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The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies, 2000-2008

Fredrick Oduor Ogenga

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"Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Media Studies at the University of Witwatersrand"

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Abstract

This thesis explores the representation of the Zimbabwean crisis by the *The Sunday Times, The Sunday Independent and The Mail & Guardian* from 2000-2008. Using critical political-economy theories of the media, theories of news production, cultural studies and a triangulated qualitative methodological approach, the thesis contends that the representation of the situation is sensational, superficial and amounts to misrepresentation. It echoes a particular kind of journalism witnessed in mainstream newspapers driven by commercial interest. Such interests are shaped by ideologies of journalism which not only lean towards a Western perspective of news construction but also define the criterion of news selection. The criterion demands that journalists write news and not history and in the process strive to be objective. This limits possibilities of contextualizing events. Further, objectivity is a myth since it assumes the existence of an independent objective reality. Therefore, news representation is problematic considering that the Weeklies used 'official' sources who furnished them with raw material for framing stories. In addition, those who own the Weeklies are in positions of control depending on how these newspapers are funded. Economic factors such as advertising and sales, working in tandem with political ideologies that lean towards liberal democracy and human rights, influenced representation. In such a context, news is conceived and valued as a product of mass production in the 'free market.' A closer inspection of the Weeklies' representation of the crisis reveals the underlying complex ideological dichotomy where Western uni-polar discourses of human rights and democracy are celebrated while those of pan-Africanism, African renaissance, national patriotic history and liberation solidarity in South Africa and Zimbabwe are taken for granted. However, this was to be expected of the three neo-conservative Weeklies studied. This thesis argues that competing discourses should be given an equal chance of scrutiny if humanity, irrespective of race, is to reach a consensus regarding the complexities of the history of human civilization and its future predicament. Such conclusions were reached through semiotics, which included ideological analysis, as the methodological approach used. The latter entailed the analysis of textual elements utilized to construct meanings of the situation at the covert level revealing how the Weeklies expressed the desire to change Zimbabwe out of fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa. This created the necessary pressure, locally and internationally, leading to the formation of a Government of National Unity.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Media Studies, in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination for any other university.

Fredrick Oduor Ogenga

15-day of-12 – 2010.

Dedication

To Joab Mark Otieno-Ogenga, Joyce Adhiambo Ogenga, the rest of the family and almighty God for their support and patience while undertaking this research.

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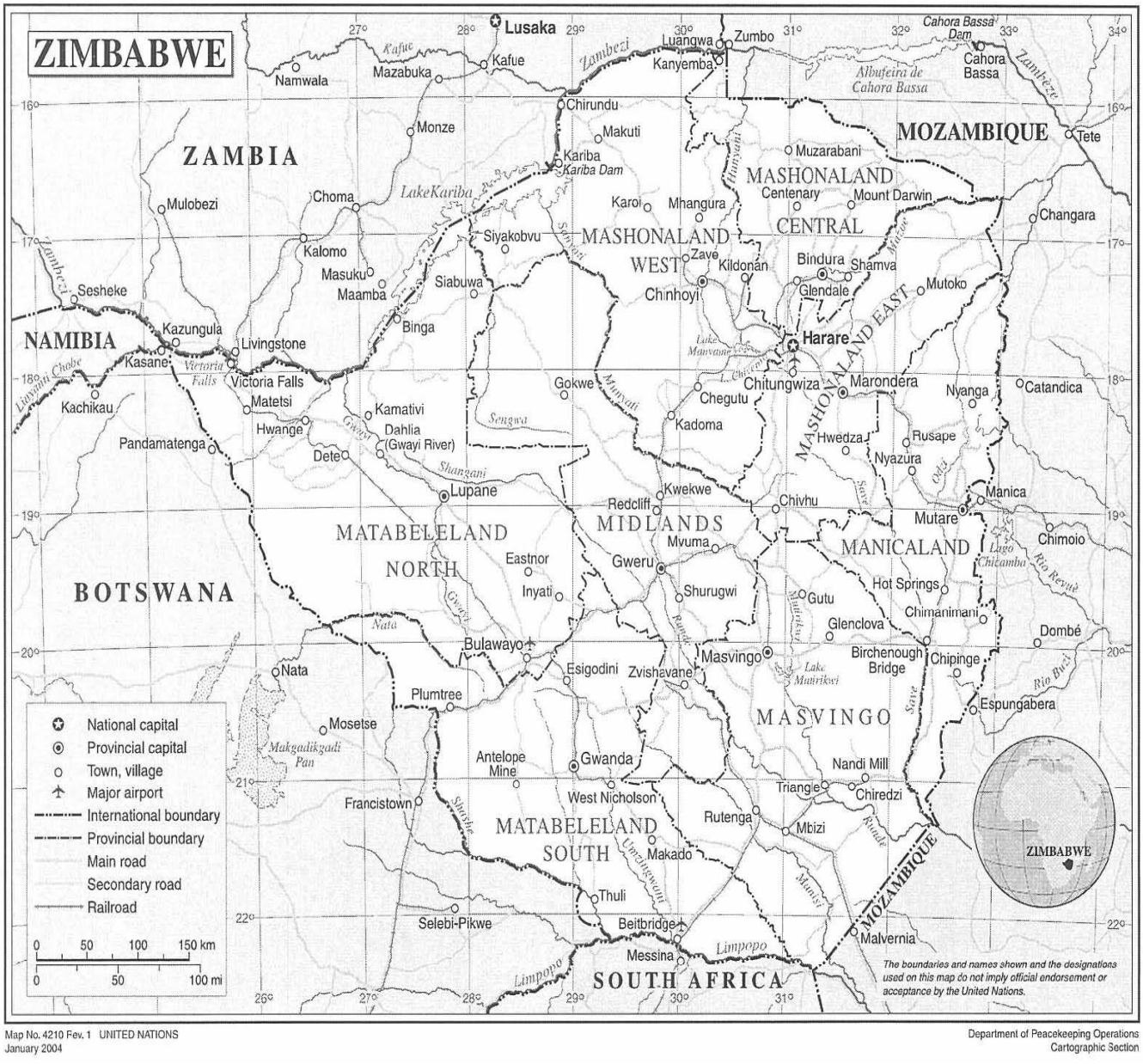
Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Union
CCPJ	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Program
GPA	Global Political Agreement
HPF	Homeless Peoples Federation
ICG	International Crisis Group
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LPM	Landless Peoples Movement
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MISA	Media Institute of South Africa
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa Development
NLC	National Land Committee
PAC	Pan African Congress
RDP	Restructuring & Development Program

RF	Rhodesian Front
SABA	Southern Africa Broadcasting Association
SABC	South Africa Broadcasting Corporation
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SANLC	South Africa's National Land Committee
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization
WVA	War Veterans Association
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union –Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZBH	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union
ZDF	Zimbabwe Defense Force
ZNLWVA	Zimbabwe National War Veteran Association
ZUD	Zimbabwe Union of Democrats
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

Zimbabwean Map

Map adapted from www.unitednations.org.



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Chapter one

Introduction

This study analyzed the representations of the problematic socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe, often summarized as the Zimbabwean crisis, by three South African Weeklies, the factors that influenced such representations and the meanings arising. The latter revealed that such representations where sensational, superficial and amounted to misrepresentation. The use of the phrase "socio-economic and political situation" in Zimbabwe in the study was based on major socio-economic and political events that occurred in Zimbabwe that, in one way or another, contributed to the birth of the common term "Zimbabwean crisis." Since the year 2000, Zimbabwean society has been facing enormous problems of a political, economic and social nature which collectively constitute the crisis. The major issues include: malgovernance, economic meltdown, a disputed land reform process, drought and hunger, HIV and AIDS pandemic, an exodus of professionals, and a determination for regime change locally and internationally.

There is no general consensus as to what exactly constitutes the Zimbabwean crisis, how it started and how to resolve it (Raftopolous , 2006; Mlambo, 2005; Raftopoulos & Jensen, 2003; Sachikonye, 2002; Sachikonye et al, 2007; Sachikonye, 2011; Moyo; 2004; Moyo, 2005; Moyo, 2007; Mano, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009b; Phimister & Raftopolous, 2004; Raftoupolos & Savage, 2004; Muzondidya, 2000; Muzondidya, 2009; Muzondidya, 2010; Hammer, McGregor & Landau, 2010; Moore, 2001a; Moore, 2001b; Moore, 2001c; Taylor & Williams, 2002; Lahiff & Cousins, 2001; Ranger, 2004; McKinley, 2004; Obe, 2006; Mamdani, 2009; Bracking, 2005; Graham, 2006; Freeman, 2005; Scarnecchia, 2006; Jones, 2010; Prys, 2008; Prys, 2009; Goebel, 2005; Bond 2007). Stakeholders emphasize explanations which would further their own interests at any one time. Most of those who get involved pull in different directions. There is no common purpose even in the international community and no common national agenda internally. It seems that the main reason for the lack of common purpose is the acute polarization of Zimbabwean politics which perpetuates moods of bitterness

among Zimbabweans, and by extension, lack of agreement by the international community on how to handle the Zimbabwean crisis. Hammar and Raftopoulos in Bracking (2005: 346) present an excellent summary of this polarization. They argue:

> a historicised and racialised assertion of land restitution and justice, versus an ahistorical, technocratic insistence on liberal notions of private property, 'development' and 'good governance'; a new form of 'indigenous,' authoritarian nationalism (based around claims of loyalty and national sovereignty), versus a non-ethnicised, 'civic' nationalism (grounded in liberal democratic notions of rights and the rule of law); a radical, pan-Africanist anti-colonial, anti-imperialist critique of 'the West,' versus a 'universalist' embrace of certain aspects of neoliberalism and globalisation; and a monopoly claim over the commitment to radical redistribution, versus a monopoly claim over the defence of human rights (Hammar and Raftopoulos in Bracking, 2005: 346).

In light of the above, it is clear that there are competing narratives regarding Zimbabwe's national liberation history and the way forward for that country. The Zimbabwean government is seen to be actively working in the recruitment of consent in the "unfinished business" regarding the national question and liberation – the West being the target of the latter (Bracking, 2005). Arguably, this has been due to the "real failure of post-liberation development democracies to address the structural, social and political legacies of colonial and apartheid rule" (Cousins in Bracking, 2005:346). From this approach, Zimbabwe is seen to be in a endless struggle against former colonialists and imperialists as captured in the works of Raftopoulos and Jensen (2003) "*Zimbabwe Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crises*." Previous works concerning Zimbabwe have been shaped by what Raftopoulos (2006: 207) calls "intellectual legacy of political-economy" in the Marxist political-economy sense. The major assumption has been that the impact of colonial rule in Africa has been mainly 'economic.' Attention was paid to the role of the state, as the central factor of development and transformation, with little emphasis on historical analysis and the idea of popular democratic process (Arighi & Saul in Raftopoulos, 2006). Even though state abuse of power was criticized, the role of the state was emphasized as argued by Raftopoulos, (2006: 209) below:

> Complementing the liberation movement's conception of the state as primarily owned and controlled by the ruling party, the sole legitimate heirs of the liberation movement. Any reference to liberal concerns with human rights and democratic space, that once formed the demands of the nationalist movement, was increasingly erased from the selective history of the nationalism espoused by the ruling party, and increasing emphasis was placed on commandism that had dominated liberation politics (Raftopoulos, 2006: 209).

The influence of the political-economy tradition led to works[1] such as those of Patrick Bond (2002; 2004) that explain why Zimbabwe is experiencing socio-economic and political crises, the political aftershocks of an exhausted national project, the consequences of the economic policy shift from corporatism to neo-liberalism and the breakdown of social justice. The works also explore Zimbabwe's position in the broader SADC and global environment with an emphasis on Zimbabwe's neo-imperialism stance and South Africa's sub-imperial role. Raftopoulos, (2006: 210) highlights David Moore's[2] (2001; 2003) contribution to the political-economy tradition where he locates the Zimbabwean crisis in the context of what he calls "unresolved process of primitive accumulation, nation-state formation[3], and democratization" (see also Moore, 2001c). Goebel, (2005) places the context of the Zimbabwean crisis in what he describes as post-developmentalism. In the latter, the post-war investment in the development project in Africa had come to an end and was replaced by accelerated globalization and downsizing of the state's role. Goebel, (2005: 348) argues that "this context meant that the

[1] Bond, P. & Manyanya, M. (2002). *Zimbabwe's PLUNGE. Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice*. Pietermaritzburg: The Merlin Press; Bond, P. (2004). 'The ANC's 'Left Turn' & South African Sub-imperialism', *Review of African Political Economy*, 31:102. 599 – 616.

[2] Moore, D. (2001). Democracy is Coming to Zimbabwe. *Australian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 36 Issue 2. 163-169; Moore, D. (2001). Neoliberal Globalization and the Triple Crisis of Modernization in Africa: Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa. *Third World Quartely*, Vol. 22 Issue 2. 909-926; Moore, D. (2001). 'Is the Land the Economy and the Economy the Land? Primitive Accumulation in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 19, 2 . 253–66; Moore, D. (2003). 'Zimbabwe's Triple Crisis: Primitive Accumulation, Nation-State Formation and Democratisation in the Age of Neo-Liberal Globalisation', *African Studies Quarterly*, 7, 2–3 . 35–47; Moore, D. (2004). 'The Second Age of the Third World: From Primitive Accumulation to Public Goods', *Third World Quarterly*, 25, 1. 87–109.

[3] Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. & Willems, W. 2009. Making Sense of Cultural Nationalism and the Politics of Commemoration under the Third *Chimurenga* in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern Africa Studies*, 35:4, 945-965

nationalist project… was unable to overcome legacies of racialised social and land related structural inequalities leading to the crisis." Moore (2001b:909) argues that:

> Neoliberal globalization has renewed and accelerated the triple crisis of capitalistic modernization in Africa. Primitive accumulation, nation-state formation and democratization remain uncompleted tasks. Neoliberal globalization simultaneously encourages these trends yet makes them difficult to resolve, given its anti-statism, its exclusionary version of democracy, and the violence inherent in the emergence of private property rights out of pre-capitalists modes of production that have been mediated by colonial and post-colonial institutions and dynamic of the cold war (Moore, 2001b: 909).

Moore introduces a bigger framework in which scholars ought to inspect the crisis in Zimbabwe. After all, it appears to be a general crisis in the continent. Bratton and Masunungure's (2011) essay titled "*The Anatomy of Political Predation: Leaders, Elites and Coalitions in Zimbabwe,* 1980-2010*,"* offer an interpretation of the rise and fall of Zimbabwe's political-economy through the lens of post-colonial leadership. They argue that "in Zimbabwe, a predatory civil-military coalition – even when participating in negotiated political settlements – always placed its own political survival and welfare above broader developmental goals." They pose two interesting questions in their thesis. The first one is related to why, after independence, did a ruling political elite resort to predation rather than development while the second is why, even in the face of a current political and economic crisis, have rival elites failed to forge a common developmental coalition. In addressing the first question Bratton and Masunungure (2011: iii) argue that:

> In consolidating state power, civilian rulers and their military allies violently suppress political opposition, engaged in corruption and challenged the economic interest of commercial farming and business elites. In doing so, leaders undermine the institutions of the state and the rule of law. Politically, they alienated the labor movement and the civil society, which went on to form a rival opposition coalition (Bratton and Masunungure, 2011: iii).

Their answers to the second questions shed light on the limits of hastily negotiated political arrangements citing the 1980 Lancaster House Agreement and the Global Political Agreement in

1998 in Zimbabwe. They argue that "leaders accept power-sharing arrangements that restrict their freedom to maneuver. Lacking strong leadership commitments, however, the rules underpinning these externally driven, hastily negotiated and reluctantly accepted political settlements in Zimbabwe have never taken root" (Baratton and Masunungure, 2011: iii). Cheeseman & Miles-Tendi (2010: 203), for example, compares power-sharing arrangements in Kenya and Zimbabwe. They argue that "in Zimbabwe, the exclusionary use of violence and rhetoric together with militarization of politics created far greater barriers to genuine power-sharing, resulting in the politics of continuity." Although Veto power players were rendered insignificant in the Kenyan case leading to the "politics of collusion," neither mode is seen as sufficient to create necessary conditions for genuine reforms. Conclusively, Governments of National Unity serve to postpone conflicts, rather than resolve them (Cheeseman & Miles-Tendi, 2010). From such a complex trajectory, it is critical to establish how the South African Weeklies have been representing Zimbabwe's political-economy in the context of the crises.

The Weeklies gave the socio-economic and political events unfolding in Zimbabwe (crises) extensive coverage over selected months from 2000-2008. However, such coverage left a lot to be desired since they appeared sensational, superficial and, to say the least, amounted to misrepresentation. The latter was true given the complexities of Africa's and Zimbabwe's political-economy as pointed out by various scholars in this thesis. The three South African Weeklies dwelt on three major issues: Politics, economics, and social upheavals. Under political issues, the major events were the cited flawed elections in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008. Under social issues, the major events were Operation *Murambatsvina* or Restore Order in 2005 (Chari, 2008; Vambe, 2008; Munhande & Matonhodze, 2008; Tibaijuka, 2005; Potts, 2005; Potts, 2006; Bratton & Masungure, 2006; Bratton & Masungure, 2011; Musoni, 2010; Sachikonye, 2006; Moore 2008; Harris, 2005; Bracking, 2005), cholera in 2008 (Mason, 2009) and the influx of Zimbabweans into neighboring countries, especially South Africa, that happened gradually (See Hammer, McGregor & Landau, 2010). Under economic issues, 'economic collapse' was studied alongside reports on food shortages (Wall & Whiteside, 2003) and 'illegal land invasions' covered in 2000 (Richardson, 2004; Peron, 2000; Ndlela, 2005; Muzondidya, 2009; Mereidith, 2002; Brett, 2005).

One interesting phenomenon is how the socio-economic and political historical pattern in Zimbabwe is similar to the one experienced in most other African countries including South Africa. It is related to how institutions of governance can benefit poor people. This perhaps explains the switch from state centered discourses of development to discourses of civil participation in development – issues of human rights and democracy. Brett (2005: 91), for instance, argues that "some 40 years after independence, Africa's capacity to maintain its political, economic and social institutions and to provide for its people is in crisis." He observes that Africa is governed by leaders who take advantage of the weak institutions to enrich themselves and sometimes deliberately orchestrate violence in order to capitalize on the state of confusion. Good examples of such countries are, of course, countries like Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, Nigeria and Zimbabwe – the latter being the focus of this thesis.

Akpabio (2008: 3) notes that "the situation in Zimbabwe has been experienced in virtually all parts of the continent." His thesis confirms the idea that the relatively unstable situation experienced in Zimbabwe is no new narrative in Africa. The Zimbabwe experience, therefore, opens memories of despair experienced by the repressed in countries like Ghana and Nigeria as they sought to overcome their socio-economic and political challenges brought about by failed leadership. He notes that:

> If you take a look at the African landscape, it is clear that years of mismanagement by the ruling elites have taken a heavy toll. If it is not unbearable hell in the midst of plenty, given the huge natural resources in the continent, it is conflicts and wars, all of which have turned Africans into economic refugees all over the world (Akpabio, 2008:3).

The focus of this study was to investigate the reasons that could account for the manner in which South African Weeklies represented the socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe from 2000-2008. The reasons were indeed many. The general consensus among scholars like Brett (2005) and Akpabio (2008), mentioned earlier, seem to lean towards the contention that issues of governance and democracy in Africa are problematic. Sachikonye et al, (2007) in a paper titled *"Consolidating Democratic Governance in Southern Africa: Zimbabwe"* published

by the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) poses a question related to the prospects of democratic transition in Zimbabwe. They agree that this is a difficult question based on the fact that several key aspects will still affect Zimbabwe's short term effects. Key among such factors is the state of the economy which "scored a record hyperinflation" (at over 1,000%) in November, 2006 (Sachikonye et al, 2007:141). Sachikonye et al (2007: 141) argue that:

> As the chapters on the country's context and economic management show, there is no end in sight yet to the economic crisis in the absence of domestic political reform or internal settlements, and of normalization of several relations with the West and donors. A bleak scenario in the economic sector is one in which there is worsening of the situation, rampant corruption fuelled by patronage and scramble for remaining state resources (Sachikonye et al, 2007: 141).

The argument above appears a little-bit pessimistic about the prospects of Zimbabwe's recovery. However, there is still some optimism presented by the fracture within ZANU-PF in the quest for President Mugabe's successor (Sachikonye et al, 2007). A ruling party split is arguably going to reduce the impact the party has in Zimbabwean politics. The assumption is that if an alliance is born between a break-away faction and the opposition (Movement for Democratic Change), then the best opportunity for a new political force and a transition from authoritarianship will present itself (Sachikonye et al, 2007). The burden of this thesis was, therefore, to surgically analyze South African Weeklies' representation of the situation in lieu of the consensus that Zimbabwe is, indeed, experiencing a crisis of governance and democracy. Of course, this was a massive task based on the epistemological positions of the scholarly literature – scholars' reference points and how that influenced their discursive frameworks. For example, even though pan-African scholars seem to accept that there is a problem regarding the path Africa has taken regarding questions of nationalism, property rights and democracy, they kept on blaming the West and global institutions like International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for, amongst many things, economic neo-imperialism and democratic crises in Africa.

The study was tasked with questions of validity regarding the meanings emerging from South African Weeklies' representations by diagnosing their common features and unpacking their role in reproducing and generating particular discourses to audiences in South Africa and beyond.

Various possible factors that influenced the South African Weeklies' coverage of the Zimbabwean situation were explored theoretically based on cultural studies, political-economy and theories of news production. Semiotics and ideological analysis were utilized as methodological approaches to find out how signs are used to construct meaning through the media – signifying practice.

The study attempted to show, specifically, how the South African Weeklies distinctively responded to Zimbabwean events in the way that they did. Though the variables were indeed wide, the study chose three main areas of journalistic coverage (elections, economic collapse and social upheavals) in three weekly newspapers. One motivation for the study, among several, is the sensitivity of South Africans in general to parallels with Zimbabwe's history of racially based land appropriation and restitution. The nature of South African Weeklies' representation of the situation in Zimbabwe was a problem to the Zimbabwean government but good news for the white farmers in Zimbabwe. However, how the Zimbabwean government and white farmers in that country responded to such representations was beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, the Zimbabwean political class held a slightly different ideological position from their South African counterparts, save for Mbeki, about racial struggle and redistributive justice.

Contrarily, a huge section of the South African political and economic class celebrated such representations because they were meant to safeguard their privileges. However, such representations revealed South African sensitivity to Zimbabwe's perceived economic meltdown and its impacts on migration across the border and consequent instability in South Africa. This study thus explored the motivations behind different ideological positions as reflected through the Weeklies' representation, for example, how the run of articles in the *The Sunday Independent*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Mail & Guardian* highlighting land invasions in Zimbabwe reflect the shared class position of major shareholders in Independent News and Media (South Africa) Limited, Avusa Group and *The Mail & Guardian* group of newspapers, respectively, with the class position of white South African farmers who fear a Zimbabwe style land grab.

A major theoretical presupposition that media representation is an attempt to explain reality and is not a reflection of reality was fore-grounded. Its methodological implication was premised on

the fact that studies in media representation are qualitative by nature. These two approaches showed how "the Weeklies discern a newsworthy crisis to be potentially unfolding when liberal democratic norms for the conduct of elections are violated" (Hall et al, 1978: 66). The 2000, 2002, 2005, 2008 Zimbabwe election periods, for example, witnessed great coverage of the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation than any other periods in the country's history by the South African weekly newspapers. The extensive coverage was due to the major socio-economic and political events, such as land invasions, that amounted to what was then and still is dubbed 'the Zimbabwean crisis.' Ndlovu-Gatsheni, (2009a: 207) argues that:

> Zimbabwe is a typical example of a post-colonial state that moved from a widely praised policy of reconciliation in the 1980's to a pursuit of political vendetta at the beginning of the new millennium. This happened in tandem with the rapid plunge of the country into chaos and violence of land invasions and the controversial First-Track land reform program (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a: 207).

Land invasions were seen to be at the epicenter of the Zimbabwean crisis and seemed to be a controversial issue in South Africa as well. It was therefore important for the study to find out whether, in reporting the crisis in that country, the Weeklies possibly reproduced the moral consensus defining the normative values that underpin hegemonic class privileges in liberal capitalist societies such as South Africa. The findings supported these assumptions.

The election periods specified in this study coincided with a series of social, economic and political problems such as high inflation, food shortages and massive migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa and other countries. The elections are perceived to have triggered these socio-economic problems going by the analysis of their representations by the Weeklies. The problems emerged as a result of poor electoral mechanisms that gave room for flawed and fraudulent results. The ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front's (ZANU-PF) had the ideological and material capacity to suppress pluralism through intimidation tactics (See International Crisis Group, 2002). The rampant corruption coupled with hyperinflation and global recession is said to have ruined the economy (See Moore, 2001b; Bond, 2007; Bracking, 2005). Consequently, Zimbabwe received intensive and extensive coverage by the international media, the South African Weeklies included. The latter was of much relevance due to the fact

that the Weeklies are categorically under what can be identified as the African press. The fact that the South African Weeklies are situated in Africa marks a significant departure from the tradition of focusing, specifically, on how the Western press represents Africa. The press in Africa has also been a suspect in representing events in the continent in a particular way and few studies have been done to inspect their character.

It was therefore important to analyze the ways in which the South African Weeklies, which are situated in Africa, represented the socio-economic and political events in Zimbabwe to arrive at an objective understanding of the factors that influenced such representations and the meanings embedded in them. A good example of how the South African Weeklies represented the situation in Zimbabwe is in the area of elections and land redistribution. Elections in Zimbabwe have been represented as controversial while government programs such as the land redistribution program or 'Fast-Track' have been represented as land grabs. Exploring the covert meaning of such kinds of representations through textual analysis was the primary focus of this study. Such explorations revealed that the Weeklies actually misrepresented the crisis in Zimbabwe. The conviction is that any attempt to represent problematic socio-economic and political patterns in Zimbabwe cannot afford to be superficial and ahistoric. It should be done in a nuanced and holistic manner to avoid occluding other relevant aspects of the situation that the public deserves to know and understand.

1.0 Aim

The aim of the study was thus to critically analyze the ways in which South African Weeklies represented the socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe (commonly known as the crisis) from 2000-2008, the factors that influence how the situation was represented and the meanings emerging out of such representations.

1.1 Motivation

Out of several possible reasons, there are at least five reasons, discussed under this sub-section, which account for the importance of researching how the South African Weeklies represented the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation (the crisis).

1.1.1 The extensive coverage of the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation by the South African Weeklies

The South African Weeklies covered and continue to cover the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation extensively (Chuma, 2011; Mazango, 2005; Waldahl, 2001). The extensive coverage was heightened by important socio-economic and political events unfolding in Zimbabwe, specifically in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008. These events are discussed in detail in the literature review chapter. However, elections as the main events from 2002-2008 are examined at length in this section because they coincided with other political, economic and social events that unfolded in Zimbabwe that are discussed later. Apart from the Weeklies representation of elections, other stakeholders were also interested in reporting the situation. Non-Governmental Organizations championed ideas of human rights and democracy wherein their ideological position regarding the elections in Zimbabwe could be easily established. One notable organisation was the International Crisis Group (ICG). In almost all their reports about elections in Zimbabwe, there was a general consensus that they were chaotic and fell short of attaining the moral benchmark that characterizes elections in a democracy[4]. Therefore, the March 2002 and March 2005 elections for example, as would be expected of the ICG reports, were all flawed. This ideological discursive framework that tinted the lenses of observers and researchers regarding the 'reality' of Zimbabwean elections was betrayed by counter-discourses that emerged regarding the 2005 elections. The 2005 elections were largely seen as free and fair even though there were reported cases of gerrymandering, inaccurate voter roll, intimidation in terms

[4] See a report by International Crisis Group titled *Zimbabwe: Prospects from a Flawed Election, Africa Report No138-20th March 2008*]. According to this report, the elections in Zimbabwe did not meet the standards of free and fair elections due to violence and intimidation targeted at the opposition supporters.

of repressive laws and irregularities in vote tallying (Bracking, 2005). Mlambo (2005:14) notes that the idea that the March 2005 parliamentary election in Zimbabwe was relatively peaceful was muted. Mlambo (2005:14) argued that:

> Human rights groups in Zimbabwe, South Africa and some Western countries, led by Amnesty International, decided to ignore that fact [that elections were relatively peaceful] and instead fan the discourse of violence in Zimbabwe. After the elections, instead of encouraging a positive way forward, they shifted their focus onto manufactured 'evidence' of vote rigging, trying to incite violent protest against the results, even when the leadership of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) said they preferred not to challenge the election results. This call for a violent uprising led some MDC youths to start violent protests in Harare the day after the announcement of results (Mlambo, 2005:14).

From the aforementioned, the discourse of violence during Zimbabwean elections was deliberately constructed as a routine practice. There was no alternative way of describing the elections to the rest of the world without mentioning state sponsored violence. The continuous representation of Zimbabwean elections as violent seemed to lend weight to the prevailing notion of immorality during democratic elections and the international consensus that seemed to suggest that there could never be free and fair elections in Zimbabwe as long as Mugabe remained in power. To represent Zimbabwean elections as neither free nor fair worked to legitimize 'suitable' measures that granted authority to the custodians of democracy to do anything within their disposal to ensure a return to normalcy (consensual calm) regarding what was being violated – human rights and democracy (See Hall et al 1978). In the manufacture of consensus, Hall et al (1978) argues that one of the techniques of manufacturing consent is by limiting the possibility of alternative versions of looking at reality. The fact that election observers considered the 2005 elections in Zimbabwe free and fair was undermined. Mlambo (2005: 24) states that:

> Those who were in Zimbabwe on the day of the elections [2005] and, watched the counting of the votes and the public announcement of the results in the three days following the elections said that the elections were peaceful, credible and reflected the

> will of the Zimbabwean people. This was said by among others, observers from 14 SADC countries, from the South African parliament and from the African Union… Those who argued against the SADC pronouncement of a free and fair poll and maintained that the SADC guidelines were not met can be seen as a clear case of outsiders who mourn louder than the bereaved (Mlambo, 2005: 24).

The actions of human right watchers such as Amnesty International, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, International Crisis Group and other international organizations fit within Hall et al (1978: 223) concept of 'signification spirals.' As the primary definers of news in private mainstream news outlets like the South African Weeklies, and by virtue of their privileged position as 'official' sources, these organizations seem to release information about elections that will escalate their threat when signified. They do this in order to cement their ideological positions. Previous elections are linked with current ones in order to establish a pattern of repeated acts of violence. The elections in 2005, although they seemed relatively free and fair, are linked with previous violent ones such as the ones in 2000 and 2002. Hall et al (1978:223) argues that one of the elements of signification spiral is convergence. He states that:

> The usage of convergence occurs when two or more activities are linked in the process of signification so as to implicitly or explicitly draw parallels between them. Convergence might represent such real connections accurately, or they may mystify by exaggerating the nature or the degree of convergence (Hall et al 1978:223).

There are assumptions made in the society about ideas, such as human rights and democracy that are set and defined by a moral framework acceptable to all. Any attempt to go againist the latter in an unacceptable form of deviancy that cannot be tolerated – the events in Zimbabwe transcended the moral thresholds. It became of interest to the South African Weeklies to cover the events since they shared more or less the same ideological position regarding human rights and democracy in Zimbabwe. The Weeklies were more likely to give credence to the views expressed by international organizations, such as the ones mentioned above, regarding human rights violation and democracy in Zimbabwe. Their interest also resulted from lack of press freedom in that country (Moyo, 2005). The other reason is that the situation in Zimbabwe was and still is of interest to the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) because of the

adverse effects it had in the region (Goebel, 2005; McKinley, 2004; Hammar et al, 2010; Prys, 2009). As such, the South African Weeklies developed a natural interest in it.

This thesis would like to problematize the human rights discourse as propagated by the neo-conservative South African Weeklies, the Western media and the civil society operating in Zimbabwe. This is due to the fact that the leaders of the opposition in Zimbabwe, who have given prominence to issues of human rights and democracy in that country, have often been viewed as dissidents since they did so at the expense of addressing a broader national question of redistributive justice (Raftopoulos, 2006). It stands to reason that for democracy to flourish in Zimbabwe, first and foremost, the national question has to be addressed since, in the Marxist sense, it established a superstructure that has worked against the principles of human rights in the first place. In addition, there is no guarantee that human rights according to Western liberals are the panacea of human civilization. Shivji in Raftopoulos, (2006: 204) argues:

> Human rights discourse has succeeded in marginalizing concrete analysis of our society. Human rights ideology is the ideology of the status quo, not change. Documentation of human rights abuses, although important, in its own right, by itself does not help us understand the social and political relations in our society. It is not surprising that given the absence of political economy context and theoretical framework, much of our writings on human rights, rule of law, constitution etc. uncritically reiterates or assumes neo-liberal percepts. Human rights is not a theoretical tool of understanding social and political relations. At best, it can only be a means of exposing a form of oppression and, therefore, perhaps, as ideology of resistance (Shivji in Raftopoulos, 2006: 204).

The human rights discourses, therefore, provide us with a schema for identifying the wrongs in our society so that necessary adjustments can be made. However, it should not be celebrated because it overlooks other social and political relations in the society which are equally important like the land question in Zimbabwe. Human rights discourses in the media, for example, have helped the world put the regime in Zimbabwe on the spot regarding its abuses during elections. Elections in Zimbabwe have been characterized by widespread human rights abuses. Mlambo (2005: 27) seems to concur with the ICG reports on the nature of Zimbabwean elections and the discourse of human rights violations. He cites the 2000 and the 2002 elections,

arguing that "the biggest problem in the general elections was political violence. Most of that violence was a spill-over from the violent land occupations that started after the rejection of a proposed new constitution in February 2000." Even though most of ICG's report seemed to point fingers on the ruling party regarding violent elections, Mlambo (2005) extends the argument to include the opposition whom he claims are equally responsible. Mlambo (2005), for example, notes how the MDC, backed by the civil society, often evoked the human rights discourse and was determined to unseat Mugabe violently between the years 2000 and 2002, a call strengthened by the West (See Moore, 2001a). Mlambo, (2005:13) argues that:

> This call was strengthened by European and American references to a 'Milosevic style mass action' to remove Mugabe. Indeed, the MDC mobilized several attempted civil disobedience mass protests in the major cities throughout Zimbabwe, but they were all brutally quashed by Zimbabwean security forces. The most publicized of these MDC mass action initiatives was held in June 2003 and was dubbed, "the final push"[5].

One of the ways of affirming the fact that the discourse of the violent nature of elections in Zimbabwe was popular amongst the West is by looking at the response of African leaders regarding the contentious 2002 elections. While the West was adamant that the elections were neither free nor fair, some Africa countries endorsed the elections demonstrating some of the initial evidence of pan-African solidarity. The ICG argued that:

> Although opinions were divided about the freeness and fairness of the election in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, the Zimbabwean civil society was unanimous that the process was neither free nor fair... Although the SADC Parliamentary Forum declared the results neither free nor fair, its Council of Ministers,

[5] Mlambo, (2005: 13) indicates that "the history of violent politics was the reason why some observers say the parliamentary elections of June 2000 and the presidential election of February 2002 were not free and fair."

> the Organization of African Unity (now African Union) and individual African government delegations declared the elections free and fair or in the case of South Africa, "legitimate." Beyond Africa, the Commonwealth and most country observer missions said the election was not free and fair resulting in the subsequent suspension of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth for one year (ICG, 2002:3).

Even though one could easily establish the ideological positions of different stakeholders in the Zimbabwean impasse as discussed above, the ICG (2002) claims about the (2002) elections are firmly supported by the findings of this thesis. The ICG, (2002: 6) argued that:

> President Robert Mugabe's plan since his party's near-defeat in the June 2000 Parliamentary elections was to systematically ensure a result to his liking. This was achieved through a variety of interlocking means, including brutalizing opposition supporters into staying home, scaring them into voting for ZANU-PF, stealing hundreds of thousands of votes by manipulating voter rolls and eligibility rules, and disenfranchising hundreds of thousands of potential opposition supporters through myriad other legal and legislative moves (ICG, 2002: 6).

It is clear that the 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008 elections thus triggered a series of peculiar socio-economic events that occurred simultaneously and were of interest to the South African Weeklies. It is also important to note that the coverage of the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation (crisis) has been more extensive and sustained than other situations in the SADC region and the African continent. For example, the conflict in the border between Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda between militia groups and rebels where the Zimbabwean government assisted Kabila when his allies (Uganda and Rwanda) turned against him after the overthrow of bed-ridden Mobutu Sese Seko (Moore, 2001c). Studying how specific South African Weeklies covered the Zimbabwean situation was important to gain an understanding of how the Zimbabwe situation and similar other situations in Africa and elsewhere in the world are represented. It also contributes to literature in studies of press representations regarding Africa.

1.1.2. South Africa's role as a mediator

One of the major reasons why the South African Weeklies gave extensive coverage to the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation (crisis) is that South Africa's former president, Thabo Mbeki, was the mediator. He was appointed by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to mediate between the government and the MDC after a brutal government crackdown on the opposition in March 2007. The aim was to secure a new constitution and free and fair conditions for elections[6]. There have been debates in the media about what has come to be known as a softly-softly approach by South Africa on Zimbabwe dubbed 'quiet diplomacy'[7] (Graham, 2006). The former South African president, Thabo Mbeki, was confronted with the question of Zimbabwe and 'a return to socialism,' as declared by Mugabe during a former liberation struggle hero's funeral, and its impacts on the New African Initiative. Mbeki's answer to this question suggested his rejection of the phrase "quiet diplomacy" as often covered in the media and gave a clearer understanding on his approach towards resolving the socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe. He refused to respond to the consequences of socialism in Zimbabwe within the context of yet another phrase, "Zimbabwean crisis" and by default the lessons to South Africa and the New African Initiative[8].

Mbeki has been accused of evasiveness regarding the situation in Zimbabwe. Critiques focused

[6] See International Crisis Group, (2005). *Post Election Zimbabwe: What Next?* The report includes recommendations made to the Zimbabwean government and ZANU-PF, the Southern African Development Community and the South African government on the best approach to restore democracy and economic stability in Zimbabwe and the SADC region.

[7] Bond & Manyanya (2002) in their book titled *" Zimbabwe Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and The Search for Social Justice*" pp. 121-135 highlight the role played by the former South African president, Thabo Mbeki, in his mediation efforts. The discussion under the *Pretoria factor* explains how parliamentary debates on Zimbabwe intensified during Mbeki's presidency.

[8] "Mbeki notes that "I have a bit of a problem with regards to this Madam speaker, because unlike the honorable member, I do not know what is meant by socialism in this particular context and, therefore, have no way of measuring what its impact would be on this processes that we are dealing with, with regard to the African continent." Mbeki evaded the socialism question that would pin him down ideologically and instead focused on critical issues that need attention in Zimbabwe. Among them: peace and stability in Zimbabwe; an end to the conflict; land redistribution within the context of the law; the economy of Zimbabwe. See Bond & Manyanya (2002). *" Zimbabwe plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice*" pp. 121-135

on the fact that Mbeki was too generic regarding the factors that have led to the Zimbabwean crisis. Bond & Manyanya (2002: 129) indicate how Mbeki attributed Zimbabwe's severe problems to "twenty years of economic policies (with no details e.g. whether *Economic Structural Adjustment Program*, ESAP, was included)." The Zimbabwe socio-economic and political situation became fodder for political mileage by Africa National Congress. Politicians in South Africa used Zimbabwe as a bad example in their campaign trails. The emerging master narrative was that what appeared to be the case in Zimbabwe could not be allowed to happen in South Africa. Bond and Manyanya, (2002: 131) argue that "Zimbabwe was used as a bad example with respect to the challenges faced on land reforms[9]." Clearly, South Africa was and is still interested in what is unfolding in Zimbabwe. Mbeki's government, for example, had keen political interests in Zimbabwe because of sub-imperialist trade policies applied to both the region and to the continent through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (Ajulu, 2001). However, as much as the West thought that South Africa had great influence on Zimbabwe, its influence was limited due to questions of sovereignty. Freeman, (2005: 154) argues that "on numerous occasions, Mbeki has pointed out that Zimbabwe is not South Africa's tenth province and that Zimbabweans themselves must find a solution to their own problems." The idea of sovereignty in Africa presents a political and economic dilemma even as neighboring countries, especially those that are privileged economically and militarily like South Africa, seek to implement bilateral and multilateral policies in their regions. The dilemma has been compounded by the problematic nature of political and economic transitions in most African countries.

[9] The political dimensions of the events unfolding in Zimbabwe, especially around economic policies and the idea of land redistribution, were felt in South Africa. While it was clear that the willing- buyer willing -seller principal appeared to have failed in Zimbabwe, the leadership in South Africa faced a dilemma as a result of the fact that they were implementing more or less the same principal of land restitution. Worse still, with the onset of violence and farm invasions in Zimbabwe, tensions were high among South African white farmers that they would be forcefully evicted through invasions similar to those experienced in Zimbabwe. The then minister of lands, Henekom, had to reassure them that there would be no breakdown of rural law and order in South Africa. All this was happening amidst Mbeki's own Washington centric *Esap* – the Growth, Empowerment and Redistribution strategy – that was noticing some degree of failure just like it did in Zimbabwe (see Brett 2005); see also Bond & Manyanya, (2002). *Zimbabwe's PLUNGE: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice*. Pietermaritzburg: The Merlin Press P. 131.

Bond and Manyanya (2002) are adamant that most political power transfers or deals have been often done hurriedly with little or no mechanism that could help address the past political, social and economic injustices caused by those who were leaving office. The worst experiences of such deals were felt by those in previously colonized states. In the latter, where African countries dominate, the 'new' leaders in the newly independent states enjoyed sovereignty but did little to address the injustices of prior dictators such as institutionalized corruption, ethnicity[10] and somewhere along the line, the leaders forgot about transforming the colonially inherited institutions. Zimbabwe seems to have fallen into the same trap. Bond and Manyanya (2002: 114) argue that:

> Most deals could be described as "low intensity democracy." Below the façade of multi-partysm, the overall parameters had been set in Washington. Truth and reconciliation commissions were rare. Most deals left the economic status quo intact, no matter how equal and unsustainable – Dictators left debts to democrats with only a few attempts to retrieve the stolen loot. Even though ZANU-PF and MDC signed the September 15th 2008 Global Political Agreement (GPA), which was binding, an elite consensus will not be easy to locate, given how much of its existence ZANU-PF has invested in the spoils of state control. A power-transfer deal cooked up in some new Lancaster House would neither solve nor survive the most profound socio-economic contradictions (Bond and Manyanya, 2002: 114).

Bond and Manyanya (2002) here draw attention to the fact that transitions from dictatorial regimes were done in a rush where previous dictators now became born again 'democrats' under the Washington Consensus. Such leaders followed the latter blindly. Bond and Manyanya (2002: 106) further argue that "the newly ruling clique of democratic politicians either went along for the ride, perhaps complaining a bit, or they mindlessly bought into the Washington consensus ideology." Under the veil of the consensus, these leaders attempted to conceal the deep divisions regarding issues related to accumulation of wealth, nation-state formation, ethnicity, conflicts

[10] Ethnicity is a big problem in African countries. In Kenya for example, ethnicity is politicized in such as way that people vote along ethnic lines. Ethnicity led to the 2007 election violence in that country. In Zimbabwe, ethnicity is defined by the traditional rivalry between the Shona and the Ndebele ethnic communities since independence. In Rwanda, ethnicity and tribal rivalry between the Hutus and Tustis was responsible for the genocide.

and democracy that characterized their societies. If it appears that most countries in Africa experience the same kinds of challenges, is there any that can take a leading role in shaping the continent's destiny? If at all such a country exists in Africa, does it mark the beginning of a new era in the history of Africa's history or just another false start? Southall's (2006) edited work on a conference proceeding sponsored by the Nelson Mandela Foundation titled *"South Africa's Role in Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking in Africa"* explores such possibilities. However, the work is more concerned with questions regarding South Africa's role as a peacemaker in Africa. The answers to such questions lead to the conclusion that South Africa's approach to Zimbabwe, like many other countries in Africa, was deliberate and motivated by historical events in the continent. Mbeki's soft approach or "quiet diplomacy" regarding Zimbabwe is rooted in South Africa's post-Mandela multilateral policy in international engagement as opposed to the unilateral approach exercised by the previous regime (Southall, 2006). Multilateralism had become the principle vehicle of Mbeki's pan-Africanist ambitions leading to various constitutions like the transformation of Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into African Union (AU) and the formation of New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). Freeman (2005:148) notes that NEPAD was "a continental plan to take Africa from the margins of world power and diplomacy into stronger role in global forums." South Africa was confronted with the question of how it could exercise its "reconciliatory role" to fulfill NEPAD's ambition and establish peace and stability in troubled parts of the African continent. The country's experience of a successful negotiated settlement - "the Miracle" that marked the end of apartheid - is seen to have crucial benefit for the entire African continent in its pursuit of peace and reconciliation (See Graham, 2006). The latter was to be achieved through the iconic status of Nelson Mandela. Southall, (2006:2) argues that "South Africa was seen as having not only a moral obligation to repay Africa for the sins of the apartheid regime, but also the resources – economic and Military – with which to undertake serious continental responsibilities."

However, the question of how much purchasing power South Africa would have in troubled parts of the continent was still open. Rather than pursuing a unilateral militaristic and economic ambition in the continent, South Africa opted for a soft approach. "South Africa resisted the temptation of using its economic and military muscle to establish itself as a hegemonic power

(McKinley, 2004). Instead, it has opted to use 'soft power' in the form of preventive diplomacy and mediation of conflicts" (Southall, 2006: 4). In his interesting thesis titled "*How Firm the Handshake? South Africa's use of quiet diplomacy in Zimbabwe from 1999 to 2006*," Graham, (2006) discusses the bilateral and multilateral efforts to resolve the Zimbabwean situation. Graham (2006: 122) for instance argues:

> Since Mbeki assumed the presidency he has been at great pains to assure fellow Africans that South Africa will not adopt a 'big brother'[11] attitude on the continent. He has often declared that South Africa claims no right to impose its will on any country and will act only within the context of its international agreements. Mbeki's preference has always been for an intra-African multilateral approach to Zimbabwe. While the rest of the world remains flabbergasted over South Africa's response to the crisis, Mbeki wants the international community to leave it to the AU and Southern African Development Community (SADC) to resolve it in 'the African way.' It has been suggested that behind the scenes Mbeki is only too aware of how disastrous a leader Mugabe is, but feels that he could have more impact on the situation if he uses an attitude of sympathy and friendship to nudge Mugabe in the right direction (Graham, 2006: 122).

South Africa's multilateralism was driven by the neo-liberal pursuit of human rights and democracy, and a market friendly approach to growth and development for South Africa and the broader African continent. "The ANCs new commitment to market-based economics, seen as vital to attract foreign investment and hence kick-start growth, in a holistic vision geared towards promoting peace, prosperity, sustainable development and good governance across the continent" (Southall, 2006: 4). In this context, South Africa was generally viewed by 'the last remaining superpower,' United States, as a regional hegemon and the 'new kid on the block' in Africa capable of advancing interests similar to those of the West (See Freeman, 2005). This being the case, South Africa was keen to avoid the increasing public perception among African

[11] See Freeman, L. 2005. South Africa's Zimbabwe Policy: Unravelling the Contradictions. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies.* Vol. 23, Issue 2: 147-172.

countries that it was a Western puppet and a traitor to the struggle (Graham, 2006). Graham, (2006: 121) further argues that "black solidarity, brotherhood and support for former comrades in arms take precedence over the need to ensure freedom, rule of law and respect for human rights – which are ironically the very values that were fought for in South Africa's (and Zimbabwe's) liberation struggles." South Africa's diplomatic approach was therefore a result of the hard lessons the country learnt under Mandela whose unilateralist foreign policy led to isolation (Kagwanja in Southall, 2006; see Graham, 2006; Freeman 2005). Kagwanja in Southall, (2006:4) lists several occasions where South Africa's diplomatic efforts under Mandela failed:

> Mandela's hard line against the Sani Abacha military regime ended unsuccessfully when OAU declared South Africa's call for sanctions against Nigeria un-African. South Africa's efforts to broker a peace deal between president Mobutu Sese Seko and rebel leader Laurent Kabila in Zaire in 1997 ignored the fact that the latter was on the verge of victory and that the Mobutu regime was on the edge of collapse; subsequently, South Africa's preventive diplomacy proved wholly ineffective in promoting dialogues between Kabila and rebels, based in Uganda and Rwanda, and in preventing Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe from sending in troops to prop up his shaky regime. South Africa's intervention in Lesotho in 1998, in the wake of disputed general elections in that country, may have restored constitutional order but it simultaneously raised the ghost of the former regime's military adventurism (Kagwanja in Southall, 2006: 4).

Kagwanja in Southall (2006) views South Africa's multilateralism as attempts by Mbeki to reverse the ineffectiveness of unilateralism under Mandela. However, he argues that Mbeki's efforts failed to take advantage of the Zimbabwean 'crises' to sanitize South Africa's diplomatic position. South Africa's difficult relationship with Zimbabwe has acted as an obstacle in the pursuit of a speedy solution to the problems in that country. South Africa was equally avoiding a military option which can amount to two issues. Firstly, the risks of the country being seen as a regional bully and secondly, a military intervention can undermine the necessary gains it has made on multilateralism in the continent (Kagwanja in Southall, 2006). Kagwanja in Southall, (2006:5) states that South Africa's foreign policy difficulty with Zimbabwe is not necessarily all bad since it has been instrumental in transforming OAU into AU through its strong relationship

with Nigeria. However, even though AU provided Mbeki's regime with "an ideal multilateral vehicle for its peace and security objectives," it worked to reduce the key liberal intentions of countries like Zimbabwe and Libya, exemplified by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), and complicated their democratic prospects.

Nevertheless, South Africa's ambition of a joint continental force to secure Africa from both internal and external threats has partly contributed to the country's successful peace efforts in countries such a Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan. However, the gains made risk being undermined by inadequate control of South Africa's arms industry that has made it easy to export arms to conflict regions of the continent (Southall, 2006). While South Africa is no doubt a regional, if not continental, power both militarily and economically, its capacity to use this portfolio in pursuit of its liberal internationalism tied to human rights and democracy has been undermined by suspicion about its credentials, that is, the fact that "it is bent upon establishing itself as a regional hegemon implementing a too obvious Western agenda." (Kagwanja in Southall, 2006: 6). Mckinley in Southall, (2006: 85) argues that "South Africa's policy cannot be understood and explained without critical reference to, and analysis of, the political economy of the renewed South Africa's sub-imperialism." McKinley, (2004:357) further argues that:

> South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe has been, and continues to be, driven by the combined, and in this case complementary, class interests of South Africa's emergent black and traditional (white) bourgeoisie (whether located in the public and/or private sectors). Put another way, South African policy can best be understood, and explained, by critical reference to the political economy of a renewed South African sub-imperialism (McKinley, 2004: 357).

The South African stance on Zimbabwe can also be seen through the dualistic discourse of race and nationalism (McKinley, 2004). The racial divide on the Zimbabwean question meant that Nothern and White countries positioned themselves against Mugabe while Southern and non-White ones have supported him (McKinley in Southall, 2006; McKinley, 2004). McKinley states that:

> The most publicly visible manifestation of this racialised divide can be seen in the ongoing 'battle' within the Commonwealth, especially as applied to the 'troika' of Commonwealth nations (South Africa, Nigeria and Australia) tasked with monitoring and evaluating the situation in Zimbabwe. The fact that the recently held Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement gave unqualified political support to the Mugabe regime at virtually the same time that Australia, Britain and the United States were successfully pushing for the renewal and extension of 'smart sanctions' against Mugabe and his cronies, supports the public perceptions (real or imagined) that racial solidarity has been the driving factor behind policy stances towards the Zimbabwe crisis (McKinley, 2004: 357).

This kind of divide has clouded meaningful discourses about Zimbabwe and the possibilities of acknowledging the existence of South Africa's new political and economic dispensation characterized by a more deracialised capitalism and a more specific class interest of a black working class (See McKinley, 2004). McKinley in Southall, (2006: 88) notes that:

> Racial polarization combined with opportunistic revival of a distorted nationalism and liberation struggle history, has impoverished much of the debate of the historical origins of the character of the Zimbabwe crisis. In the context of South Africa's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe, it has tended to completely obscure any meaningful analysis of the very real economic motivations behind South Africa's policy and the attendant politics that so effectively conceals such motivations (McKinley in Southall, 2006: 88).

The dominant view about South Africa's constructive engagement (See Graham, 2006) with Zimbabwe is that it is meant to avoid the collapse of a sister economy upon which South African export-oriented industry relies on (McKinley, 2004). The soft approach was also meant to safeguard against total collapse and avert a civil war (McKinley in Southall, 2006). South Africa also wanted to adhere to consensual regional/continental institutional practices embodied through SADC and AU and the "need for African interstate cooperation" (Obe, 2006: 194). However, such arguments have been criticized for overlooking the class analysis as an approach to explanations regarding South Africa's relationship with Zimbabwe. The fact that consensual continental and regional institutional practices are only applicable by South Africa when such

practices suit the relevant political or economic class interests, make their relevance questionable (McKinley in Southall, 2006).

South Africa's interests in Zimbabwe are class interests where South Africa's private businesses and corporations benefit from joint business ventures in that country ranging from electricity supply to oil and gas explorations through corporate companies like South African Coal Oil and Gas Company (Sasol). Zimbabwe depends on South Africa for its fuel supplies and on a number of parastatals such as ZICO, Telkom and Eskom. Graham (2006) states that "instead of the leadership in South Africa to use this vast economic leverage coercively against Zimbabwe by way of economic sanctions, Mbeki was adamant that he would not alter his 'quiet diplomacy' policy" (Graham, 2006: 123; See also Obe, 2006). The leadership in South Africa has, instead, used its political and financial resources for the creation of a black bourgeoisie through state sanctioned policies such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) that has benefited ANC aligned politicians and propped their status to black millionaires in Rands (See Freeman, 2005; Southall, 2006; McKinley, 2004). McKinley, (2004: 349) further notes:

> By providing political support and legitimacy to the (victorious) Mugabe regime, Mbeki's government was ensuring the longer term security and expansion of South Africa's (capitalist) economic 'investments' in Zimbabwe while simultaneously tying the future health of Mugabe's capitalist cronies to South African investment/patronage (McKinley, 2004: 359).

The beneficiaries of Mbeki's approach to Zimbabwe were various political leaders cum-private individuals. They enjoyed government backing in setting up private corporations with stakes in big government parastatals such as the aforementioned. Good examples are people like Tokyo Sexwale, Cyril Ramaphosa, Patrice Motsepe and Shabir Shaik. Mbeki was therefore determined to help Mugabe in order to insulate the region from a political and economic crisis and shield it from the associated "contamination" (McKinley in Southall, 2006:91; Graham, 2006).

Since Mbeki's approach was too soft according to the West, the idea of sanctions to tame Mugabe became apparent. Graham (2006) talks of 'smart sanctions,' common among the 'Troika' nations tasked to monitor Zimbabwe like travel bans and asset freeze, as measures that

South Africa ought to have taken as alternatives to the soft approach. He contends that the popular argument that a loud intervention may result in a greater destabilizing effect in Zimbabwe and SADC region was inaccurate. Ironically, the influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa due to hyperinflation, cholera and electoral violence was, in fact, a consequence of South Africa's failure to act or 'softly-softly' approach. The latter risked disillusioning Western liberals and conservatives who argued that black liberation solidarity between Mbeki and Mugabe stifled the quest for human rights and risked damaging South Africa's record as a "good citizen of the international community" (Obe, 2006: 194).

The quest for human rights and democracy are both regional and global policy issues and tensions may arise when global actors or the international community poke their nose into the affairs of a region composed of sovereign states regarding these sensitive issues. It even becomes more complicated when they use 'the hegemon' in the region (South Africa) to push such an agenda. Prys (2008) introduces a very interesting thesis about the idea of regional hegemony titled "*Developing Contextually Relevant Concept on Hegemony: The Case of South Africa Zimbabwe and Quiet Diplomacy."* This work, later published[12] as *"Regional Hegemony or Regional Bystander: South Africa's Zimbabwe's policy 2000-2005,"*perhaps best explains why South Africa is not acting as would be expected of a hegemon considering the conventional theory of hegemony. This is due to the fact that the world has seen a shift from "superpowers" and systemic bipolarity to a more unipolar global political-economy presenting new challenges in the conceptualization of hegemony. This is also due to the theoretical failure to incorporate the region into the concept of hegemony which has worked to ensure that countries considered 'regional hegemons' operate in a manner unexpected of them (Prys, 2009). Prys, (2008: 6) argues:

> While, for instance, the idea of 'regional hegemony' is frequently used to analyze or describe the roles and behavior of states such as South Africa or Brazil, the literature has largely failed to properly incorporate 'the region' into the concept of hegemony...this is

[12] See Prys, M. 2009. "Regional Hegemony or Regional Bystander: South Africa's Zimbabwe's policy 2000-2005." Politikon: *South African Journal of Political Studies*, 36:2, 193-218.

> among the key reasons that states categorized as regional hegemons often do not act according to what is generally expected of them: they do not provide public goods, such as order and stability, nor do they have an extraordinary impact on the behavior of other states in their region (Prys, 2008: 6).

South Africa is basically seen as a country that seeks to transform its idealistic and geographic positioning into real benefits by taking advantage of the region (Southern Africa). However, it has often been accused of failing to manage the situation in Zimbabwean as would be attributed to hegemons (Prys, 2009: 196). By definition, South Africa's approach to Zimbabwe fits within the understanding that regional hegemons reject external interference in their sphere of influence and, at the same time, rely on external actors to fulfill their regional and global policy objectives. Furthermore, the abstract definition of hegemony that emphasizes on its concrete self or in terms of an exsisting powerful and influential individual state is problematic. It excludes the idea of relations between states and consequences to other actors. "It has led to misdirect the expectations of what regional powers, in the developing world in general and South Africa in particular, can and want to achieve within their regions" (Prys, 2008: 7). South Africa's policy on Zimbabwe is surely hard to understand but it certainly corresponds to what would be expected of a regional hegemon going by Prys' (2008) conceptualisation. This sharply contrasts with the popular view, often represented by the media, that South Africa has been treating Zimbabwe with 'kid's gloves.'

In any case, it would seem, South Africa (the power of the region) is pushed into the hegemon position by external actors (notably United States and United Kingdom). Mbeki was referred to as the 'point man' on Zimbabwe by George Bush when he visited South Africa (Obe, 2006; See also Prys, 2009) while Mugabe called Blair and Bush born again colonialists (implicating them in the crises that Zimbabwe had become) (Phimister and Raftopolous, 2004). Freeman (2005: 147) argues that "Mbeki responded to Western pressure to do 'something' with assurance that processes are under way to bring about resolution of the crisis. At the same time, he made sure that his government was not prepared to go beyond a minimalist policy of constructive engagement and quiet diplomacy. Prys (2008) further argues that consent is very critical in the

conceptualization of regional hegemony, meaning that other countries must be willing to follow the leadership of the materially privileged state. The countries that follow must also accept their own weaknesses. They must also accept the practices and political values projected by the hegemon. This was hardly the case regarding the relationship between Zimbabwe and South Africa. In fact, Zimbabwe succeeded in mobilizing other African countries to contain South Africa through pan-Africanism and neoliberal solidarity discourses. Freeman, (2005: 150) talks of how "significant numbers of African leaders, intellectual elites, and grassroots opinion outside Zimbabwe strongly endorsed Mugabe's policies." Ayoob in Prys (2008:10) argues that "secondary states could decide to contain regional power with the help of outsiders." Mbeki was compelled to respond by closing ranks with other Southern African leaders in a regional protest against internal and international forces opposed to Mugabe's regime (Freeman, 2005). "The challenge for Mbeki's Government has been to walk the tightrope of keeping South Africa's presidential ambitions alive (by not coming out in opposition to Mugabe's regime) without totally sacrificing Western support" (Freeman, 2005:156). However, the fact that Zimbabwe accepted financial and other forms of support from South Africa and a similar political system (Government of National Unity) still qualified the latter as a hegemon, though more economically than politically (Prys, 2008; Freeman 2005). Freeman (2005: 159) argues that "South African negotiators pushed ZANU-PF and the MDC to form a government of national unity (not unlike the government of national unity, which had produced the first post-apartheid administration)."

1.1.3 The relationships and parallels between South Africa and Zimbabwe

Spence Obe (2006) observes that what is clear from the relationship between South Africa and Zimbabwe is that it is a special relationship. The relationship is based on "geographical contiguity, historical ties, economic interdependence, racial solidarity and shared political interests (Geldenhuys in Obe, 2006: 191). For example, Zimbabwe and South Africa share a border. Apart from sharing a border, the two countries have a similar political history of resistance against colonial and racist domination. They also share cultural and economic links (See Freeman, 2005). One aspect that the countries have in common is that of land dating back to

colonial times and white settler government. Land issues are highly sensitive and both countries are still burdened with questions of land redistribution and restitution. South Africa is experiencing the same difficulties that Zimbabwe experienced regarding land reforms based on the willing-seller willing-buyer principle. There have been consistent concerns in the political and economic circles in South Africa lately about democracy in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The major concern is that democracy in South Africa should not 'collapse' like in Zimbabwe. South African Weeklies, therefore, have an interest in what is happening in Zimbabwe[13]. Obe (2006: 192) points out key events that define the relationship between South Africa and Zimbabwe as follows:

- The failed attempts by the South African government in the early 1920s to persuade the white Rhodesian minority to accept incorporation as a fifth province in the Union of South Africa.

- South African support for the Smith regime following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965. South Africa provided military assistance against the liberation movements operating on Rhodesian soil.

- During the 1980s South Africa pursued a destabilization strategy against the newly established Mugabe regime designed to weaken the exiled African National Congress presence in Zimbabwe and to weaken the government's resolve and its legitimacy via attacks on the country's infrastructure and the manipulation of cross-border transport links and support for opposition factions in Zimbabwe.

- In the 1990s, after the initial euphoria generated by the establishment of the new South Africa in1994, relations between the two governments soured over a range of economic and security issues. There was growing estrangement between

[13] See Richardson, (2004) and a report in 2005 by the International Crisis Group (ICG) titled "*Blood and Soil: Land Politics and Conflict Prevention in Zimbabwe and South Africa."* This report has measures and recommendations that should be taken both in Zimbabwe and South Africa to avoid land conflict.

> Presidents Mandela and Mugabe, compounded by rivalry over leadership roles in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Obe (2006) argues that while this past relationship has given South Africa leverage, it has worked to constrain the relationship between the two countries. Obe (2006: 192) further argues that understanding the relationship between South Africa and Zimbabwe "requires some understanding of the country's aspirations in both continental and global terms; of its capabilities – economic, military and diplomatic and of its role as a putative regional hegemon." Within this context, South Africa can be described as an emerging power compared to India and Brazil (Obe, 2006).

1.1.3.1 Cultural links

The cultural links shared by Zimbabwe and South Africa arise out of the migration of the Ndebele ethnic group from present day KwaZulu Natal to South Western Zimbabwe in the Matabeleland provinces in the 19th century. The Ndebele language spoken in provinces in Zimbabwe is derived from the Zulu language in present day KwaZulu Natal[14]. In 1821 the Ndebele King Mzilikazi[15], a Nguni military commander under Tshaka king of the Zulu, came into conflict with Tshaka and then fled the Zulu domain, migrating with his followers first to near Basutoland (now Lesotho). Unable to conquer King Moshoeshoe and in the face of further defeat at the hands of the European settlers of the Transvaal (South African Republic), Mzilikazi moved Northward, invaded what is Southern Zimbabwe today and established the Matebele Kingdom. Mzilikazi subjugated the surrounding Shona or Mashona. The latter were the link between the then ZAPU and the ANC. Freeman (2005: 158). Argues that:

> During its liberation struggle, the ANC was much closer to the opposition Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) than to ZANU-PF; and the latter did little to hide its preference for the Pan Africanist Congress, a liberation movement/ political party in

[14] See Hammond-Tooke, (1980)
[15] See http://www.bulawayo1872.com/history/mzilikazi.htm Retrieved, 02 March 2009.

> South Africa that dwindled into obscurity after the end of apartheid. During the 1980's the ZANU-PF government did come to an accommodation with the ANC and made a major contribution to the overall anti-apartheid struggle (Freeman, 2005: 158).

The relationship between these parties, born out of the liberation struggle, was affective as well as ideological. Further, "comrades from the two organizations shared the same language and culture, trained together in the Soviet Union, fought together in the bush and lived together in Lusaka" (Gevisser, 2007:433).

1.1.3.2 Economic links

The South African and Zimbabwean economies have a long history of interconnection. South African companies including multinational companies operating in South Africa have business interests (especially in the mining industry) in Zimbabwe and are keen to see a speedy resolution to the socio-economic and political situation in that country. According to ICG (2005: 22) "the Zimbabwe crisis cost the SADC region R17 billion between 2000 and 2003." This is as a result of the business interests shared between Zimbabwean companies and South African ones. Given such economic links, the South African Weeklies are bound to be keen on the economic and political issues unfolding in Zimbabwe. Discourse on the economic and business issues in South Africa currently point to an adverse effect on South Africa, particularly, regarding foreign investments. The crisis in Zimbabwe affected South African interests. Chapter eight discusses how the selected South African Weeklies expressed fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa.

1.1.3.3 Media links

There is a shared history of the press in both countries. The Argus Company, currently known as the Independent Newspapers Limited, used to own newspapers in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia for instance. In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Newspapers Limited (Zimpapers) formerly called the Rhodesian Printing & Publishing Company was controlled by the South African-owned Argus Media Group in the 1980s[16]. Zimpapers publishes two dailies, The *Herald* in Harare and *The Chronicle* in Bulawayo. Waldahl (2001:32) notes that "Zimpapers was still controlled by the South African-owned Argus Media Group and that was of course unacceptable" therefore the government bought 45 percent of shares from it with monetary gift from the government of Nigeria. A key newspaper in South Africa *The Mail & Guardian* is owned by a Zimbabwean entrepreneur Trevor Ncube. Furthermore, some journalists who worked in the Zimbabwe media have migrated to South Africa and are now working in the South African media. The contexts that surround media operations in the two countries are radically different.

In South Africa, although it took extensive political lobbying, the media made a complete departure from the apartheid legacy[17]. Kupe in Barrat and Berger (2007: 80) argues that "constitutional reforms which follow the South African practice are necessary and are at the center of some of the reforms wanted by media advocacy organizations." He emphasizes the importance of scrutinizing colonial structures in African countries that the media has inherited arguing that:

> In the case of Zimbabwe, the government still holds large sections of what should be public media and it is the only country in Africa where there is no private or community

[16] See Waldahl, (2001). *Politics and Persuasion: Media Coverage of Zimbabwe's 2000 Election*. Harare: Weaver Press

[17] See Kupe in Berger, (2007). *50 Years of Journalism: African Media Since Ghana Independence*. Johannesburg: The African Editors Forum, Highway Africa and Media Foundation for West Africa for detailed discussion of how the Southern African media has transformed.
See also (Ngugi 1995; Mbennah, Hooyberg and Mersham 1998; Nyamnjoh 2005). They critically discuss the media landscape in Africa and interrogate questions of media ownership versus diversity in the continent since Ghana's independence.

> owned commercial broadcasting stations. These countries have also maintained some of the colonial repressive laws that they inherited from colonial governments. Their constitution often guarantees freedom of expression and do not guarantee freedom of the media (Kupe in Barrat and Berger, 2005:79).

In Zimbabwe, early years of political transition into liberalization and democracy reported significant progress. However, the recent political dictatorship and economic failure indicate a major setback. The media in Zimbabwe has thus shown elements of continuity from a colonial culture of patronage where it serves the interest of the elite. Although under the new deal (GPA) the government has relaxed media laws allowing a degree of press freedom, it still controls large sections of the media. The government in Zimbabwe has on many occasions used laws to suppress independent media when it supports a credible opposition party which threatens its hold on power.

Enoh-Eben (2008) in his report on the "*Ethical Challenges in Media Coverage of the Zimbabwe Crisis"* indicates the challenges the media face in reporting the 'Zimbabwean crisis.' The main contention is that the media has often been polarised regarding the situation. This is not surprising. Although the media is always required to be objective when reporting, it is very difficult to imagine how objectivity can stem out of a state controlled media. Therefore, state media denied the extent of the crisis and, of course, leaned towards ZANU-PF's ideological position. Privately owned media premised their coverage on assumptions that there were indeed gross violations of human rights, failed land resettlement policies, hyperinflation, a deteriorating economy, poor governance and corruption. To a large extent, such observations were true, however, they were misrepresented. Ndlela (2005:76) cites similar concerns of polarization "as a result of the complexity of the crisis and the intertwining of problematic issues such as democracy, free and fair elections, human rights and property rights which implies that objective coverage becomes difficult." Polarisation regarding discourses of the crisis in Zimbabwe were issues that were not just limited to media coverage, they equally stemmed from other quarters of the society such as academia, politics, economics and the civil society.

Polarised discourses about the crisis in Zimbabwe introduced questions of reliability regarding narratives that sought to explain the crisis since neither the independent media nor the state owned media could be relied upon as an objective source of information. While the independent media strived to be objective, fair and credible in exposing human rights abuses under difficult circumstances, the sources they relied upon were questionable. In most cases, the sources utilised were anonymous. Ndlela (2005:79) argued that "the independent media has a valid excuse that given the repressive legal framework and violence... protection of sources is indeed a basic principle of journalism, but the danger of relying too much on anonymous sources should be pointed out." The state owned media, on the other hand, was simply a mouthpiece of the government. Having established that the press was generally polarised regarding the crisis in Zimbabwe and that state media in that country was naturally biased against any opposition, it was imperative to look at the kind of discourses emerging from the selected South African Weeklies given that they are privately owned and are not Zimbabwean. This is well covered in the next sub-section.

1.1.4 The nature of the South African press

As already indicated, the South African press is privately owned and, as such, not subject to direct government editorial control. It was not likely to represent Zimbabwe in ways that were directly influenced by the South African government. However, the Weeklies are commercial and profit driven, a reality that influenced representation. In addition, the fact that high quality newspapers in South Africa target a middle class readership and have an urban circulation impacted on reporting. Covering Zimbabwe from South Africa was challenging since the studied Weeklies do not have bureaus in Zimbabwe which means their reporting did not rely on direct experiences but on independent journalists, correspondents and news agencies. Reliance on news agencies and independent journalists was problematic when it came to capturing the contextual imperatives of events unfolding in Zimbabwe since time pressure encouraged superficial coverage of complex issues in that country. Ndlela (2005: 3) argues that:

> The international flow of information has been dominated by a handful of Western global media monopolies whose financial and technological wealth has created a situation

> whereby Africans and non-Africans learn about African realities through the filtered lens of news agencies based outside Africa is of big concern. News Agencies like Reuters, Agence France Presse (AFP) and others control 93 percent of the news flows into Africa (Ndlela 2005: 3).

Ndlela (2005:4) further argues that even though there are various African media outlets due to internet technology, the Western media is always reluctant to source stories from such outlets and would rather rely on secondary sources than directly from the media in Africa. "Majority still receive edited versions through their national newspapers. The edited versions do not reflect the full story [regarding Zimbabwe] due to selection processes." More often than not, news from Africa is explained through Western news agencies and international correspondents. This means that news about Africa is usually heavily biased and tends to excessively rely on stereotypes about the continent. One would expect the South African media to cover events in Zimbabwe slightly differently given that it is a media situated in Africa. Even though there could be remote possibilities of the South African media exercising a more responsible coverage of Africa, such a possibility was mitigated by parachute journalism or the idea of relying on foreign journalists with no deep contextual knowledge of the Zimbabwean political-economy or Africa in general. So the question is: what is it that the South African media focused on when representing Zimbabwe that was distinct from how the Western media would usually cover events in Africa? Did the South African Weeklies give issues in Zimbabwe special treatment unlike issues unfolding elsewhere in the continent? These are some of the salient issues that this study dealt with.

1.1.5 Coverage of Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political situation as a particular way of representating the situation.

It is important to distinguish the socio-economic situation unfolding in Zimbabwe from their media representation since they are not the same thing. This study took the approach that media coverage is a form of representation of reality and not a mirror reflection of reality[18]. It was important to critically analyze factors that influenced the ways in which South African Weeklies represented the Zimbabwean crisis. Representation involves the selection and construction of meaning through language in news[19]. Representation was worthy of study because it is a way of understanding or a particular way of interpreting reality. The ways in which the Zimbabwean situation was represented by the South African Weeklies was therefore an important theoretical concern. This is due to the fact that, more often than not, such representations amounted to distortions and, therefore, misrepresentation. Theories of media representation were used to interrogate the meaning emerging out of the ways in which the situation was represented. The manner in which the South African Weeklies represented the situation was foregrounded as a problem given that conclusions suggested that, in many instances, the Weeklies actually covered events in Zimbabwe superficially. The study also established that most Zimbabweans and South Africans were contented that the problematic situation in Zimbabwe, somehow, merited some degree of negative coverage. The study chose to be careful about the objects of analysis in order to employ objectivity by beginning from the premise that representation is in itself theoretically problematic because it necessarily alters the original. In other words, it potentially misrepresents (Mcqueen, 1998; Grossberg, Lawrence et al, 2006; Hall, 1997).

[18] Representation is attempts by media to partially explain aspects of intricate social reality and can therefore never be a mirror reflection of reality. See Ferguson, R. (1998). *"Reflection and Representation"* in Ferguson, R. "*Representing Race, Ideology, Identity and the Media."* London: Arnold; Sources are used in signifying practices by the media to qualify and limit certain discourses and to frame stories. See also Manning, P. (2001). "*News and News Sources – A Critical Introduction."* London: Sage.

[19] Representation does not operate in a vacuum, they emanate from a cultural environment in which the media is located thereby influencing its operation through the language used (See Mcqueen, D. 1998:139; Grosberg, L., Wartella, E., and Witney, D. 2006. *Media Making: Mass Media in Popular Culture*; Hall, S. 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying.* London: Sage and Open University).

1.2 Research questions and themes

Questions related to how the South African Weeklies represented the socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe (the crisis) were explored through counting certain thematic dimensions of texts. The questions were three namely:

1. In what ways did the South African Weeklies represent the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation?
2. What factors could account for the ways in which the Weeklies represented the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation?
3. What meanings emerged out of the ways in which the Weeklies represented the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation?

A theory-driven approach was used to derive the themes/dimensions from the literature review. The dimensions were related to politics, economics and social upheavals. This was done in order to find out the pattern of recurrence of the dimensions and their implications in the broader macro and micro level contexts that sanctioned news production. The theory-driven approach guided the process of answering questions related to how the selected South African Weeklies represented the situation and the factors that could account for such representations in order to unpack their meanings. Like it has already been pointed out, the latter suggested that such representations were superficial, sensational and amounted to misrepresentation.

1.3 Structure

The thesis is thematically structured. While the context and theoretical frameworks chapters historically explore the socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe and the nature of media representation, the methodology and research findings chapters use a triangulated technique to quantitatively and qualitatively explain the meaning of how the socio-economic and political events were represented. Chapter one is the introduction chapter. It discusses the aims and motivations of the study and touches on the research questions that the study was seeking to address. It argues that the representation of the situation by the three South African Weeklies show how political instability in Zimbabwe, characterized through election violence, has coincided with serious socio-economic problems. The representation suggests that land invasions that were followed by food shortages led to an economic downturn. It links electoral politics to other social upheavals like operation *Murambatsvina,* cholera and influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa. These events hugely attracted the South African Weeklies' attention and were given extensive coverage. However, the manner in which the Weeklies represented the events is a theoretical concern that this study was keen on exploring.

The second chapter contextualizes the study. It discusses the political, economic and social situation in Zimbabwe, giving a scholarly account of the meanings of election politics, economic collapse, and social upheavals respectively. The problematic polarization among scholars is looked at critically with the aim of recognizing their school of thought and the idea of "source politics." The polarization has been mainly between Scholars wishing to address the Zimbabwean national question rooted in the idea of redistributive justice commonly known as 'leftists' and those who were generally concerned with questions regarding liberal ideas of human rights and democracy or 'the right.' The 'left' was heavily influenced by Sino-Soviet ideologies, since China and Soviet Union supported ZANU and ZAPU respectively, while the right was generally influenced by Western Europe and North America (Raftopoulos, 2006). Raftopoulos (2006: 205) gives a brief historical overview of the context in which the concept of the 'left' emerged in Zimbabwean politics and its constituent elements and, later, its influence in

the SADC region. He argues that:

> The left has emerged through two major historical processes. The first relates to the period of the liberation struggle. Several intellectuals who were themselves part of the liberation struggle, developed leftist affiliations in the course of the struggle, while others who were in universities in sites of exile came into contact with various forms of leftist thought. The liberation movements were themselves occasionally arenas for fierce ideological battles …in the mid 70's. Attempts by younger militants to inject a more formal Marxist content into the ideology of the liberation movement was defeated by authoritarian militarism of old guard nationalists…nationalism as an ideology was more far reaching in its influence in the course of the struggle and the post-colonial state (Raftopoulos, 2006: 205).

Many intellectuals emerging during this period are responsible for the development of key structures of the post-colonial state in Zimbabwe (Raftopoulos, 2006). These intellectuals, affiliated to the 'legacy' of the liberation struggle, were committed to the development of a statist structure of development and a strong anti-imperialist stance. The second major source of the leftist, though, was a different story. It was born out of the struggle of the civil society against the post-colonial state. This was characterized by a growing critique of the state's authoritarian tendencies, with a critical attention paid to the legacy of the liberation struggle. Emphasis was given to the idea of human rights and civil rights with cases such as those of *Gukurahundi*[20] taking the lead in criticisms of the state giving rise to a plethora of NGOs and later leading to the emergence of the opposition (MDC). The chapter gives a contextual analysis of the situation and historical trajectories of events unfolding in Zimbabwe with a brief comparison to South Africa. The third chapter discusses the theoretical framework used. Critical political-economy theories of the media, theories of news production and cultural studies are used to show how several micro and macro level factors influenced how the South African Weeklies represented the Zimbabwean situation from 2000-2008.

[20] *Gukurahundi* refers to state terror against civilians in Zimbabwe carried out in Matableleland, commonly known as the Matabeleland massacres discussed in the background chapter (See Raftopoulos &Savage, 2004)).

The fourth chapter discusses the methodological approach used. Triangulation is used as a technique that employed more than one method. Quantitative and qualitative content analysis are used to identify and analyze the frequency of occurrence of specific dimensions of texts related to selected themes (politics, economics and social upheavals) to unpack their meaning. Although studies in media representation are qualitative by nature, it was useful to begin with a quantitative approach to identify and count the frequency of occurrence of specific textual dimensions in order to qualitatively interpret them. This involved the utilization of semiotics and ideological analysis. While the fifth chapter, that is, the counting content chapter, presents the weekly editions and stories that were analyzed in the study, the sixth chapter textually analyzes the selected content in those editions.

The seventh, eighth and ninth chapters analyze the representation of the selected themes respectively and how such representations amounted to misrepresentation. Under politics, elections as a dimension or identified unit are discussed. Under economics, illegal land invasions, food shortages and high inflation as dimensions or units are discussed. Under social upheaval, operation *Murambatsvina,* influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa and cholera as dimensions or units is discussed. The chapters argue that the Weeklies used strategies of personalization, simplification, marginalization and ethnicization to represent the situation in Zimbabwe (Willems, 2005). However, the Zimbabwean government and the South African government then under Mbeki used such kinds of representations to re-appropriate and mask the covert role of ZANU-PF in creating the problematic situation.

Most of the chapters were presented in various conferences. The sixth chapter, for example, was presented at the "Second Annual Es'kia Mphahlele First Postgraduate Colloquium and Arts Forum," 2nd to 3rd September 2010 at the University of Witwatersrand. It has also been published by the African Conflict and Peace-building Review (ACPR) Vol. 1. No 1, Indiana University Press. The seventh chapter was presented at "The Media and Elections in Africa Conference" 7th to 8th October 2010 at the Wits Institute of Social and Economic Research (WISER), University of Witwatersrand, "The 3rd Post-graduate Cross Faculty Symposium" 25th to 29th October 2010

at the University of Witwatersrand and "The 8th Biennial Conference in Dispute Resolution," October 22nd-23rd 2010 at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, United States. The eighth Chapter was presented at "The Africa Media and Democracy Conference" in Ghana 18th to 20th August 2010. It has also been published as a conference proceeding by the McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies, University of Massachusetts website. The findings of the entire thesis were presented at the Institute of Advancement of Social Science (IASS) special workshop on the 23rd to 24th of July 2012 in Boston University USA and are to appear in the IASS forthcoming journal, *Explorations.*

The last chapter is the conclusion. The chapter argues that the representation of the Zimbabwean situation by the three South African Weeklies have been superficial, sensational and amounted to misrepresentation. Often, events in that country were covered in a simplistic and stereotypical manner – a Western trend and a problematic ontological and epistemological dilemma in critical media research. It was also concluded that institutional mechanisms and conventional work practices employed by journalists are defined by Western ideologies of journalism such as the criteria used for selecting news that encouraged sensationalism. The extensive reliance on official and readily available sources seemed to frame stories that 'speak truth to power' and went against the grain of journalistic objectivity. Events in Zimbabwe were reported using official sources due to institutional pressures of time and deadlines coupled with the lack of correspondents on the ground. Such journalistic pressures invited a situation where very complex events unfolding in Zimbabwe were presented in a very simplistic and deterministic manner –a manner likely to appeal to the South African market dominated by white readers and emerging black bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, without celebrating the role that the Weeklies played, they created a public sphere that acted as a seed-bed for the construction of discourses of change in Zimbabwe.

Chapter two

Contextualizing the study

2.0. Introduction

This chapter begins with a historical exploration of the situation in Zimbabwe through discussing the elections, economic downturn and social upheavals as analytical categories identified in this study. These analytical categories were chosen because the study used a theory driven approach. The chapter later advances the discussion to the hidden dimensions of the socio-economic and political situation in that country. The political, social and economic events that unfolded in Zimbabwe in the years 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008 are very crucial in defining the prevailing circumstances that are commonly referred to as the Zimbabwean crisis. Under political issues, the major events were the cited flawed elections in 2000, 2002, 2005, and 2008. Under social issues, the major events were operation *Murambatsvina* or restore order, cholera and influx of Zimbabweans into neighboring countries, especially South Africa, commonly referred to as 'border Jumping' or 'Human Tsunami'(See Hammer, McGregor & Landau, 2010). Lastly, under economic issues, the major event was 'economic collapse' which includes reports on illegal land invasions and or food shortages. These events are critically discussed in this chapter because they make a significant contribution to the analytic discussions in the findings chapter.

2.1 Historical overview

It is not quite clear when the situation in Zimbabwe began deteriorating. Some scholars like Zunga (2003) are convinced that it was somewhere in the 1980's. Zunga (2003: 7) argues that "Zimbabwe began to deteriorate after April the 18th 1980 when Zimbabwe attained independence." He is adamant that Zimbabwe deteriorated due to political dictatorship of Robert Mugabe. However, it is not sufficient to reduce the complex situation in Zimbabwe to personalities. Such reductionism limits the opportunity to look at various factors that also played a key role in the crisis that Zimbabwe has become. Richardson (2004) questions why Zimbabwe is lagging behind in Africa in his thesis on "*The Collapse of Zimbabwe*." He introduces the idea of property rights, with a special emphasis on land and how land rights were violated in Zimbabwe. However, he does not thoroughly explore the genesis of such violations in that country. The interesting idea emerging out of Richardson's argument is that violation of property rights suddenly becomes an issue only when the 'rights' of white Zimbabwean farmers are in danger. Richardson (2004) thus omits the discourse of colonial invasion and how black Zimbabweans suffered under the hands of Ian Smith's regime through evictions and marginalisation from their productive land. On such a note, he cannot escape accusations of employing selective memory and history. Richardson (2004: 16-17) argues that:

> [...] an inclusive property rights system … whereby every single property be it land, house, machinery, is listed in a single legal document…creates security for individual owners and increases the motivation to invest with the objective of gaining some returns. In such a system, the government obtains an organised way of collecting tax and even channelling input from individuals to securities such as government treasuries and bonds that can allow for borrowing of capital to reinvest into the economy for sustainable growth (Richardson, 2004:16-17).

The above suggestion is highly welcome but its timing is suspect. It seems to have been introduced only when property rights of the white minority in Zimbabwe were threatened. White minority rule in Zimbabwe (Ian Smith's regime) is equally responsible for the anarchy

experienced in that country because it set precedence for the marginalisation and domination of the poor by those in power. Moore (2001: 913) adds that the fact that settlers took land from Africans was a form of primitive accumulation that undermined their property rights, "Africans were removed from productive land and restricted to poorer reserves." In fact, Richardson (2004: 17) rightly notes that "reforms that only guarantee property rights to privileged elite, while excluding a great majority of citizens, are retrogressive." However, his theoretical framework of questioning immorality in Zimbabwe leaves a lot to be desired. It appears as if he refuses to go beyond a certain historical moment (pre-Lancaster House agreement) when the white minority leadership of Ian Smith perpetrated injustices that he is criticising the black majority government of Robert Mugabe for. However, the argument here does not intend to serve the purpose of sanitising the actions of 'Bob's' corrupt regime. Actions by the latter regime must be carefully highlighted if Zimbabwe is to progress beyond the socio-economic and political difficulties it is currently faced with. Comparing immorality in both regimes does not help the situation and does not equally mean that this thesis wants to overlook the salience of selective memory regarding Zimbabwe's history. It is through past mistakes that societies learn to be more cautious about where they would want to see themselves in the future and selective history plays a refreshing role in that regard. The only problem is that once selective history is employed, it hides very contentious issues within competing discourses. Richardson's (2004) arguments, for example, remind us of a very serious and emotive issue in Zimbabwe that requires urgent attention – the idea of colonial redistributive justice by default. Richardson (2004: 17) argues

> The Zimbabwean government in the name of revolution has taken the 4,000 most productive agricultural farms away from their owners. A system of accumulation that reserves its opportunities and advantages to only a few people is bound to fail over time. Land taken from 'legitimate owners' was not, in many instances, given to the poorest but rather to those who showed unconditional support for the regime, and to those who had won the personal favour of the government (Richardson 2004:17).

It is unfortunate that lands belonging to White minority farmers were being taken 'illegitimately.' However, that may depend on which side of the fence one sits regarding the historical injustices experienced in Zimbabwe. The sensible argument in such a scenario is that

questions of legitimacy and land ownership rights in Zimbabwe are contestable and should be approached with flexibility. Land was acquired illegally by British settlers through military conquest. Herbst, (1990: 37) presents an interesting thesis titled: *Conflict over Land: White Farmers and the Black Government* that argues that:

> Land was the central issue during liberation struggle for Zimbabwe and continues to be the most important domestic issue in the post-independence period. The appropriation of African land by European settlers guaranteed White economic dominance and Black poverty during the colonial period, and the inequitable distribution of land in Zimbabwe today is the most dramatic symbol of the enduring structures of an unequal society (Herbst, 1990: 37).

Indigenous blacks were evicted and resettled in poor un-productive land as squatters. In the demarcated land, they acted as cheap source of labour for white large scale farmers. In a moral society, it is immoral for a few individuals, irrespective of race, to grab large chunks of land and leave almost nothing to the majority. The fact that they used legislation to acquire title deeds does not moralise their actions. Legislation can favour partisan interests in any society and is sometimes drafted within the narrow consensus of the same immoral regimes. In the case of Zimbabwe, the legislative, 'legal', resettlement of white large scale farmers favoured the white minority and were drafted by individuals driven by imperialist motives. Equally, the government of Robert Mugabe, although legitimate, used legislation that favoured only a few loyalists in land allocations and can also not escape the same accusations. The poor Zimbabweans continued to be excluded leading to the historic exodus of millions of them who cross borders into neighbouring countries like South Africa,[21]Botswana and Namibia. Therefore, Richardson's (2004) thesis helps in confronting important issues that should not be taken for granted if Zimbabwe is to recover and restore confidence in its citizens. The Zimbabwean government has the moral obligation to provide equal opportunities for citizens and avoid confrontational politics of anarchy. Herbst (2004: 37) notes that:

[21] Thousands of Zimbabweans cross the border into South Africa every day in search for a better life. See Redden J. (Oct 9 2007). *Determined Zimbabweans Flow Into South Africa***.** UNCR news. Retrieved 06 February 2008 at http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/470b8baf4.html

> The evolution of government's efforts to address the land question is of great importance because of the peasants' expectation that their long held grievances will be addressed as the new regime redistribute property formerly held by White farmers. In deed there was probably no more controversial question at independence than how the new regime will be able to resist the influence of white farmers and implement the promises concerning land that it had made during the liberation struggle (Herbst, 2004: 37).

Part of the problem is a result of the fact that land redistribution was a great challenge for the black majority rule in Zimbabwe and it was seen as necessary to "neutralise a looming crisis of expectation on the part of a land hungry population" (Chaumba, Scoones & Wolmer, 2003:536). The government was under pressure and people were dissatisfied with the factt that the promise of the liberation struggle was not forthcoming leading to the formation of militia groups. The latter undermined the spirit of democracy. Zunga (2003: 7) argues that "Zimbabwe's democracy was undermined with the creation of the "third force" who were armed, resourced and directed to inflict crude justice, by kidnapping, killing, and harassment of civilians." Such events affected Zimbabweans, who opted to migrate to other countries, and greatly affected the economy. Raftopoulos in Harold-Berry (2004: 1) adds that:

> [...] all authoritarian regimes face limitation that imposes constraints on the politics of repression. These limitations take various forms: the economic crisis that such regimes may not have caused but certainly accelerate, lead to the erosion of national legitimacy as a result of perceived betrayal of a vision of renewal, the emergence of an alternative political movement like the MDC in Zimbabwe and the growth of criticisms of the international community (Raftopoulos in Harold-Berry, 2004: 1).

Raftopoulos in Harold-Berry (2004) is hereby seen to address the historical issues that Richardson (2004) overlooked – colonial inheritance. He mentions the fact that the new government under-estimated the idea of economic leadership considering that they inherited challenges from the previous regime and lacked the capacity in terms of educated Zimbabweans who would take over the engine of that country. The promise of liberation was dented by economic challenges that led to poverty and hopelessness among the very people who desired liberation (the war veterans). This climate of suspicion and pressure is what characterised much

of the post-independence Zimbabwe. Much of the challenge centered on the idea of land redistribution which the South African Weeklies overlooked. Raftopoulos in Harold-Berry (2004:4) argues:

> Land was purchased by the state for redistribution following willing-buyer willing-seller procedures. This framework was agreed on in the Lancaster House Conference. The private sector led the identification and supply of land available for resettlement, while central government was a reactive buyer choosing land on offer. The government provided land to beneficiaries selected mainly by its district officials under the direct supervision of the central government officials (Raftopoulos in Harold- Berry, 2004:4).

The willing-buyer willing-seller principle of land redistribution has been percieved to have virtually failed (See Goebel, 2005). Moyo (2004: 7) for instance observes how " ... the 1980 witnessed low-intensity land acquisition, or squatting carried out by various communities, sometimes unofficially supported by party officials." One can argue that such attitudes regarding land policy and reforms might have set precedence for land invasion later in Zimbabwe. Chaumba, Scoones & Wolmer (2003:539) echo Moyo's observation. They argue that, much later, in the run up to the 2000 elections, land invasions, which were not new to Zimbabwe since they were visible through squatting, took a new dimension. They became political with the objective that the protests would gain national attention. "It was this new political setting, yet, significantly, contextualised by a long history of a particular style of a technocratic intervention that set the scene for major land invasions in 2000, and with these, the time of *Jambaja* [intensive invasions]." Moyo (2004) states that even though the government made concerted efforts in the 80's to improve the standards of living of Zimbabweans through certain measures like those of protecting workers, Africanising the state and creating a national army, it retained the 'command' element of the colonial state using the latter. Moyo (2004: 7) shows how:

> There was a strong element of 'command' reflecting the continuing influence of the often militarist politics of the liberation movement. Such politics emerged in the context of the struggle against a colonial regime, and embedded repressive politics offering few opportunities for democratic participation. Moreover, this emphasis on the transfer of state power from the old to the new was affected with little concern for the civil rights of

> the individuals – a common feature of post-colonial states. This style of management soon became apparent in many spheres of Zimbabwean politics (Moyo, 2004:7).

The many reasons that could account for the situation in Zimbabwe, especially the economic situation, make it more useful to be cautious about arguments that come to the fore when trying to make sense of the situation. While Richardson (2004) points out interesting factors, his arguments are watered down by the time frame in which he chooses to sanction reasoning regarding the situation in Zimbabwe well captured by Raftopoulos in Harold-Berry (2004). Moyo (2004), on the other hand, extends the argument by shedding light into the nature of prevailing circumstances in that country from the pre-colonial struggle to the postcolonial adventure of primitive accumulation, nation-state formation and democratisation in Zimbabwe. While the approaches advanced by these scholars can all be merited for their usefulness, the best ones would be those that provide a thoughtful insight into the Zimbabwean crises with the aim of reflective criticism in order to advance the understanding of the nature of the problems faced. This should be opposed to those that prescribe a set of possibilities regarding the responsible events and personalities in that country that might be the problem. This thesis seems to lean to the former.

2.2. Mugabe, Mbeki and anti-imperialism

Mbeki inherited power from Nelson Mandela calling for a new order, an African renaissance. This changed Mandela's pledge that human rights would be the light guiding South Africa's foreign affairs (Freeman, 2005). For Mbeki, Africans needed to rebel against the tyrants and dictators "who seek to corrupt African societies and steal the wealth that belongs to the people" (*Zimbabwe Independent* in Freeman, 2005: 157). This is one episode that demonstrates the media battles fought by Mbeki on behalf of Zimbabwe regarding 'quiet diplomacy.' The reasons why Mbeki employed a soft approach on Zimbabwe and was determined to fight for the country despite the public discontent have already been discussed (Gevisser, 2007; Bond & Manyanya, 2002; Prys, 2008; Prys, 2009; Obe, 2006; Sharpell, 2006; Graham, 2006; Southall, 2006). However, Gevisser's (2007*) "Dream Differed: Thabo Mbeki"* gives an excellent perspective that is equally worth exploring in this section. He argues:

> While Mbeki would frequently acknowledge the problems in the country – and would even express extreme private frustrations with Mugabe – he would shy away from taking any direct action against the Zimbabwean President, favouring a policy of 'quiet diplomacy' over international sanctions and public censure (Gevisser, 2007: 432).

Mbeki's insistence on 'quiet diplomacy' was based on the conviction that the solution to the problems faced in Zimbabwe could not be reached unless the people and leadership of Zimbabwe agree. Mbeki drew examples from the US foreign policy failure in Iraq. However, he had practical and logical reasons behind his strategy, the dominant reason being that he did not wish to precipitate a civil war and a flood of refugees across the South African border – an argument that Obe (2006) rejected earlier. Mbeki was also sceptical about the "skittish" opposition leadership and the fact that Mugabe still commanded much allegiance on the African continent (See McKinley, 2004). "He believed that criticisms from South Africa would only quicken Mugabe's descent into dangerous self-delusion" (Gevisser, 2007: 432).

Broadly speaking, the relationship between Mbeki and Mugabe is a complex one. It is characterised by a similar historical struggle against imperialism, the dilemma of upholding

black liberation ideology and the burden of maintaining and sustaining a Western democratic system championed by capitalism and market liberalism (See Graham, 2006). Therefore, the reasons why Mbeki was 'soft' on Zimbabwe are more historical, but it doesn't stop there. Zimbabwe, under Mugabe, assisted the ANC with the struggle for liberation in South Africa (Gevisser, 2007). Mbeki secured a deal with Mugabe that is described by Gevisser, (2007: 436) as:

> …the most extensive and promising one that the ANC has ever been offered by an African country. *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK)[22] would be allowed to move weapons and cadres through the country and would be issued with Zimbabwean identity documents and would be actively assisted by the Zimbabwean military; an office would be opened and the ANC above-ground diplomatic work will mask its secret military operation (Gevisser, 2007: 436).

However, it is important to note that the deal between the two leaders did not last long due to the fact that Mbeki was caught up in the traditional crossfire between ZAPU and ZANU. Therefore, the existing closeness between Mugabe and Mbeki is really not because of ANC's history of pro-ZANU partnership since the deal he secured with Mugabe had overcome that. Gevisser (2007:439) argues that his latter-day appeasement with Mugabe is out of the recognition of the role that both of them played in making a bad relationship a good one. "Mugabe had gone out of his way to assist a movement which had once labelled him an imperialist's stooge and the ANC had let him down by squandering this opportunity. Mbeki would not let him down again." Phimister & Raftopoulous (2004) well capture the complexity of the relationship between Mbeki and Mugabe in their work titled "*Mugabe, Mbeki and the Politics of Anti-imperialism*."

So far, the way in which the world seeks to understand the complicated situation in Zimbabwe is slowly unfolding in this thesis. Various schools of thought are emerging on the reasons for the situation and the way forward for democracy. The argument is that there is a clear disjuncture between the Western discourse and the African discourse on the same object of observation – human rights and democracy. However, there is a broad consensus on what the latter entails, at

[22] MK was the ANC military wing (see Gevisser, M.2007. *The Dream Deferred*: Thabo Mbeki. Johannesburg, Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers. pp 431-447).

least for Mbeki, if not Mugabe. Although this thesis has pointed out the dangers of reducing argument about the situation in Zimbabwe into personality rhetoric, it is useful to recognise the leadership roles of Mbeki and Mugabe and the consequences of their ideological positions in either complicating or addressing the issues affecting both their countries and the African continent. The reason why African leaders are emphatic about neoimperialism is because of the dilemma African countries face in the context of global nationalism. These leaders argue from a perspective that recognizes the clash of local and global class interest in post-colonial African states as they seek integration into the global political-economy. The thesis argues that globalisation has presented a shift from traditional primitive accumulation to sophisticated individual property rights leading to conflict and a clash of ideologies presenting difficulties in achieving nationalism (nation-state formation) and inclusive democracy in Africa (See Moore, 2001c). This has awoken the spirit of pan-Africanism, liberation solidarity and neo-imperialism discourses in some African countries championed through leaders such as Mugabe and Mbeki (African Renaissance) (See, 2009a). Key critical institutions of globalization and liberalization, IMF and World Bank have been criticized for the economic crises in Africa. Can African countries move beyond the modified versions of dependency theory to modernize? Are there alternative African development paradigms? Moore (2001b: 911) argues:

> We are led to believe that in the globalised era, political democratization and economic liberalization work together. 'Good governance' and 'democracy' programs bloom all over Africa. They promise the liberal democratic verities of freedom and human rights along with their material prerequisites. However, structural adjustment policies denies the means for the latter…the dictates of neoliberal economic policies in societies already structured by scarcities means that democracy's promises turn out to be lies (Moore, 2001b: 911).

While it is true that issues of imperialism have been emotive, it would be naive for Mugabe and Mbeki to utilise the neo-imperialism score-card in advancing their interests any time their record regarding human rights and democracy is questioned. Of course, this thesis does not celebrate the Western version of democracy and human rights since they do not emerge from a clean slate. More often, its character is easily established by what it is not rather than what it is making many

leaders in developing countries in Africa view it with suspicion. Democracy has been accused of some weaknesses by critiques, one of which is that it creates room for corruption and double standards. The strongest critiques being African leaders like Mugabe. Some of the latter's criticisms are well captured by Phimister & Raftopolous, (2004: 388) below:

> Mugabe condemned the war-like disposition … of the new imperialism. The United States, awakened to the implications of being the sole superpower, joined by Britain as a born-again colonialist, have turned themselves into fierce hunting bulldogs raring to go, as they sniff for more blood… Third World blood…Britain was attempting to undermine the sovereignty of Zimbabwe by introducing neo-colonialist rule…double standards, working within the law in the West, while employing force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary for the rest (Phimister & Raftopolous, 2004: 388).

At the core of such criticisms lie the antagonism of the power relations between the legitimacy of the West in interfering with sovereignty of independent African states (neo-imperialism) and question of morality regarding democratic values as exported elsewhere by the West. Phimister and Raftopolous (2004: 387) argue:

> African leaders support President Mugabe and ZANU-PF with profound understanding of colonial and imperial history. It was the British who invaded Africa, butchered those who resisted, [and] chained and shipped blacks for slavery […]. Today they are in Iraq murdering for oil. Genocide and pillage are core values that sustain British and American societies. Africans wanted to know how such a past could be squared with new found Western democracy, good governance, respect for the rule of law and upholding of human rights (Phimister and Raftopolous, 2004: 387).

Phimister and Raftopoulos (2004: 386), however, seemed to give credence to the view that the West had the moral authority of exporting stability and liberty in failed states rather than the idea that African sovereignty had to be jealously defended by all means. They indicated how liberal imperialism was seen as necessary in seeking to bring order to the chaotic world of 'failed states' where the well governed would export 'liberty' and 'stability.' Such a move will ensure that 'democratic values' and 'freedom' are real to people across nations of the world especially in

Africa. The West's Afro-pessimistic conviction prompted them to imagine that they had the moral authority to fulfill the mission of exporting democracy and freedom. This conviction acted as the seedbed for the conceptualization of neo-imperialism discourses amongst African leaders. Phimister and Raftopoulos's (2004) ideological position on the emotive issues discussed in this sub-section could be easily established since they openly supported the views championed by Western 'superpowers' over those advanced by opponents of neo-imperialism (pan-Africanists). Phimister and Raftopoulos (2004: 386), for example, argued that:

> Mugabe blamed Britain and USA for what he termed neo-imperialism and managed to garner support and sympathy from those countries especially in the SADC opposed to neo- imperialism. Britain, taking their cue from conservative American thinking after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, in which the 'war on terrorism' was cast as one between the 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' worlds, British role was, therefore, to extend this war on the likes of Mugabe …This was a measure seen by UK and the USA and they were, to some extent, a counter-attack to the neo-imperialist debate championed by Mugabe (Phimister & Raftopoulous, 2004: 386).

According to Phimister & Raftopolous (2004: 39) some segments of the Zimbabwe and South Africa press have been representing neo-imperialism in a manner sympathetic to the "African schools of thought." Mbeki featured prominently in the latter defending his approach on Zimbabwe even though his voice was overshadowed by extensive criticism by the South African media, especially the weekly newspapers, as revealed by this study. However, segments of the media, like the state owned media in Zimbabwe, often sourced from powerful officials in Mugabe's and Mbeki's government who supported 'quiet diplomacy.' Consequently, when opponents of ZANU-PF expressed their criticisms of the regime through the language of human rights and democracy, their protests have either been grotesquely misrepresented or simply ignored. The privately owned press, on the other hand, has been very critical of Mbeki and Mugabe for obvious reasons – they have been sympathetic to the ideas of human rights and democracy. Ajulu (2001: 35) argues that:

> Mbeki's input on and support for neo-imperialism can be seen to have roots in his broad and vigorous African Renaissance views of the global world order [NWO]. Mbeki has

> made major contributions to the African renaissance debate wherein, he has criticised the global market economy as the 'newly created God' that everyone should religiously subscribe to with submission. 'In this volatile economy… there has been a huge reduction of the sovereignty of states, with the weakest (African states) being the biggest losers…. those who are already worse off suffer huge losses as a result of the marginal adjustment of the other' (Ajulu, 2001: 35).

The argument above depends on the kind of ideological lenses one chooses to wear when viewing reality about the situation in Zimbabwe. Hall et al (1978) argues that every society has an ideological matrix that acts as a schema in signification practice and does not, therefore, reproduce various ideologies deliberately. The meaning emerging out of signification results from the limited ideological frameworks in this matrix that are relied upon when constructing meaning. However, the covert meaning is as product of a discursive practice that enables reality to be constructed in a particular way. Hall (1978: 73) argues:

> If the inventories from which particular significations were generated were conceived, not simply as a formal schema of elements and rules, but as a set of ideological elements, then the conception of the ideological matrix had to be radically historicised. The deep structure of a statement had to be conceived as the network of elements, premises and assumptions drawn from the long-standing and historically-elaborated discourses which had accreted over the years, into which the whole history of the social formation had sedimented, and which now constituted a reservoir of themes and premises on which broadcasters could draw for the work of signifying new and troubling events (Hall et al, 1978: 73).

The 'reality' in Zimbabwe would be reasoned differently depending on the ideological matrix that serves as the point of reference for those who seek to explain or make sense of it. For instance, one would not expect the ideological matrix that informs reasoning by Robert Mugabe and Thabo Mbeki to be similar to that of Tony Blair and George Bush captured well by Ndlovi-Gatsheni (2009b) in *"Making Sense of Mugabeism in Local and Global Politics: So Blair keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe*." However, more often than not, discourses emerging from a neo-liberal inspired perspective are given prominence over those of pan-

Africanism by the Weekly newspapers and in the public domain regarding the Zimbabwean crisis. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009b) explains Mugabeism as:

> A contested phenomenon with the nationalist aligned scholars understanding it as a pan-African redemptive ideology opposed to all forms of imperialism and colonialism and dedicated to a radical redistributive project predicated on redress of colonial injustices. A neo-liberal inspired perspective sees Mugabeism as a form of racial chauvinism and authoritarianism marked by antipathy towards norms of liberal governance and disdain for human rights and democracy (Ndlovu-Gatssheni, 2009b: 1139).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009b) argues that Mugabeism is a discourse born out of political popularism of ideas through public articulation of desires, wishes and aspiration of the people of Zimbabwe other than a genuine ideological category. Mugabeism is a mongrel discursive framework that is composed of a mixture of so many 'isms' and ideological matrixes such as Marxism, Stalinism, Maoism, Nkrumahism, Nyerereism, Garveyism, Negritude, pan-Africanism, Kenyattaism, African neo-traditionalism and Nativism. "As a result of imbibing and deploying all these 'isms,' Mugabeism has assumed a complex 'polyglot' character" (Ndlovy-Gatsheni, 2009b: 1140). He further argues that:

> Mugabeism has articulated issues of liberation and oppression; peace and war; reconciliation and retribution; empowerment and dispossession; victimhood and heroism; social justice and injustice; social harmony and violence. This has made it appear a nest of contradictions, with Mugabe donning the hat of a great nationalist revolutionary, a great liberator, father of the nation concurrently with that of a tyrant, a dictator and undertaker of the nation (Ndlovu-Gathseni, 2009b: 1140).

Lanclau in Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009b) states that Mugabeism invokes the selective history and memory of the struggle for liberation which is used as an empty signifier around which war veterans, peasants, workers and black middle class converged and were mobilized. The latter centered on the desires attached to the land question and in so doing, popular subjects were created. The signifier is first emptied of its genuine content and filled afresh with selective

discourses tied to the history and memory of the struggle for liberation. This was however to be expected of a man (Robert Gabriel Mugabe) who underwent training at the Kwame Nkurumah Ideological Institute at Winneba in the period 1958-60 where he imbibed both Nkurumaism and Marxism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009b). The most compelling issue about the discourse of the struggle for liberation in Zimbabwe is the manner in which Mugabe abandoned his Marxist socialist ideas for a Lancaster house compromise which some leftist criticized as an elitist deal that worked to postpone the accomplishment of complete liberation (See Raftopoulos & Jensen, 2003 *"Zimbabwe Unfinished Business"*). Mugabe is said to have only reintroduced his 1980's ideological thinking when Britain withdrew its support for land reforms and therefore the land question once again became the focal point for achieving what he termed complete liberation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009b). Mugabeism, read as left nationalism, refers to rejection of neoliberal orthodoxy through a systematic plan to go against or contradict the wishes of its political and economic ideals. Ndlovu Gatsheni (2009b: 1143) notes that "those reading Mugabeism as left-nationalism emphasize its rejection of neoliberal orthodoxy, opting for pursuit of a 'heterodox economic plan'…[that] emerged dialectically in conflict with imperialist sanctions, whose key conditionality has been regime change…"

The heterodox plan is a mixture of crisis management and strategic planning that included a deliberate defaulting on foreign debt; pursuit of an anti-imperialist foreign policy; increased state intervention and regulation of businesses and a fast-track land reform program. Mugabeism of early 2000's must be understood as an 'interrupted revolution' that was being spearheaded by a radicalized state where sanctions are blamed for the crises in Zimbabwe (Moyo and Yeros in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009b: 1143). Even though sanctions have been known to have negative impacts on economies in many countries, this thesis is keen on questioning the extent to which sanctions really led to the crises in Zimbabwe. Mamdani's (2009) contribution *"Lessons from Zimbabwe"* echoes the idea that sanctions highly contributed to the crises in that country. He gives a more optimistic outlook of the land reform program which many observers also think contributed to the economic crisis in Zimbabwe. Mamdani has the opinion that such reforms (land reforms) gave some room for the democratic process. However, this does not imply that he overlooks the manner in which the reforms were done or the challenges therein. Mamdani (2009)

is convinced that scholars are shifting opinions regarding the conventional wisdom about land reforms in the Zimbabwe citing Scoones' et al (2010) work that dispels the common myths about the reforms (coercion, corruption and incompetence) that have replaced the entire process of land reforms.

As stated in the introduction chapter, leftist discourses such as the ones discussed here did not go without counter discourses. The latter came from human rights and democracy advocates that included Scholars such as Terrence Ranger and Timothy Scarnecchia, civil rights groups such as the Catholic Commission, Amnesty International and the International Crisis Group. Most critical scholars such Brian Raftopoulos and Ian Phimister, whose works have already been discussed, have made useful contributions. Since 2000, Raftopoulos is said to have exposed "the authoritarianism and violence hidden behind the pan-African and anti-imperialist rhetoric of Mugabeism" (Raftopoulos in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009b: 1143). He advocates for an approach that would transcend the structural political-economy one to introduce a more multi-layered and multi-pronged perspective that recognizes the importance of human rights and democracy in the competing discourses. The political-economy approach alone has no capacity to accommodate human rights and democracy. This thesis strived to be objective in light of the competing discourses but in the end took a 'centre' approach regarding the crises in Zimbabwe. Such a position was necessitated by the fact that theoretical approaches utilized in the study were not limited to political-economy. Other factors were considered in the process such as sociology of language and the influence of culture in the construction of meaning through signification. The conviction is that if a closer objective inspection of human rights and democracy discourses is done and weighed against those of pan-Africanism, patriotic history, liberation solidarity and neo-imperialism, then the contention is that they both punch heavily. However, if these discourses are carefully integrated, then they can set precedence for the reproduction of progressive ones for the common good of all mankind considering the possibilities brought about by cultural relativism.

Hall (1978: 79) argues that "where things appeared to have only one given unalterable and 'supra-class' meaning – was as a result of the practice of closure; establishment of an achieved system of equivalence between language and reality, which the effective mastery of the struggle

over meaning produced as its most pertinent effect." This appears to be the case regarding antagonism between neo-imperialism and its opponents. Why do media debates and debates in the academia regarding Zimbabwe seem to lean towards the Western rationale? As much as this is a difficult question, with obvious answers such as the role of Western media technologies in advancing Western hegemony, it clearly shows how our society has got a set of episodic thinking or reasoning sanctioned by prior knowledge/familiarity of an event which furnish us with the taken for granted elements of the practical knowledge or 'common sense.' Gramsci in Hall et al (1978:73) argues that:

> What must be explained is how…in all periods there coexist many systems and currents of philosophical thoughts, how these currents are born, how they are diffused, and why in the process of diffusion they fracture along certain lines and in certain directions…it is this history which shows how thought has been elaborated over the centuries and what a collective effort has gone into the creation of our present methods of thought which has subsumed and absorbed all this past history, including its follies and mistakes…every social stratum has got its own 'common sense' and its own 'good sense', which are basically the most widespread conception of life and of men (Gramsci in Hall et al, 1978:73).

From such a background, Mbeki, Mugabe and the West employed their own versions of 'common sense.' Paradoxically, Mbeki employed a different ideological matrix, more or less similar to that of the West, with regards to South Africa's sub-imperial role in the SADC region and the African continent – double standards (McKinley, 2004). Mbeki should have been keener to address the disparity between the rich and the poor in his African Renaissance debate. Therefore, this thesis argues that his support for Mugabe is a leftist-hardline approach based on the mere fact that he has a problem with the current 'global market forces' that seem to be dominated by the West (Bond, 2004). Mbeki's support was also driven by the fact that he wanted to maintain South Africa's economic potential in Africa in concert with the idea of racial solidarity. Raftopoulos (2006: 212) argues that:

> One of the most disturbing features of the Zimbabwean crisis has been the manner in which the Mugabe regime has articulated a repressive national politics to a broad anti-

> imperialist, pan-Africanist appeal, with essentialist notions of race as the central makers of the conflict. This process has been a reminder of the power of the idea of race…with great intensity in Zimbabwe, but with increasing frequency in South Africa, the mobilization of race as a legitimizing force has been used to justify the battles against historical inequalities, while attempting to conceal the structures that increase such inequalities (Raftopoulos, 2006: 212).

What Raftopoulos (2006) points out is that a closer scrutiny of the political-economy of Zimbabwe reveals how the system is littered with militaristic content, structures and agency. Mugabe, more than anything, uses race as an argument to counter historical injustices and inequalities while, in a real sense, his leadership is perpetrating the same. Will African states survive primitive accumulation, nation-state formation and democratization to form radical yet progressive political institutions? It is important to note the oft-quoted maxim of *Scipio Africanus* (there is always something out of Africa) to help hide the obvious prevailing pessimism regarding Africa's adventure in light of this rather difficult question. However, it is always worth concluding with a more optimistic tone well captured by David Moore (2001b: 924) who predicts that "perhaps… deleterious effects of the current impasse will open space for the necessary social forces to emerge and generate the alternatives to Africa's combination of old, new and uneven forms of capitalist development." When this happens, democracy in Africa will have found the necessary foundation to flourish.

2.3 Political situation- Elections and violence in Zimbabwe since 1980

Many scholars have tried to justify what Zimbabwe has become in light of the crises facing that country. However, there seem not to be a clear consensus (Raftopoulous & Savage, 2004; Muzondidya, 2009; Ndlela, 2005; Willems, 2005; Mlambo, 2005; Herbst, 2004; Gevisser, 2007). The prominent discourse emerging is the relationship between the Lancaster House Agreement and current socio-economic and political problems in that country. The question that one would likely raise regarding such reasoning is why the Lancaster House Agreement was celebrated then, as African leaders rushed for power, but now seems to be the biggest mistake ever made (See Goebel, 2005). The other one would concern why Zimbabwe experienced relative buoyancy and stability a few years after liberation and only descended into crisis in the late 90's and in the 2000's. Why would a country suddenly 'collapse' more than a decade after Lancaster House Agreement? Muzondidya in Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009:172) notes that "The Lancaster House deal embodies a series of compromises over minority rights… and guaranteed white representation in the parliament. It protected existing authoritarian bureaucracy and protected private property, limiting [land] redistribution." To a large extent, the Lancaster House willing-buyer willing-seller principle appears to have been an obstacle. However, at the onset of its implementation, it was performing relatively well and enjoying assistance from the United Kingdom, until the politics of power strangled the policy (See Goebel, 2005).

Malmbo (2005) extends the "rush to power" argument by indicating how political leaders failed to focus on the promise of liberation for the sake of their own interests ultimately creating tensions and polarization amongst various stakeholders. The tensions culminated in political violence fueled by politicians and the media. Mlambo's (2005) premise is refreshing since it reduces the distance or gap between memory and time regarding the history of post-Lancaster House Zimbabwe that is used to obscure reality. Mlambo does this by introducing new parties and dimensions to the socio-economic and political situation in that country presenting a more complex and nuanced analysis. Among many stakeholders, Mlambo (2005) cites political parties and the media as the most notorious ones. Even though much of the problems in Zimbabwe stem

from leadership failures, suffice is to say that the black majority rule was haunted by colonially inherited institutions that were traditionally in the service of the interest of the white minority. The government had no mechanisms for dealing with the pressures of a newly established government. This cultivated a fertile ground for growing resentment when the fruits of independence were not forthcoming leading to the formation of militia groups as earlier argued. The political process thus became a hot-house of competing discourses.

> […] a major cause of bitterness among Zimbabweans is the history of violence associated with political processes. Political violence in Zimbabwe is historically rooted in the brutality of the struggle for liberation. After independence in 1980, there was no social or legal process to deal with the trauma suffered during the struggle and, therefore, the bitterness and mutual suspicions continued (Mlambo, 2005:16).

Mlambo's (2005) thesis introduces one problematic issue that has continued to paralyze democratic development in many African countries that Brett (2005) also discusses – the lack of institutional capacity for governance leading to politics of disorder. Political regimes in Africa have the tendency of resorting to disorder as a strategy to maintain the status quo. Mlambo (2005: 16) argues that "both Zimbabweans and the international community were too much in a hurry to declare the success of democracy over white minority rule, and did not stop to deal effectively with the past, and that ugly past continued to affect the new Zimbabwe." The matrix of the competing discourses about the situation in Zimbabwe and their polarized nature are convincingly the Zimbabwean crises. Among many angles from which the latter can be explained, one notable one is ethnicity which is both a pre-colonial and post-colonial nightmare. The Matabeleland crisis (1980-1987) is a perfect example. Many Zimbabweans lost their lives at the hands of 'state security.' The move was largely seen as political strategy to silence the opposition even though the government insisted that it was fighting dissidents (Malambo, 2005). Raftopoulos and Savage (2004: 44) argue:

> […] the motivation of operation *Gukurahundi*[23] was more politically than ethnically driven, adding that the fifth Brigade[24] itself in rhetoric and actions, conflated being a 'ZAPU supporter' with being Ndebele with being a 'dissident.' The intention behind the onslaught was a ploy to crush ZAPU as a viable political entity and to create a *de facto* one party state. The situation was temporarily ameliorated by a 1987 Unity Accord between ZANU-PF and Zimbabwe African People's Union Patriotic Front (PF) ZAPU which, although it stopped the physical violence, did not remove the mutual ethnic suspicions. These suspicions still exist today (Raftopoulous and Savage, 2004: 44).

One important issue raised by Raftopoulos and Savage (2004) is how African politics is characterized by deeply rooted ethnicity. Politics and elections in Africa are based on ethnic loyalty rather than genuine issues affecting citizens. It is important to note that the violence in Zimbabwe during elections is usually motivated by ethnic partisanship in the political struggle for power in that country's post-independent life. However, the underlying issues that define the state of events that have been unfolding there since 1980 are rarely reflected in the media, especially, considering the reality that the media in Zimbabwe has historically been suppressed and that of South Africa is commercially driven. The South African Weeklies commercialized news content on Zimbabwe portraying events superficially and sometimes distorting the picture and the complexities involved. The Weeklies failed to address the context surrounding the problematic issues that have now become perennial in Zimbabwe. Most importantly, the Weeklies approach to the events unfolding in that country was based on how those events affect South Africa's own domestic politics as discussed earlier.

[23] Sometimes commonly known as the Matabeleland massacres referring to state terror against civilians in Zimbabwe carried out in Matableleland. It is also known as *Gukurahundi* (See Ratoupolos & Savage, 2004).

[24] Civilians who supported the then opposition ZAPU were persecuted and the senior leadership targeted. "Joshua Nkomo narrowly escaped assassination and had to flee to Botswana" Ratoupoulos & Savage 2004. 45.

2.3.1 Political Parties

Even though there are several political parties in Zimbabwe, the dominant one is ZANU-PF. In recent years, the MDC has emerged as a powerful opposition that has given the ruling party a run for its money and the two have been involved in a fierce political battle for supremacy. Political rivalry dates back to the 1980's when ZANU-PF (led by Robert Mugabe) and PF-ZAPU (led by the late Joshua Nkomo) joined forces following the *Matebeleland*[25] uprising. The aim of the unity was to reduce tensions and ethnic polarization between the Shona and the Ndebele. Mlambo (2004: 20) argues that "the Unity Accord has been hailed as the unifying force between the Shona and the Ndebele people." However, tensions still exist between the two ethnic communities most of which can be linked to politics. The emergence of MDC as a powerful opposition has acted as a real threat, similar to ZAPU in the 80's, forcing ZANU-PF to devise various strategies to neutralize the threat, one of which has been the use of "violence and intimidation tactics" (Moore in Vambe, 2008:25). Mlambo (2005: 6) further argues that "the MDC is the most successful opposition… so far. In the 2000 parliamentary elections, it gained 57 seats compared to ZANU-PF's 62, putting them on an almost 50/50 situation with ZANU-PF." The MDC has been largely viewed as a Western puppet due to its ideological position that leans towards white farmers. Solidarity Peace Trust in Ranger (2004:219) point out how President Robert Mugabe, in a speech after the 2000 election results, claimed that "the MDC is driven by the repulsive ideology of the return to white settler rule" since the West has been seen as the source of its campaign funds. It is now clear that with or without the opposition, Zimbabwe is faced with serious problems. So who should really be held accountable for the crises in Zimbabwe? Are the politicians the only ones to blame? Even though it is obvious that politicians should be held responsible for the crisis in Zimbabwe, several other stakeholders are equally responsible. The perception that the crisis in Zimbabwe, particularly the economic crisis,

[25] Sometimes it is known as the *Gukurahundi* referring to state terror against civilians in Zimbabwe carried out in Matableleland. It is also commonly known as the Matabeleland massacres (See Ratoupolos & Savage, 2004).

is the sole responsibility of ZANU-PF and Mugabe, which has been a common discourse in the media and the society at large, should be abandoned.

2.3.2 The Media

The best approach to understanding how the media in Zimbabwe operates is to look at the political system in that country. Although the political system in Zimbabwe is difficult to establish, its composition reveals both democratic and autocratic elements. However, the latter seem to have stolen the show. The media in Zimbabwe has been dominated by the state. The few existing private media find it difficult to freely operate. Mlambo's (2005) talks of media polarization in Zimbabwe and his arguments focus on two ideas. Firstly, that the independent media has been most critical of Robert Mugabe and secondly, that state media has acted as a mouth piece of ZANU-PF, which is easily the truth, but that is besides the point (See Waldahl, 2005). What is interesting is how Mlambo (2005) questions the operation of the state owned media in Zimbabwe as if one would expect it to operate differently in a country dominated by ZANU-PF politics. He argues:

> […] in Zimbabwe, the government controlled media reports only the good things about ZANU-PF, and only the ugly side of the MDC. On the other hand, the independent media presents a Zimbabwe in which everything including rivers, mountains, trees, and animals all live and die for Robert Mugabe (Mlambo, 2005:24).

Mlambo's (2005) criticisms are echoed in Mano's (2005: 64) study titled "Press Freedom, Professionalism and Proprietorship: Behind the Zimbabwe Media Divide: *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*." Mano (2005) deals with the macro and micro environment pressures that journalists are exposed to prompting them to make critical decisions regarding where and how they work. He explains that out of many reasons, journalists change employers to change the "shackles of partisan editorial policies." One respondent in his study argues that:

> It is common knowledge that papers under the Zimpapers stable are government mouthpieces. It is also common cause that you hardly find a code, which states that journalists should be propaganda agents for the government, but this is achieved through

> a process of socialisation in the newsroom. The way one's stories are treated help a reporter, especially new ones, form an impression of the editorial position or course of a publication (L2[26] in Mano, 2005: 64).

However, as opposed to state owned media, the private media has been most critical of the government. Mlambo (2005) indicates how the private media has been bashing ZANU-PF since it is not subject to direct editorial control and political pressure or government control. Conflicting political interest between the private and government owned media has created a lot of pressure when reporting Zimbabwe and there is no occasion that they have been on the same page regarding local politics. Such obvious polarization calls for journalistic objectivity even though it is quite known that journalistic objectivity is a myth (Bignell, 1997). The latter means journalists strive to be 'objective' when covering events in order for them not to be accused of bias. This is important considering that journalists reporting for the private media would naturally be subjective when it comes to reporting events in Zimbabwe that deviate from the ideology of democracy and human rights while those emerging from government owned media would traditionally support the state's position on contentious issues.

In such occasions, 'objectivity' regarding the judgement of journalists working for the private media would demand that they become more critical of a situation where, in their view, the state is abusing human rights but, at the same time, warn on the consequences of such abuses. On the other hand, state constrolled media would naturally deny reports of human rights abuses through biased reporting. Therefore, objectivity becomes a problematic journalistic value for both the private and state controlled media (journalistic myth). For example, journalists from the private media would report incidences where the state is clashing with civilians in a manner critical to the state depending on their position regarding the causes of such clashes. It is obvious that their position would generally be influenced by discourses of human rights and democracy which will inturn promt them to embark on exposing the personalities responsible for the messy state of the nation. In the case of Zimbabwe, Mlambo (2005:24) has a problem with how "the private media

[26]'L' Stands for London where respondents of the study were drawn from in the United Kingdom and '2' stands for the number given to the particular respondent quoted. See Mano, W. (2005). Press Freedom, Professionalism and Proprietorship: Behind the Zimbabwe Media Divide. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture,* University of Westminster, London. Special Issue. pp. 56-70 (Online). Retrieved 26th May 2012.

and sections of the international media including the South African press, have labored to present Mugabe as the devil incarnate" as a sign of displeasure with Mugabe's human rights record. There is no doubt that the leader has disregarded the latter. However, the media has often excessively focused on trivial personality issues instead of the contextual ones regarding the situation in Zimbabwe considering the complexities of that country's political economy discussed so far.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) drawing from the four theories of the press, which have become so influential, explain the character of the news media. They observe a close relationship between media systems and political systems. Hallin and Mancini (2004:8) argue that "one cannot understand the news media without understanding the nature of the state, the system of political parties, the patterns of relations between economic and political interests, and the development of the civil society, amongst other elements of the social structure." As mentioned earlier, it is really difficult to establish the political system in Zimbabwe. However, it is true that Zimbabwe has exhibited elements of a democratic system and more of a dictatorial system. This makes it difficult to pin-point the kind of media system existing in that country. Hallin and Mancini (2004) further complicate our closure of the kind of media system active in Zimbabwe due to the fact that their comparative media systems models are entirely confined to European and North American countries. But since Africa (Zimbabwe) has not established a strong tradition of media scholarship, its epistemology around media systems and journalistic ideologies are greatly influenced by the Western approach. Going by the latter, one would argue that the media in Zimbabwe, be it private or state, operates within the parameters of what is expected of it considering the social system in which it is functioning. Such an observation pours cold water on the previous criticisms advanced by Mlambo's (2005) regarding the media in Zimbabwe.

Perhaps Mlambo (2005) was more broadly concerned with the ideology behind journalistic practice than the idea that media systems are manifestations of political systems even though he did not explicate it in his argument. Mlambo (2005), for example, insists on journalistic objectivity, which as indicated earlier, is a myth (Bignell, 1997; Tomaselli, 1996). He argued that "all media organizations have a duty to report both sides of the political divide as accurately and

as objectively as possible without becoming weapons of mass deception" (Mlambo, 2005: 24). He notes that:

> Zimbabweans and the world at large are not being told the true Zimbabwean story by both the local and the so called independent international media. The true Zimbabwean story lies somewhere… between the international agencies predictions of impending famine and mass starvation and the Zimbabwe government's forecast of future bumper harvests, between the "horrors" of Operation *Murambatsvina* and the hopes of Operation *Garikai* or restore hope, between Mugabe begging for a loan on his knees and the International Monetary Fund nudging the South African government to offer Mugabe an unsolicited loan (Mlambo, 1995: 25).

With such a complicated media environment in Zimbabwe, is there any particular special role that the South African Weeklies played in the context of the crisis in that country? And if there is any, what does it mean regarding the role of the media in political transformation and democratization in Africa? Hyden, Leslie and Ogundimu (2007: 1) emphasize the important role the media must play in Africa given the absence of aggressive social movements and other voluntary organizations that have played a significant role in democratizing countries in regions such as Latin America and Eastern Europe. They argue that "media has been so influential in shaping the emerging, but still fledgling, democratic culture in Africa." A solution to the problematic situation in Zimbabwe will require looking beyond media institutions, irrespective of the fact that the media has recently exercised increased influence in politics. Any good scrutiny of the role of the media in politics should be guided by the consciousness of the fact that "it is impossible to understand the interface between media and democratization without considering multiple dimensions notably, political, economic and technological" (Hyden, Leslie and Ogundimu, 2007: 1).

Further, studies have proved that democracy would only be feasible once society had been modernized. "Industrialization, urbanization, modern education and the spread of the market economy, would provide the conditions that are congenial to growth of democracy" and therefore there is a strong correlation between these features of the society, on the one hand, and democracy on the other (Hyden, Leslie and Ogundimu, 2007: 2). However, the question that

remains unadressed is concerning the best possible ways of modernizing Africa as explicated by neo-imperialism. For example, the free market is seen as more of a burden for Africa than a benefit since developing coutries are still faced with major export deficits and cannot equally compete with developed ones. In the worst scenarios, countries facing economic sanctions such as Zimbabwe can never overcome the serious challenges presented by the absence of the democratic stimulants posited by Hyden, Leslie and Ogundimu (2007). Therefore, what needs to be reformed in that country is what Hallin and Mancini (2004) mentioned earlier. That is, the nature of the state, the system of political parties, the patterns of relations between economic and political interests, and the development of the civil society.

2.4 Economic situation and land reforms

The central fear captured in scholarly debates and media representations about the 'chaotic' nature of land reforms and consequent economic decline in Zimbabwe is that South Africa, a nation that has its own reform challenges, should not emulate Zimbabwe. Goebel's (2005) work *"Is Zimbabwe the Future of South Africa? The Implications of Land Reforms in South Africa"* is a testimony. Quoting Human Rights Watch, Goebel (2005: 345) argues:

> In both South Africa and Zimbabwe, a history of race-based colonial land dispossession led to the domination of white commercial farmers and rural underdevelopment and impoverishment of black Africans. In both countries, the question of land reform emerged in the post-independence contexts, linked to the dual challenges of redistributive justice and economic development. The dramatic events in Zimbabwe since the year 2000 involving massive and often violent land occupations of white-owned commercial farms have sparked concern about developments in South Africa (Human Rights Watch in Goebel, 2005: 345).

The general fear in the public discourse in South Africa was that land invasions in Zimbabwe might spread to South Africa which meant that instability in Zimbabwe had consequences in the broader SADC region. The leadership in Zimbabwe insisted that the approach taken on land reforms was as a result of the pressure they faced both from within and externally. However, the

latter seemed to have been most prominent. Why were the problems faced by the Zimbabwean government while implementing its ambitious land reforms program externalized? The most compelling issue is that while the government blamed external actors for the failed redistribution program and land invasions, external actors discredited the reform program for corruption, abuse of the rule of law, marginalization of the poor and abuse of human rights. The argument advanced by various scholars is that land invasions resulted in dramatic agricultural productivity decline, including massive food shortages and losses of exports (Goebel, 2005).

After carefully comparing debates through a systematic examination of the land question in Zimbabwe and South Africa by various stakeholders, Goebel's conclusion is a reminder of the premise of the arguments presented in this sub-section. That is, the general fear that what happened in Zimbabwe might actually take place in South Africa. Goebel (2005: 346) argues that "despite many structural similarities, the particularity of the two cases [Zimbabwe and South Africa] strongly suggest that South Africa is unlikely to face a Zimbabwean-type future on the land question." Most actively, newspapers such as *The Economist* in South Africa worked tirelessly to assure South Africans that South Africa is not Zimbabwe whenever incidences of squatting on white commercial farmlands emerged. Therefore, "South Africa's media reportage reflects the growing frustrations among key actors regarding the slow pace of land reforms…reportage frequently frames concern over South Africa's process with allusion to the Zimbabwe crisis" (Goebel, 2005: 346). The crucial lesson from the situation in Zimbabwe is that ethnically diverse societies, characterized by inequality in terms of land distribution patterns, are more likely to descend into chaos if they don't undertake rapid and radical reforms (Goebel, 2005).

Therefore, land reforms in Zimbabwe and South Africa have always been contentious and central in defining the future of both countries since they have impacted, in one way or another, on the economic situation in the region. If you take Zimbabwe for example, then there is no doubt that the economic situation and land reforms in that country are interlinked (Richardson, 2004; Scoones et al, 2010; Bond, 2007; Moore, 2001a; Freeman, 2005; Goebel, 2005; Lahiff & Cousins, 2001). The problematic economic situation in Zimbabwe and the SADC region could

be attributed to a 'failed' land reforms program (See Moore, 2001a). The willing-buyer willing-seller principle, mentioned earlier, is considered to have failed to distribute land appropriately to the needy and contributed to food shortage and economic meltdown since the policy interfered with commercial farming (See Goebel, 2005). One would questions why the policy failed since it was accepted as a compromise in 1980 and seemed to be working well in the early stages of its implementation. So what really affected the implementation of the land resettlement program in Zimbabwe?

Richardson (2004) squarely blames the British government for their failure to honor the Lancaster House agreement to finance the land resettlements (See Goebel, 2005; Bond 2007; Moore, 2001a; Freeman, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009a). His sentiments are quite well acceptable. However, the case of why the British government withdrew their support is equally an important thesis (see Taylor & Williams, 2002). The circumstances that may have led to the British withdrawal, even though they were committed to supporting the program and indeed released significant funds in support of the program, should be raised. The discourse emerging from the British is that they withdrew their support because Mugabe used the opportunity to reward his cronies (See Moore, 2001a). Evidently, Mugabe made constitutional amendments such as the Land Acquisition Act of 1992 that disregarded the highly contested issue of property rights. Richardson (2004: 37) argues that "the Land Acquisition Act allowed the government to expropriate land without permission at a price set by the government. The government again utilised these acts to reward loyal members of ZANU-PF." Such legislation that disregarded property rights was retrogressive irrespective of the manner in which the landowners acquired their land.

In addition to blaming the British government, Richardson (2004) also accuses the Zimbabwean government for not adhering to "the principles established at a donor conference in 1998 which included respect for the law and sound economic management" (Richardson, 2004: 39). ZANU-PF was blamed for many issues including the continuous suppression and intimidation of the opposition during elections, sponsoring poll violence and manipulating the constitution. Mugabe is said to have ignored constitutional provisions by amending the Land Acquisition Act and

replacing judges "who did not comply with his orders" (Richardson, 2004: 39). Clearly the Zimbabwe government was less concerned with securing property rights regarding land, a reality that scared off investors and reduced the confidence of those who owned property in that country.

The Zimbabwean government can therefore be blamed for opening room for the violation of property rights leading to the exodus of investors from that country. Arguably, many of the farmers in Zimbabwe, who previously owned land and contributed to the national food basket and the economy, were threatened by land invasions and chaos. Some of them are said to have fled into neighbouring countries such as Zambia and South Africa leading to production gaps that could not be compensated by the new black landlords. These incidents are presumed to have contributed to the economic problems in Zimbabwe. Although land politics in Zimbabwe and South Africa appear the same, they are distinctively complicated by the unique nature of the compromises both countries made for black majority rule (Goebel, 2005). While the South African government had to go slow on the question of land redistribution, due to the fear of jeopardizing the compromise made for black majority rule in that country under Nelson Mandela, the Zimbabwean government's case was a unique one. The latter was under increased pressure, especially from war veterans, to Fast-Track the land redistribution process to fulfill the liberation promises and had to redistribute land through any means possible. However, the question of whether or not the land redistribution process failed is open for debate as discussed in the next sub-section (Bond, 2007; Goebel, 2005; Brett, 2005; Freeman, 2005; Moore, 2001a).

2.4.2 Zimbabwe land resettlement is not a total failure

For at least a decade, the Fast-Track program was labelled land grab and the global media coverage has been dominated by images of chaos, destruction and violence (Ndlela, 2005; Willems, 2005). A new study by Scoones et al (2010) *"Zimbabwe's Land Reforms: Myths and Realities"* observes the need to have a more balanced appraisal for the process that is considered to have overhauled a century old pattern of land use dominated by a small group of large-scale commercial farmers as Zimbabwe continues with agrarian reforms. The most fascinating issue about public discourse regarding Zimbabwe's land reform is that what has been widely known and understood about the reform has been from media headlines, particularly, from the year 2000. Scoones et al (2010:1) observes that "from early 2000 headlines around the world reputed the invasion of largely white owned farms in dominant terms…this were Mugabe land grabs, with unruly violent mob of war veterans looting and destroying property across the country."

Of course, more can be said about the complexity of the land reform program in Zimbabwe and, eventually, how it culminated in land grabs than the manner in which they were represented. The land grabs dominated the mainstream media both locally and internationally. A deeper analysis of the land reforms program in Zimbabwe show how the process was influenced by what Scoones et al (2010: 8) identify as "myths." These myths are said to have permeated policy narratives eventually affecting the approach taken on land reforms. The dilemma facing various stakeholders was related to how they could reach a political and ideological consensus about the history and nature of land restitution that would form the basis of formulating a suitable approach for the future benefit of Zimbabweans. The dominant political perspective was that land has to be redistributed to address colonial injustices while the economic one centered on how land could benefit the newly landed citizens – a market friendly approach designed to contribute to economic development (Scoones, 2010). What were the impacts of the dominant political perspective?

Political ideology with regard to land utilization, where land was perceived as a necessary correction of colonial ills, took center stage, especially during elections, shaping the political landscape of Zimbabwe. Scoones et al (2010: 17) observes that " in the lead-up to the 1990 elections, Joshua Nkomo highlighted the land issue in a number of high profiled interventions…Mugabe picked this up and land became (as before) a core issue for the election, with the usual, racial anti-British slant." But it was not simply all about electoral competition but also about what happens beyond elections. This meant that the dominant political ideology had to be balanced by the aforementioned market friendly ideological approach which viewed land in terms of economic viability and as a means of consolidating wealth for the elites. The latter perspective (market friendly approach) undermined ideas such as small scale farming which was seen as an insult to large scale viable commercial farming. Commercial farming was mistakenly considered the best option of improving rural livelihoods (see Goebel, 2005). However, small scale production, which was largely unpopular, was later found to have the potency of increased productivity due to its informal nature and "off the market" arrangements between landlords and tenants – a reality that was taken for granted when assessing the economic implications and the impacts of land reforms in Zimbabwe. The perception, even among the donor community, that small scale production was equally productive was difficult to ignore encouraging a paradigm shift in the idea of land utilization. There was a general conviction that small scale production had the potential to improve rural livelihoods (Scoones et al 2010). Therefore, in understanding the successes and failures of Zimbabwe's land reforms, this thesis pays attention to the fundamental question posed by Scoones et al (2010): What happened to different people's livelihoods once they acquired land through land reforms? The general contention is that peoples' livelihoods were improved. Scoones et al (2010: 18) argues:

> By late 1990's results begun to emerge from the long term monitoring resettlement households by the Zimbabwe Rural Household Dynamic Study (ZRHDS), led by Bill Kinsey…the research showed how resettled farmers' real income had more than doubled over the period between 1982-3 and 1994-5…resettlement had been much more

> successful across a variety of criteria than many pessimists had predicted[27] (Scoones et al, 2010: 18).

Scoones et al (2010: 19) indicates that despite the bad press, resettlement schemes and settler schemes were relatively doing well." This narrative of relative success challenges one of the five "myths" raised in his study, that Zimbabwe land reform had been a total failure. Other myths addressed are:

- The beneficiaries of Zimbabwe land reforms have been largely political cronies.
- There is no investment in the new resettlements
- Agriculture is in complete ruins, creating chronic food insecurity and
- The rural economy had collapsed.

This section was mostly concerned with the first myth. However, there are several repetitive discourses for the alleged failure of the land resettlement program that came to the fore. Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) and drought were highly perceived as some of the reasons that accounted for the much proclaimed failure of the program. Other reasons were related to politics, largely the emergence of the MDC opposition, constitutional referendum and the run-up to the delayed 2000 elections. Scoones et al (2010: 20) argues:

> The government was also forced to make substantial unbudgeted pay to war veterans who were demanding compensation for their role in the liberation war…in November, under the powers of the Land Acquisition Act, the government engaged in a sweeping designation of 1, 471 farms…this was a departure from the past policy and signaled a shift in political thinking. The results were clear: the government was now prepared to designate and compulsorily acquire land for resettlement (Scoones et al, 2010: 20).

[27] See other studies mentioned by Scoones et al 2010 that echo positive resettlement schemes such as those by Harts-Broekhuis and Huisman, 2001; Robilliard et al, 2001.

Scoones et al (2010) was evasive on the idea of land invasions or the *Jambanja*[28] period or a period of intense land invasions. He evades the discussion by referring the reader to several scholars, locking or burying the key highlight of the reform program in the footnote. However, he confronts the issue later and must be credited for capturing these complexities, that is, "the distinctive patterns of Masvingo's new agrarian structure including relationships between new small holder areas, small scale commercial farms and remaining large scale farms" (Scoones et al 2010:32). He also addressed the question of how new authorities opened up through land reforms resulted in "very different outcomes in various places and often intense contestation over legitimacy and control" (Scoones et al, 2010:188). He and the other five authors seem to admit that "a two sided debate based on the often simplistic generalization and limited empirical data is insufficient for capturing the complexity on the ground…*Jambanja*, for example, – notorious period of invasion, occupation, associated with chaos and confusion is complex and generalizations, even with provinces like Masvingo are impossible to make" (Scoones et al, 2010: 23).

Regarding the myths that farms benefited political cronies, Scoones et al (2010) agrees that some new farmers are successful due to political connections and patronage. Yet, despite their disproportionate influence on local politics, in Masvingo, the farmers make up less than 5% of household. Scoones et al (2010) warn that they do not want to underplay the abuses that took place or the challenges that transition brings. However, their research has dispelled the assumption that Zimbabwe's controversial land reform was "all bad." Solid empirical evidence has challenged the myth that there is no investment, that agricultural production has collapsed and food insecurity is universal, that the rural economy is in precipitous decline, and that farm labor has been totally displaced.

[28] The term *Jambanja* was popularized by the singer Marko Sibanda in his hit song *Jambanja Pahotera* about a fight in a hotel between two naked couples who discovered they had exchanged partners in separate extra-marital affairs. The term literally means violence or angry argument. It has been used in subtly different contexts to refer to different people and places, including the ex-combatant and farm invaders (Chaumba, Scoones & Wolmer, 2003. From *Jambanja* to Planning: The Reassertion of Technocracy in Land Reform in South-Eastern Zimbabwe. *Journal of Modern African Studies, 41, 4. 533-554*)

2.4.3 Economic 'collapse' – Corporatism and the "free market"

Bond's (2007) essay *"Competing Explanations of Zimbabwe's Long Economic Crisis"* is a tantalizing contribution to the literature regarding Zimbabwe's economic crisis. Bond begins by hypothesizing what could have really led to the crisis in Zimbabwe and the period when the crisis is presumed to have started. A range of issues are listed from president Mugabe's authorized land invasions, November 1997 "Black Friday" when the local currency was decimated, to September 1991, when the stock market crashed once interest rates were raised to high levels at the outset of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) (Bond, 1997: 149). The reality is that several reasons led to the economic crisis in that country. However, the genesis of the crisis can be pegged on Zimbabwe's economic policy shift in the early 1990's, particularly, the introduction of ESAP (See Bracking, 2005). Bond (2007) argues that as much as the introduction of the latter is a good starting point for beginning debates about the economic crisis in Zimbabwe, it is important to note that such discourses emanate from the ruling party analysis of the cause of the problem. Government officials saw ESAP as a "capitalistic project" and blamed it for the crisis (Bond, 2007: 151). They argued that Western states and institutions caused the economic crisis through what they called "mythical" sanctions since they were unhappy about land reforms in that country.

The Zimbabwean government position compels this thesis to investigate the impacts of economic policy shift given that the South African economy has shown signs of stability even though it was also equally implementing the same policy. Bond (2007:151) accepts that "Zimbabwe's major advances in education and health of the early 1980's was in part reversed by ESAP fees, and the solid growth rates of the mid/late-80s under a more controlled economic regime look excellent in retrospect." Brett (2005) has argued that the transformation of the market from corporatism to neoliberalism had a significant negative impact on the Zimbabwean economy that was controlled by corporate companies. However, he talks of an economic policy (black majority rule) regime and how it contributed to the crisis between 1980 and 1997. Brett's (2005) argument regarding political leadership is an important point of reference given that the same policy

(ESAP), criticized in some quarters, has been implemented relatively well in South Africa judging from the impressive economic situation in that country and its sound fiscal and monetary policies – South Africa is the biggest economy in Africa. Since South Africa, just like Zimbabwe, was also undergoing a shift from apartheid to neoliberalism, a lot of lessons were drawn from the Zimbabwean experience. Horwitz's (2001) work titled "*Negotiated Liberalization*" shows how the South African political landscape was changing from repressive apartheid regimes to democracy. The change also included the transformation of colonial institutions including media transformation.

The phrase 'economic collapse' that has been lately used to define the economic situation in Zimbabwe is not farfetched. Edward Brett (2005) historically traces the economic situation from the early 80s. Brett (2005) uncovers the political policy regimes and traces the economic crisis from the failure of the regimes to come up with sustainable economic policies for posterity. Brett (2005:92) argues that "the shift from corporatist to liberal economic policy regimes in Zimbabwe led to the crisis of the late 1990s." Brett (2005: 91) however, outlines "the rationale behind the introduction of certain economic policies by the regimes, the reasons for their failures and achievements and how they contributed to the adoption of dysfunctional policies of the late 1990s." He argues that "Zimbabwe adopted a highly corporatist program between 1980 and 1990, before making a rapid switch to a liberal one in 1991 that terminated in disaster in the last years of the decade" (Brett, 2005:92). This shift was necessary because corporatism, which was largely a leftist economic ideology popular in the early seventies, lost its popularity 20 years later and many countries were now shifting right to neoliberalism. Of course, each approach provided critique of the other. Brett (2005:92) argues that:

> […] both assumed that the outcome of any developmental strategy is determined by the adequacy and the rules and incentives that govern resource allocation. However, corporatists argued that free markets would inhibit industrialization and intensify uneven development, and liberals that state control would lead to inefficiency and, in the worst cases, to corruption and predation. Corporatism was clearly in a crisis in Africa by the end of the 1970s, producing an almost universal switch to liberalization implemented

> through the Structural Adjustment Program managed by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) over the next 20 years (Brett, 2005: 92).

Mbeki's approach to the economic trouble in Zimbabwe was centered on blaming the Structural Adjustment Program (Bond & Manyanya, 2002). While the program can be blamed for the economic situation in Africa, depending on the justifications provided, Mbeki's approach occluded the fact that South Africa is relatively stable even though it equally implemented the same economic policy shift (Brett, (2005). In fact, Mbeki blamed the Washington approach to economic policies regarding Zimbabwe and did not mention the experiences of his own adoption of ESAP in South Africa and its implications for the economy. If South Africa's economy has been performing that badly due to the policy shift, as some have argued, then Mbeki should have been keener to point this out explicitly. So what were the genuine consequences of liberalization in Africa? Brett (2005: 92) posits that liberalization has failed "to generate sustainable political and economic reforms."

The economic breakdown in Zimbabwe that began in the late 1990s was driven forward by exploitation of a crisis situation by political and economic regimes using the clientelistic processes. Chabal and Daloz in Brett (2005:92) describe the process as "the exploitation of the political-economy of disorder for individual and group benefit." Brett (2005) insisted that one of the reasons that can account for the economic problems in Zimbabwe is poor political leadership. Thus, several reasons led to the economic breakdown and not only "the actions of a predatory ruling class or external imposition. Both Mercantilist and liberal projects have succeeded elsewhere, and both produced success as well as failure in Zimbabwe" (Brett, 2005:93). So why did the policy shift fail in Zimbabwe? Bond (2007: 151) quotes a Keynesian economist, Godfrey Kinyenze, to explain the extent in which ESAP ruined the economy in Zimbabwe as stated below:

> The Zimbabwean economy is in crisis. Economic growth remains erratic and below targets. The balance-of-payments problems that have plagued the economy since the last quarter of 1997 persist. The failure of ESAP to redress the inequalities inherent in the

> Zimbabwean economy means the majority of the people cannot take advantage of the opportunities that are offered. This is a major impediment to the success of reforms…the highly dualistic nature of Zimbabwe's economy (in which the white minority dominates formal-sector economic activity and owns two-thirds of high-potential land and the black majority is concentrated in rural, communal areas and urban informal sectors) was never adequately addressed when planning economic reform. By focusing exclusively on the formal sector for economic growth, ESAP neglected the sectors with the greatest potential for employment creation: the informal, small and medium-sized enterprises (Bond, 2007: 151).

The economic crisis in Zimbabwe is usually explained in terms of political personalities. Basically, the fact that President Mugabe's traditional hold on power has compounded the crisis. Mugabe has often used selective national history regarding the liberation struggle to gather sympathy votes and to instill fear among Zimbabweans by warning them of the possible return of colonial rule (neo-imperialism). In so doing, he anointed himself as the champion and defender of black liberation not only in Zimbabwe but the entire African continent. The problematic issue is that Zimbabwe's national history related to the struggle for liberation is usually applied selectively and is based on patriotism communicated at various levels, "from the relatively sophisticated to the crudely racist" (Bond, 2007: 152; See also Ranger, 2004). The latter was well captured in campaign slogans such as "The Land is The Economy and The Economy is The Land" (Bond, 2007: 151). Solidarity Peace Trust in Ranger (2004: 220) details how ZANU-PF has been using various forms of communication to marshal patriotic history during election campaigns:

> The nation is daily bombarded with grim images of grotesquely mutilated and decomposing black bodies from the liberation war, falling like boulders from the cliff of the television screen.[It is] an attempt to edit the nation's collective memory in order to rewrite the history of the struggle for independence... By virtue of being the government of the day ZANU-PF has access to and control over the recorded signs and symbols that denote and connote our history as a nation. .. Central to ZANU-PF's election campaign is

> the political commodification of the legacy of the liberation war. Amid the choking fumes of aggressive political campaigns, history lets out a piercing wail as Big Brother relentlessly attempts to weave past, present and future into his person (Solidarity Peace Trust, in Ranger, 2004: 220).

Bond locates the economic crisis in Zimbabwe within a broader global and structural relationship and what it means for African countries on the periphery. He argues that primitive accumulation or excessive accumulation of capital has done injustice to economic development in Africa and other parts of the world since capital has been rendered idle in un-useful structures in the society instead of being pumped into useful projects to stimulate growth – a 1970s crisis (Bond 2007; See also Moore, 2001a; Moore, 2001c). Primitive accumulation set the ground for Bond's scrutiny and analysis of the impact of recent events popularly known for the economic crises in Zimbabwe such as unbudgeted decisions to pay war veterans, decisions to intervene in the war in the Democratic republic of Congo and seizure of white commercial farms (Bond, 2007). With different competing discourses both locally and internationally, the country's economic crisis has often attracted various forms of explanations and analysis and the challenging issue is to locate those that are properly and decisively capturing the changing relations in the history of Zimbabwe's political-economy. Raftoupoulus in Bond (2007) quotes Hall arguing that:

> Until one has shown how objective economic crises actually develop, via changing relations in the balance of forces, into crisis in the state and society, and germinate in the form of ethical-political struggles and formed political ideologies, influencing the conception of the world of the masses, one has not conducted a proper kind of analysis, rooted in the decisive and irreversible passage from structure to superstructure (Raftoupoulus in Bond, 2007: 171).

However, Bond (2007) diverts attention from the Keynesian economic rationale to political dimensions (that are more episodic than structural) of the crisis, listing several political blunders that both the ruling party and Zimbabwe made regarding the crisis. The ruling party is accused of failing to handle IMF politics that led to a once-off payment of US$ 209 million owed to the institution and getting nothing in return (Bond, 2007). The opposition is also accused of not

taking advantage of the economic crisis to push for genuine reforms regarding human rights and democracy. What is fascinating in Bond's conclusion is how he reduces the economic crisis to issues of human rights and democracy – something he admits to have done anyway. He argues:

> A full book is required for this ''proper'' analysis, to be sure—especially when in Zimbabwe there are multiple modes of ongoing primitive accumulation at stake. But instead of completing the argument that would take us from objective economic crisis to the present balance of forces…it might be instructive to risk the charge of reductionism and jump ahead to address a few of the main implications (Bond, 2007: 171).

The conclusion that human rights and democracy are the preconditions for economic development is insufficient since there are many examples of countries that are undemocratic and have poor human rights record but still thrive economically such as China and Iran. Perhaps what Bond was alluding to is the fact that Zimbabwe, being an African country (knowing the dark history of African countries especially those that were colonized), stands the best chance of thriving economically through a liberal democratic system that prioritizes human rights and liberal ideals. This view can be easily dismissed as a Western reductionist approach to the complexities faced by developing countries that seek to navigate their way into the global economy. David Moore (2001a) in his work *"Is the Land the Economy and the Economy the Land? Primitive Accumulation in Zimbabwe*" argues that the economic crisis in Zimbabwe is "a three-fold impasse facing the African continent as a whole" (See also Moore, 2001c). According to Moore (2001a: 253):

> The three intricately tied problems at the source of Zimbabwe's organic crisis are: primitive accumulation; the still simmering dilemma of nation-state formation; and the dialectic of democratization… The question of stalemated primitive accumulation is most closely associated with the recent emphasis by the ZANU-PF on resolving the land question through invasions and other means of 'fast-tracking' land resettlement. Hence the ruling party's 2000 election slogan 'the land is the economy and the economy is land.' (Moore, 2001a: 253)

Many scholars discussing the economic crises in Zimbabwe have often risked personalizing the situation by focusing on the individual seen as the "titular head of national society" (Moore, 2001a: 256). Apart from the argument that Mugabe and his cronies created a feudal system of accumulating wealth at the expense of peasants, Moore (2001a) locates the Zimbabwean crisis in the context of failed land resettlement Fast-Tracked in the aftermath of the 2000 referendum that was largely viewed as a vote in disapproval of the leadership of ZANU-PF. Moore (2001a) argues that Zimbabwe failed to take advantage of its early social democracy to properly address the Zimbabwean land question and the prevailing genocidal ethnic divisions. Zimbabwe is also accused of having created a problematic relationship with a hegemon in the South (South Africa) compounding the crisis it faced – Without undermining ESAP's contribution in the crisis, these systemic and organic structural issues were never created by the IMF (Moore, 2007). Moore (2001a: 260) further argues that "if the land question had been solved, ZANU-PF would no longer have been able to claim that the land is the economy, even with ESAP-induced elements of the crisis." As long as the land question is postponed, it will continuously emerge in future as a political weapon or resource for the ruling party (Moore, 2001a).

2.4.5 What went wrong in Zimbabwe? Political instability and economic crisis

From the above discussion, the contention is that Zimbabwe was relatively stable in the first few years after independence extending to a number of years into the implementation of IMF policies. In fact, in a 1995 World Bank Report into the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program in Zimbabwe, the IMF recorded some positive results as indicated by (Brett, 2005) below:

> The original Project Completion Report of the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) that governed the new policy regime classified its outcome as "satisfactory" although this was subsequently downgraded to "marginally satisfactory" in the subsequent Performance Audit report (World Bank, in Brett, 2005: 93).

The case of Zimbabwe, it can be well argued, is that of failed political leadership as posited by Brett (2005). However, political leadership is not the only factor that can account for the economic problems in Zimbabwe. There are other factors brought about by 'the free market' that acted as powerful forces beyond political control some of which have been highlighted earlier. Brett, (2005) notes:

> The shift to liberal institutional arrangements in the last 20 years produced a new era marked by the renewed dominance of the market principle with economic and political decision making processes subjected to the rule of globally determined prices in the economic sphere and to multi-party elections in the political (Brett, 2005: 93).

The latter (multi-party elections) has changed the political landscape in many African countries since leaders swallowed the idea of multi-party democracy with a pinch of salt. Democracy has been implemented relatively differently in many African states producing different experiences for citizens and uneven economic development. Countries that are relatively stable politically show signs of rapid economic growth. South Africa and Ghana are good examples. Even though

the economic policy shift can largely be blamed for the economic problems in Africa, African leaders can also be blamed for the 'low intensity democracy' and political instability that has chased away investors. In such a scenario, the policy shift that was expected to improve the economies of African countries 'manufactured a crisis.' Although the wider implication of the shift in the global world has generally been positive, the worse-off have been countries on the periphery of the global metropolitan. Some of these countries have now been safely identified as failed states[29]. Good examples in Africa include Guinea, Niger, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Gabon, Somalia and Zimbabwe. Brett (2005:4) argues that "Zimbabwe's recent history provides us with an important natural experiment in understanding the impact of corporatist, as opposed to liberal policy regimes on developmental trajectories in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)." Why is Zimbabwe an important natural experiment?

Zimbabwe under the corporate state had certain measures that protected the economy such as price control, licensing, and subsidies that kept private firms under tight control. ESAP is said to have removed such restrictions opening up the economy to unfair competition and exploitation (Bond & Manyanya, 2002; Bracking, 2005). The government had to intervene – "corporatist controls over the exchange rate and many other prices were re-established that destroyed the viability of many firms and reduced the incentive to invest, and violent land expropriations followed." These factors affected the GDP between 2000 and 2002 which fell by about 26 percent (Economist Intelligence Unit in Brett, 2005: 94). Initially, "a series of counterproductive political decisions were taken from late 1997 – large payments to war veterans that undermined fiscal discipline, land appropriation and a decision to send the Zimbabwean army to the Congo" (Brett, 2005: 94; See also Freeman, 2005; Moore, 2001a; Moore, 2001c). Brett (2005:94) argues that the decisions made as a result of ESAP "represented a break with the relatively disciplined and coherent decision-making processes of the previous 18 years, and requires explanation. It cannot be attributed to a major breakdown in economic capacity, given that the worst had seemed to be over..." (See Bracking, 2005).

[29] (See Failed States Index, 2012 at www.fundforpeace.org retrieved 02 August 2012).

According to the African Presidential Archives state of Africa report (2009:1) on African leaders "a number of African countries have been making significant strides in furthering democratic and free market reforms." These changes reflect "the vision and dynamism of the present generation of African leaders in those countries." Further, the fact that "Africa's financial institutions – those indigenous in the continent – have historically been marginalized in the global economy is good news for Africa relative to the recent economic crisis." The marginalization seemed to have insulated them from the global financial crisis (APA, 2009:2). The report further argued that "African markets were more liquid than those in the Western world…something very positive…this solvency suggested that going forward, the financial architecture of the continent represents a solid foundation" (APA, 2009:2). The reason why such arguments are important is because they point out how every crisis brings in a number of opportunities that can be exploited. The Zimbabwean crisis presents the leaders in Zimbabwe and SADC region with an opportunity to reflect on their local and regional economic policies that can be used as solid foundations for rejuvenating the common market and exploiting its potential internally – such policies call for democratic and market reforms.

Brett (2005) raises important issues regarding economic stability and the political frameworks that would guarantee stability. The assumption that global market forces impact all countries in the world in a monolithic way should be abandoned. The relatively young markets in late developers, as he calls them, find it difficult to accommodate powerful global forces like competition, interest rates and foreign exchange rates due to the lack the institutional mechanisms, and proper fiscal policies to monitor and regulate such new developments – these issues take time to realize. Economic stability can be directly influenced by political stability. Therefore, both the economic and political regimes should work jointly on a compromise for the mutual existence of the two forces unless either of the two considers compromise a dirty word. Zimbabwe's example demonstrates the lingering suspicion from the political and economic sphere on the best economic approaches to adopt. However, the former regime would usually shape policy issues in a manner that greatly influences or affects the latter especially regarding property rights and the ability to conduct business in a friendly environment. Brett (2005: 6) argues:

> Political stability depends on the ability to sustain an economic process that can generate the fiscal and foreign exchange surpluses needed to finance the state apparatus and legitimize the regime. This does not impose determinate policy demands on the regime, since many solutions are compatible with long-term survival, if not with dynamic growth. However, there must be some degree of symbiosis between the needs of the economic groups that produce these surpluses and those of the political and administrative elites that are responsible for enforcing their property rights and providing them with essential services (Brett, 2005:6).

Brett (2005) shows the relationship between economic policies and regime survival. He argues that the nature of the constraints governing economic decisions are not random, but determined by the nature of existing policy regimes which, in turn, determine the conditions under which firms must operate in the economic sphere. When this happens the regime can "mobilize resources and maintain support" (Brett, 2005:6). Changes brought about by a sudden shift in the nature of existing economic policies existing will threaten the interests of either side leading to resistance, conflict and disorder. Brett (2005:6) observes that "it is clear that the major changes in rules, incentives, and power relations induced by the policy changes in Zimbabwe generated a major threat to the security of the ZANU-PF based political regime and to the viability of the state apparatus that sustained it." It is not surprising that ZANU-PF utilized any means possible to defend their 'legitimacy' such as operation *Murambatsvina* discussed in the next section (Bracking, 2005; See also Hammer, McGregor & Landau, 2010).

2.5 Social situation – Operation *Murambatsvina*, cholera and influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa

The understanding of social upheavals in Zimbabwe was premised on the idea that ZANU-PF was struggling to maintain the status quo through hook and crook. There are several issues that can be qualified as upheavals in Zimbabwe such as the notorious land invasions. However, the most prominent event that defined the upheavals in that country was operation *Murambatsvina* which was widely considered a deliberate effort to quash the opposition in Zimbabwe[30] (Potts, 2006). Episodes of cholera outbreaks and the influx of Zimbabwean into other countries, especially South Africa, were viewed as consequences of rural and urban displacement as a result of malgovernance in that country. Harris' in Vambe (2008) explores the discourse of dirt in the Zimbabwean colonial and post-colonial context. He carefully interrogates the discursive context in which the social disturbances code named *Murambatsvina* occurred. Munhande and Matonhodze, (2008: 2) argue that the interpretation of *Murambatsvina* in Shona which means "get rid of trash give rise to the question of: what constitutes trash, who is trash and who should get rid of trash?" The interpretation meant that the operation was getting rid of trash, people included. The event was presumed to clean up the filth where dirt was used as an excuse to moralize the state's hidden agenda in the operation (Harris in Vambe, 2008). Harris in Vambe (2008, 40) argues that "the Operation was driven by ideas about dirt and cleanliness with their roots in colonial, post-colonial, and nationalist constructions of cleanliness and dirt, purity and impurity, health and disease, as well as morality and immorality."

Just like the elections and 'economic collapse,' operation *Murambatsvina* also drew parallel views making it difficult to come up with a single definition. Charamba in Munhande and Matonhodze (2008: 3) argues that "the controversy in the conceptualization of operation

[30] See Moore's (2008) article "Coercion, Consent, Context: Operation *Murambatsvina* and ZANU-PF's Illusory Quest for Hegemony" in "*The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe"* and Chari's (2008) "Worlds Apart: Representation of Operation *Murambatsvina* in Two Zimbabwean Weeklies" also in the same publication. It illustrates how creative writers and popular singers have been sensitive to and critical of the colonial and post-colonial state habit of assigning the identity of 'human dirt' to those that they consider dissidents.

Muarambatsvina has thus seen parallel views being advanced, making it rather difficult to come out hard and fast with one definition…the interpretation has therefore been subjective rather than objective." Harris in Vambe, (2008:40) argues that "*Murambatsvina* is a symptom of various government anxieties about the loss of control of urban population irrespective of political affiliation." The government argued that *Murambatsvina* was aimed at arresting "disorderly or chaotic urbanization," inappropriate urban agricultural practices and black markets (Tibaijuka, 2005: 20). However, the Zimbabwean government 'good intentions' did not stop the public from accusing it of employing various forms of violent tactics during elections to maintain the status quo. The discourse of human rights was also used to condemn the operation. Potts in Vambe (2008: 63) argue that "to displace urban people forcibly…breached human rights, was destructive of livelihoods and caused enormous suffering." So what were the real intentions of the state when carrying out the operation? Of course, from a human rights discourse, one cannot buy the idea that the state simply wanted to bring sanity and order by getting rid of dirt and illegal activities in the informal settlements such as black market. This is due to the fact that people were denied their sources of livelihood and therefore such actions defeated the states good intentions. It also made the accusations from the civil society operating in Zimbabwe that the state wanted to displace the urban population in order to disrupt voting during elections appear credible.

As discussed previously, elections in Zimbabwe are usually controversial and the March 2005 one was a watershed in terms of controversy regarding Zimbabwean politics. That year's election was considered very crucial in determining the future of ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe. Chari (2008) explains how the Government embarked on a controversial clean-up exercise, Operation *Murambatsvina*, after winning the 2005 elections. Moore in Vambe (2008: 31) argues that "if Operation *Murambatsvina* is seen within the context of the long history of ZANU-PF's failed efforts to establish its rule as hegemonic – that is, more through consent than coercion and threats thereof – then it is understandable." Moore's (2008) argument on the reasons for the operation explains the complex relationship between economic policy regimes and their ability to create wealth for their citizens whereby the latter would guarantee their legitimacy. Mugabe was determined to rule through brutal force irrespective of people's resentment. Moore in Vambe,

(2008: 25) argues:

> The operation is an understandable consequence of ZANU-PF's failure to establish rule through hegemony rather than a sudden and almost inexplicable eruption of violence and inability to deal with economic crisis. It should be seen as an almost logical extension of the techniques of a party that has consistently failed to rule Zimbabwe through consent rather than force or its possibility. Indeed, closer inspection and historical analysis of the ruling party itself suggest that the leading elements within it rarely reach a position of 'minimal hegemony.' This lack of consensus spreads throughout the party and into society in manifestations of violence (Moore, 2008: 25).

Operation *Murambatsvina* received extensive newspaper coverage just like the political and economic problems experienced in that country related to the crisis. Chari (2008: 105), for example, discusses the polarity[31] of the Zimbabwean media in reporting Operation *Murambatsvina* in two local Zimbabwean newspapers. Even though this study was not concerned with how the Zimbabwean newspapers represented the operation, Chari's (2008) research echoes the idea of media polarisation discussed earlier concerning almost everything that had to do with the crisis in Zimbabwe. Chari (2004) looked at two Zimbabwean newspapers: *Sunday Mail* and *The Standard*. He argues that "the operation allowed the *Sunday Mail* and *The Standard* newspapers to go beyond the levels of 'permitted partisanship' in ethical journalism. Thus the real danger in such reporting is the possibility of the media alienating the reader." *The Standard* and *The Sunday Mail*, for example, had opposite positions in their coverage of the operation. Chari (2008: 105) argued that "*The Standard* largely presented operation *Murambatsvina* as a policy bankruptcy… state terror, state apartheid and crime against humanity" in an attempt to shape public opinion to its disastrous consequences by devoting significant space to its impacts. *The Sunday Mail*, on the other hand "legitimated the operation as

[31] The polarity was between the government owned media, *The Sunday Mail* (published by Zimbabwean Newspaper Limited, a government owned publishing company) and privately owned newspaper, *The Standard* (published by Zimind publishing group is owned by Trevor Ncube). Chari's (2008) "*Worlds Apart: Representation of Operation Murambatsvina in Two Zimbabwean Weeklies"* in the Hidden Dimensions of Operation *Murambatsvina*. p. 117 shows how different newspapers in Zimbabwe covered the operation. The coverage reflected their ideological positions.

a noble exercise for the restoration of law…having paved way for the introduction of a government program of reconstruction" (Chari, 2005: 109). Chari's (2004) work is worth mentioning because unlike this study, it focused on two papers that had totally different ideological inclinations.

The Standard newspaper used the idea of the 'worthy victim' as conceptualized by Herman and Chomsky. This concept is based on the use of the eye witness account or the first person narrative technique to explain the plight of the victims of the operation to win the sympathy of the reader. Chari (2008:112) argues that "the first person narrative technique provokes the anger of the reader. The government is described as a monster capable of trampling on its victim, while the victim is projected as good natured." Chari (2008) accuses the media in Zimbabwe for failing to project the clean-up operation in a manner reflecting its multifaceted nature but he is equally guilty of not giving a holistic view of why the media in that country operated as it did. Structural factors, such as the macro-level political system in Zimbabwe including media ownership and control, audience interests, market pressures, micro level ideologies of journalism, institutional pressures and psychological traits of individual journalists, are taken for granted in his critique. However, he exposes how 'crises' and conflicts can impose technical limitations, confirming that the press is never ideologically independent.

Contrary to the idea of the worthy victim, Musoni (2010) presents a very interesting perspective regarding the victims of *Murambatsvina* in his analysis of informal traders' responses to the operation in Zimbabwe. He argues that even though informal settlers/street venders appeared useless (dirty) since they were assumed to be outside Zimbabwe's formal economy, they invented useful ways of survival in the system for their own benefit well captured by Jeremy Jones in the Rise of *Kukiya-kiya* economy (Jones, 2010). Instead of bowing in defeat, they went back to the city and reconstructed their entrepreneurial structures in defiance. In addition, instead of participating in organized resistance following government crack-down, they intelligently avoided such resistance as much as possible and worked out solutions for their own benefit. Hammer, McGregro & Landu, (2010: 271) argue that:

> a progressive encroachment of economic styles and tactics formerly relegated to the urban social margins . . . activities formerly associated with down-class urban youth and 'part-time' female work have rapidly become the source of livelihood for much of the urban population and of government and big business. This has involved new understandings of space and time, characterised by a shift from 'straight' transactions, conducted according to known rules and moral codes, to 'zigzag deals' cut 'in a particular time and place (Hammer, McGregror & Landu, 2010: 271).

This shows that informal settlers think correctly about their situation and the circumstances surrounding them unlike the manner in which they have been represented by formal discourses of politics and human settlement. He argues that such mastery of local politics transformed them from mere victims to sophisticated equals of those with the 'formal' mentality. The latter is accused of undermining the informal sectors' contribution to the GDP (Musoni, 2010). Sachikonye (2006: 29) argues that the informal economy had become "a significant base for 'social reproduction,' indeed survival, as the formal economy experienced doldrums. Notwithstanding its role as a survival net, the government appeared not to have understood the need to promote the informal economy. Instead, it tended to be hostile towards it." Unfortunately, there are limited scholarly arguments on cholera and the influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa as opposed to political and economic issues in that country. Much of the discussions about the two events (cholera and the influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa) emanated from ordinary newspapers. This study relied on a data driven approach, whereby the findings in the analysis of these events in the three Weeklies drove the process of closure regarding the two events. The data driven approach imposed a limitation on the study because the selected newspapers had a number of stories on cholera but very few stories on the influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter contextualized the study by discussing the events unfolding in Zimbabwe considering that it used a theory driven approach. The South African Weeklies focused on the events because of historical parallels and relationships between the two countries. A good example of the relationship between the two countries is how they struggled against racist white minority rule. The struggle against the latter previously known as the fight for liberation in pre-colonial Zimbabwe translated into a post-colonial discourse of pan-Africanism, liberation solidarity, patriotic national history and neo-imperialism in the political power circles in Zimbabwe and South Africa. In Zimbabwe, the discourse materialized in the form of episodic violence in an attempt to answer the land question dubbed the "unfinished business" (primitive accumulation). The latter witnessed a series of invasions that received extensive coverage by the South African Weeklies. The chapter cited various scholarly arguments with a brief look at how the state and other media in Zimbabwe covered the situation. The chapter further underscored the importance of clearly understanding the history of Zimbabwe considering issues such as source politics, media polarization and the use of selective memory and history in discourses about Zimbabwe's political-economy. The chapter has argued that Zimbabwe, just like South Africa, struggled against white minority rule through a series of *Chimurengas* or liberation wars leading to the contentious Lancaster House negotiations. Even though the Lancaster House agreement has a negative legacy, according to many scholars who discredit it as a quick settlement that overlooked fundamental problems in that country, the settlement eventually paved way for a new democratic dispensation in 1980 under the leadership of Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party. The latter broke ranks with PF-ZAPU, a coalition partner in the Lancaster negotiations, but later united in 1987 marking the beginning of black majority rule.

The chapter also highlights the fact that Zimbabwe enjoyed significant socio-economic and political reforms in the early years of liberation that seemed to empower the black majority. However, as many scholars have argued in the chapter, the government later took unbudgeted decisions on various issues including sponsoring unnecessary wars in Congo and hefty payments to war veterans. In a climate of rapidly rising poverty, the government was pressured by

members of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA), an association set up in 1992 by the War Veterans Act in order to improve the welfare of ex-combatants and their dependents. Despite promises to uplift their lives, war veterans became increasingly disillusioned and began to put stronger pressure on the government (Bond 2007; Moore, 2001a; Freeman, 2005). In 1997, the government finally succumbed to war veterans' demands when it offered gratuities that were not budgeted for. The unbudgeted spending on war veteran pensions, coupled with a decision in 1998 to intervene in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are presumed to have led to a strong decline of the economy (Bond, 2007; Moore, 2001a).

In addition, the adoption of the Economi Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) in the early 1990s is said to have threatened the future of commercial white farmers and killed the manufacturing sector and the local market. ESAP necessitated a radical shift in economic policies from the left to right without proper planning and implementation (Bracking, 2005; Bond, 2007). The move from corporatism to neo-liberalism affected different economic and political stakeholders in varied proportions impacting heavily on the domestic market (Brett, 2005). The decisions later led to low investor confidence, shortage of foreign currency reserves and the weakening of the Zimbabwe dollar. The consequences were high unemployment rates, decline in food production, poor service delivery and the collapse of the ruling party's legitimacy to rule (See Hammer, McGregor & Landau, 2010).

Under such conditions, the civil society became increasingly vocal. In order to address the rising political and economic problems in the country, the labor union movement united under the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) resolved to support the formation of a new political party. This led to the establishment of the MDC in September 1999. The MDC has been unequivocally seen as a white sponsored project by the Government and a sell-out to liberation solidarity. Since the media, both locally and internationally was polarized in relation to how they represented the Zimbabwean situation, it was useful to be objective and critical on scholarly accounts of events in Zimbabwe. This is due to the fact that information about Zimbabwe is not value free and it is very easy to establish the lack of conscience in many scholars who have emerged as authorities regarding the problem in that country. This chapter underscored the need

to rigorously unpack Zimbabwe's history for a nuanced understanding of the situation in that country.

With monumental scholarly debates on the situation, it would be naive to argue that the South African Weeklies representation alone can give a true reflection of the events unfolding in that country. Of course, there is enough evidence to support the fact that Zimbabwe is experiencing serious problems such as the ones discussed in this chapter. However, the South African Weeklies' representation was equally problematic since it was ahistoric, sensational and amounted to misrepresentation of events in that country. This was due to the fact that every moment of representation is a unique moment that is determined by the constant change of social phenomena, the competing discourses at the time and how journalists choose to employ balance in their reporting (objectivity). Such factors are among other journalistic values and ideologies that dictate their work. Further, the ever changing social forces at any particular time in history can influence the approach taken in any study and this study is no exception. Nevertheless, the manner in which the selected Weeklies represented the Zimbabwean situation exposed how the South African society views itself and its politics.

Chapter three

Theoretical Framework

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section critically looks at scholarly works on the Western media's representation of Africa that focuses primarily on Zimbabwe. Among these works are Ndlela's (2005) "*The African Paradigm: 'The Coverage of the Zimbabwean "Crisis" in the Norwegian Media,* Akpabio's (2008) *"Framing of the Zimbabwean Crisis in Botswana Print Media,"* and Willems's (2005) "*Remnants of Empire? British Media Reporting on Zimbabwe."* The section also includes the works of Mudimbe (1988), Mudimbe (1994), Mazrui (2005) Nyamnjoh (2010) and Allimadi (2002) which deal with how Africa has generally been negatively represented by the Western media.These studies, especially Willems's (2005), have all extensively inspired the findings of this research. The second section discusses the theoretical framework utilized. It focuses on critical political-economy of the media, theories of news production and cultural studies. While critical political-economy is concerned with the macro-level factors that influence representation such as broader political ideologies, media ownership and control, advertising, the perception of audience as a market and news as a product in the "free market," theories of news production are concerned with the micro-level factors that influence the process of news production. These are factors such as institutional mechanisms, work practices and ideologies of journalism as a profession. Cultural studies looks at the potentiality of multiple meanings due to the polysemic nature of language.

3.1 Media representation and Africa

3.1.1 Introduction

Although studies have been done on media representation and Africa, they have mainly focused on the Western media's representation of Africa such as those of Agutu (2008) and Hawk (1992). The latter focuses on Africa's *Media Image*. It consists of several chapters by different scholars that capture the manner in which Africa has been represented. Agutu's (2008) work discusses important issues that influence media representation that this thesis touches on. To be more specific, it highlights the impact of media ownership on news content in Kenya. As already noted, additional theses that also focus on Western media representation of Africa included in this section are: Mudimbe (1988), Mudimbe (1994), Mazrui (2005), Nyamnjoh (2010) and Allimadi (2002). These scholars generally point out how Africa has been represented in a distorted way.

3.1.2 An insight

Africa has been generally represented negatively by the Western media (Mudimbe, 1994; Mudimbe, 1988; Mazrui, 2005; Nyamnjoh, 2010; Allimadi, 2002; Agutu, 2008; Hawk, 1992; Willems, 2005; Ndlela, 2005). Often such representations are characterized by stereotypical frames that journalists use as points of references whenever a new event unfolds in Africa (See Fourie & Karam, 2001; O'Sullivan, Dutton & Rayner, 2003). Hawk (1992) singles out the lack of symbolic cultural resources by Western journalists as the main reason for the distorted representation when they seek to report about Africa. The lack of such resources is a perennial problem that would actually work to limit their imagination and deeper contextual understanding of the factors that shape 'reality' in Africa. This being the case, journalists in Africa have faced various forms of criticism. For instance, Hawk (1992:187) show how "South African journalists have been criticized for giving stories from the frontline nations (nations bordering South Africa) a South African angle which has often been very similar to the American and Western perspective as evidenced in this study."

In Kenya, the criticisms seem to be similar as shown by Agutu's (2008) study *"The Impact of Ownership on Media Content: An Exploratory Case Study of Nation Media Group and Standard Newspaper Group; Kenya."* Media ownership patterns influenced news coverage and media content during the 2002 multi-party election in Kenya. Agutu, (2008: 8) indicates how "the emerging winner was also the candidate with the most coverage in the two newspapers." In addition, "election coverage was widely affected by editorial decisions on the chosen news content and how the editorial decisions were pegged to ownership influence in most cases" (Agutu 2008: 8). In such instances, media ownership patterns are seen to have influence on editorial choices, compromising the practice of objectivity and consequently influencing representation.

Agutu (2008: 87) utilizes critical political-economy of the media as a conceptual framework to show how "ownership patterns affect media messages in total disregard to established editorial policies and other industry best practices…ownership control and interference makes the future of journalists quite bleak." His study also shows how ethical journalism is facing its biggest test in the face of media ownership and business interests well captured in critical political-economy of the media. However, the study fails to account for the structural internal relationships that determine the news gathering process. He suggests the need for studies on how the internal news gathering process can be revitalized to ensure balanced and accurate news coverage – these are ideological and structural concerns. This study theoretically furthers Agutu's (2008) research. It utilizes theories of news production and semiotics to address the fractures existing in Agutu's (2008) work by analyzing the factors that influence the process of news production. In so doing, it critically examines the pressures and challenges editors and journalists face within the internal working environment and the consequences of such pressures on representation. Are the challenges that journalists face responsible for the negative portrayal of Africa? Why it is that news about Africa is always negative? Ndlela (2005: 73) argues that:

> The very process of selection and construction in representation serves not only to stereotype, but also to exclude many features and ways of understanding the issues in Africa. Negativity is one of the main features or dimensions of events which are likely to be reported in news media. Negative events in Africa increase the chances of those events being reported while positive events rarely attract the attention of the Western media. There has been a tendency in the Western media to represent Africa as a continent ravaged by disease, tribal conflicts, despair and depression. Negative developments or events in Africa easily fit into these stereotyped categories (Ndlela, 2005: 73).

In his introduction, Ndlela (2005:71) argues that "African countries are generally given scanty coverage in the daily news of the mainstream Western media, except when there is a big event going on, a pending catastrophe, or disaster." What does not come out clearly from Ndlela's (2005) work is the extent to which the work questions the epistemological frameworks that ideologies of journalism are founded on. For instance, how do ideologies of journalism dictate the criteria by which news is selected? Going by the news selection criteria, an event has a high threshold value if it is unusual or bizarre. If this criterion is employed, then it seems that Africa ranks high in disasters and catastrophes judging from the magnitude and frequency with which such events are reported in the continent. Any new big event unfolding or a pending catastrophe is likely to be reported as such – a disaster. Hall in Gurevitch, Curran and Wollacot (1982: 70) argue that "the signification of events is what has to be struggled over, for it is the means through which collective social understanding are created – and the means by which consent for particular outcomes can be effectively mobilized." The fact that Africa is represented negatively has to be struggled over because it reflects the politics of signification. Hall in Gurevitch, Curran and Wollacot (1982: 70) further argues that "ideology depends on the balance of forces in a particular historical conjuncture…central to how particular range of privileged meanings was sustained was the question of classification and framing."

The events unfolding in Zimbabwe since 2000 have been framed negatively to construct a broad consensus of the 'reality' that Zimbabwe was experiencing a crisis. Ndlela (2005:71) indicates that "the disputed parliamentary and presidential elections are events that have placed Zimbabwe

in the international media limelight." His paper analyzes the problematic issues associated with the coverage of the Zimbabwean crisis in the Norwegian mainstream media between 2000 and 2004. The analysis is limited to representations of the controversial land reforms and the disputed elections in two major newspapers, *Aftenposten*, *VG* and *Dagbladet*. Ndlela, (2005: 71) shows how "these newspapers represent the mainstream news flow in the country reaching thousands of readers daily." However, this study is much broader because it used three South African mainstream weekly newspapers and dealt with several socio-economic and political issues and was not limited to only two issues or events.

In order to examine the articles in the newspapers in his study, Ndlela (2005: 72) used a critical discourse analysis approach, "a particular type of qualitative methodology that tries to understand the processes through which reality comes into being." Jensen in Ndela, (2005:72) argues that discourse analysis offers insights into the way in which newspaper articles become meaningful to their readers by examining "the textual patterns that serve as the vehicle for communication." Considering that discourse analysis may be concerned with various aspects of language use such as syntax or semantics. Ndlela's (2005:72) study was concerned with language use in social contexts, whereby, "discourses are assumed to be functional with respect to various aspects of the social context." Ndlela's (2005) research is similar to this study at the level of how texts, located in particular social contexts, influence the way in which they construct meaning. In other words, there are particular societal structures that influence meaning construction through texts. The contention is that language constitutes a pre-existing reality. It does not reveal nor reflect pre-existing reality. Therefore, meanings of media texts are largely influenced by their authors and how they utilize language to construct meaning (Ndela, 2005).

The South African Weeklies simplified events owing to certain factors that limit their operation. A good example, out of the many events that have been simplified regarding the Zimbabwean situation, is the farm occupations. There is no doubt that the latter captured international headlines, but how were they really being reported? Willems (2005:95) argues that "farm occupations enabled journalists to simplify the situation in Zimbabwe" since "the more clear and unambiguous the signal… the more probable that it will be recorded as worth listening to"

(Galtung and Ruge in Willem, 2005:95). The possibility of reporting Zimbabwe positively was denied through signification politics where events were framed often negatively and sensationally "to limit the range of possible meanings" (Willems, 2005: 96). Even though Willems rightly noted how farm occupations were framed negatively and without contextualization, journalists had a different argument that justified the manner in which they covered of the occupations. They claimed that the latter were "a big story that you can't ignore" and had higher premium in the news value criterion because it involved the issue of race (Willems, 2005: 96).

Willems (2005:96) shows how "the dichotomy between good and evil" or black and white is used to construct news stories just as it is used to construct fiction" since both "news values and fictional values stem from the same society, they both bear the same need to be popular, and it is not surprising that they are fundamentally similar" (Fiske and Hartley in Willems, 2005: 96). In reporting the crisis, racial conflict, for example, is used to portray one side as good and the other as evil in reporting. Willems' (2005: 97) study show how "some newspapers in the British press supported the idea of racial conflict by suggesting incidences of ethnic cleansing." Her study further highlights how "British media framing of the situation in Zimbabwe as black versus white conflict ultimately made the much larger number of black victims invisible" – it marginalized them (Willems 2005:98). In other occasions, journalists personalized the situation in Zimbabwe where the blame shifted to personalities. This was a commercial strategy used to raise readers' interests and increase circulation. The key personality that the Weeklies focused on was Robert Mugabe with occasional references to Thabo Mbeki. Willems (2005: 100) captures occasions where Mugabe was represented as the 'bad guy' by the British media. She argues that:

> Journalists often used the metaphor of The Jewel of Africa to describe how wonderful Zimbabwe had been before Mugabe had turned it into a nightmare. The narrative of the transition from 'food basket to basket case' was often invoked in order to stress that Zimbabwe was the tale of a success gone bad (Willems, 2005: 100).

Presenting Robert Mugabe as the 'bad guy' solely responsible for the crisis in Zimbabwe is a problem since it takes for granted the many contextual factors that have shaped the situation in that country as discussed in the previous chapter. Like Ndlela (2005) and Hawk (1992), Willems (2005:100) concurs with the idea that superficial representation applies to Western media coverage of "geographically and culturally distant nations… affairs of these nations will be portrayed in the Western media as activities of …the head of state." Galtung and Ruge in Willems (2005: 100) argue that "the more events can be seen in personal terms, as due to the actions of specific individuals, the more probable that they will become a news item."

The fact that the media follows a routinized mechanism and is dictated by ideologies of journalism is well established and there is no need to rehearse it in this section but nevertheless, it was imperative that this thesis interrogate this mechanism that influences meaning through discourse analysis. Ndlela's (2005) and Willems' (2005) study, for example, used discourse analysis to show complexities in news production. This study used theories of news production to show how news texts can be seen as manifestations of complex journalistic processes, where mechanisms influence meaning, through ideological analysis. Discourse analysis helped Willems (2005) explore the various ways in which the British media and the broadsheets *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* in particular, have framed and represented events in Zimbabwe since 2000.

Ndlela (2005:72) aimed to examine "how the Zimbabwean crisis was represented and interpreted, who the main sources used or referred to were, their orientation, and whether they were primary or secondary sources." One fundamental element which all these studies identify is the polarized nature of the media in Zimbabwe. However, the polarized nature of the press was beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, as Ndlela's (2005) insists that "in any other conflict situation, there are many players who usually try to influence the outcome of the press and it is important to take note of the characteristics of the sources of information and their inherent biases" (Ndlela, 2005:72). In his findings, Ndlela (2005:89) argues that:

> […] land reforms and elections are presented within the general context of human rights, struggles for democracy, the rule of law, freedom of the press and economic development.... Representations have revolved around the usual framing associated with Western media. Representations of victimized farmers, dead white farmers and victimized black laborers reinforce deeply entrenched imageries of 'disaster' generally associated with Africa (Ndlela, 2005: 89).

While the Norwegian media reduced the complex Zimbabwean issue to a "typical African story of tragedy and despair" as argued by Ndlela, (2005:90), the British media and specifically *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, through strategies of simplification, ethnicisation and marginalization, framed and represented recent events in Zimbabwe in terms of racial conflict (Willems, 2005). However, the government, through the local media, re-appropriated the crisis. Willems (2005: 104) argued that the government represented the crisis as a "bilateral disagreement over land with imperial power (Britain) which resulted in a significant amount of solidarity and support from neighboring countries and black movements in the Diaspora."

According to Ndlela (2005) the Norwegian media representation of the crisis was simplistic and amounted to reductionism. But why does Ndlela accuse the Norwegian media of reductionism? The answer is partly due to the problematic nature of approaches to understanding cultural industries and debates on the best approaches to understanding complex socio-cultural processes being investigated (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). The other reason can be related to the limitations posed by political-economy theoretical approaches. The approaches have been criticized, especially by its left-wing cultural studies theorists of laying too much emphasis on texts and reducing complex issues such as the situation in Zimbabwe or media representation thereof to a single political-economic cause. A few justifications from the analysis of the representation of what is unfolding in Zimbabwe amounted to reductionism – The events were often explained in connection to liberation solidarity which was, of course, a neo-imperialism perspective. The events were therefore explained with the conviction that they were inevitable and necessary to safeguard the country from individuals with the latter mentality. In other occasions, the events

were simplified in line with the "African story of tragedy and despair" which, more often than not, amounted to misrepresentation (Ndlela, 2005:89).

If any analysis is confined to a single political-economic cause, the textual meaning often amounts to reductionism. Which means it uses what is already familiar about the situation to the audience to construct meaning. The situation in Zimbabwe is therefore likely to be constructed as another African tragedy. A tragedy of the post-colonial African mindset determined to resist neo-imperialism, defend liberation solidarity and engage the West with suspicion. This is opposed to a determinism approach, whereby certain contextual conditions and broader structures can be used to understand and set limits to the possible determinants of events that lead to certain textual discourses and meaning in the first place. Like the case of how liberal human rights and democracy discourses would influence reporting. This calls for the consideration of various competing but yet determining contextual factors regarding how the Zimbabwean situation is represented. When this happens, the best combination of factors can be chosen to explain the peculiar events in that country since events do not impact on the situation in one monolithic manner (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). Thus, a complementary approach or framework, like the one utilized in this study, is usually advisable.

The analytical approach utilized in this study set the processes of economic determination alongside other processes and pressures in culture and analyzed their interaction (Hesmondhalgh 2007). Other important factors in examining a cultural moment, phenomenon or processes are: the role of institutions that have been colonially inherited; the forms of discourses such as: neo-imperialism, pan-Africanism, national patriotic history, versus liberal ideals of human rights and democracy and the fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa captured in phrases such as "Mugabe must go." Considerable attention should also be paid to questions of redistributive justice. The commonsensical conviction among some Zimbabweans about land repossession that is meant to address colonial injustices had a wider implication in the SADC region. For example, there were widespread fears in South Africa that the land question and the manner in which Harare has handled it would impact on South Africa in the same fashion (Bond & Manyanya, 2002). It would be more useful if all these factors were taken into account.

The approach chosen in this study was sensitive to the factors mentioned above. However, the researcher's subjective purpose posed a huge limitation to the level of sensitivity allowed. Such limitations are common in empirical research with idealistic trajectories and metaphysic as a philosophical branch concerned with the nature of being and the world or reality. This being the case, the study strived to be more nuanced in its analysis of the coverage of the socio-economic and political events in Zimbabwe by the South African Weeklies. This allowed the study to depart from the superficial analysis that has been the bedrock or nature of most scholarly analysis of the international press's coverage of Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa. If attention is paid to Ndlela's (2005) conclusion, then there is a clear indication of his subjective purpose which reminds us of the difficulty in addressing the limitation of researcher bias. Ndlela (2005: 89) argues that:

> Systematic reading of the Norwegian media leaves no doubt that the selection of the events, the angles taken and the comments are influenced by the interpretations and stance of the international community in relation to the conditions in the country. The presentation and interpretation of the events in Zimbabwe cast a pale shadow on the neutrality and objectivity of the Norwegian and British media (Ndlela, 2005:89).

The fact that the media do not present a comprehensive and balanced account of the crisis but one that fits into the dominant paradigms associated with the representations of Africa in the Western media is a conclusion that was not unexpected in this study. This was due to the fact that "the South African Weeklies covers issues in Africa from an Anglo-Western perspective" (Paterson in Hawk, 1992:187). The Norwegian media and British media failed to reconcile the polarized interpretations given to the elections and land reforms thereby missing opportunities for more informed and nuanced coverage of the Zimbabwean crisis.

Akpabio's (2008) study, mentioned earlier, is quantitative and one of the limitations of a quantitative approach is that it fragments units of analysis into countable forms and does not clearly show the relationship between the units with broader structures to give them meaning. It

does not critically analyze the deeper meanings and subtleties of the frequent occurrences. So what distinguishes this study from the aforementioned ones? The distinguishing factor is derived from the methodological approach. In other words, how the study utilised both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The latter approach analyzed the numerical occurrence of thematic data while the former provided rich explanations of its meaning. Akpabio (2008:8) agrees that the categorization system he used fails to account for the institutional roles, epistemologies and ethical ideologies of media professionals:

> It fails to account for the stereotypical portrayal of Zimbabweans as law breakers which becomes part of 'common knowledge,' and which may have xenophobia as one of its spin offs. The measurement table gives no specific indication of the portrayal of Zimbabweans so that remedial measures can be taken to procure better images (Akpabio, 2008:8).

With no evidence of critical analytical qualitative studies on how South African Weeklies represented the Zimbabwean crisis[32], it was very important to fill this gap. The press in South Africa can be considered a local press because it is situated within the boundaries of the African continent. It was interesting to explore how it represented issues about Africa and specifically Zimbabwe. The most important issue was the kind of language the Weeklies used in framing the reality of events unfolding in that country (Shohat et al, 1994). The fact that South Africa is a neighbouring country to Zimbabwe creates value through proximity regarding journalism. The South African Weeklies strived to report the political, economic and social issues unfolding in Zimbabwe by giving them a South African angle to suit the interests of the South African audience. Considering that Zimbabwe has a relatively large white population, it would be

[32] Since the year 2000, Zimbabwean society has been facing enormous problems of a political, economic and social nature, which collectively constitute what has been called the Zimbabwean crisis. Much of what has escalated the situation is the manner in which the media has represented it. One could easily tell the ideological agenda of the media due to its polarized nature. Different stakeholders have come up with several theses on what led to the problem however, the information they have advanced is not value free. This calls for a proper 'objective' account of the historical trajectories and contextual factors that have shaped the 'reality' in that country. See Mlambo A. (2005).Moods of Bitterness: How Political Polarization has Influenced Zimbabwean Elections. *Journal of African Elec*tion issue 4 No. 2. 15-36.

obvious for the Weeklies, which are white male dominated[33], to have an interest in that country. However, giving stories unfolding in Zimbabwe a South African angle, can sometimes lead to distorted representation and bias.

3.1.3 Thinking about an African media

Apart from the scholarly works already discussed that have made significant contribution to the literature about the Western media representation of Africa, others that are equally worth exploring in this chapter, as stated earlier, are the works of: Mudimbe (1988), Mudimbe (1994), Mazrui (2005), Nyamjoh (2010) and Allimadi (2002). Mudimbe's (1988; 1994) compelling theses titled *"The Invention of Africa"* and *"The Idea of Africa"* respectively, have made significant contributions to the critique about the construction of otherness in Western discourses and the assumption that Western episteme about ideas of Africa and its people is the universal blueprint. Mudimbe's (1988) contribution "*The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and Order of Knowledge"* hypothesizes the possibility of authentic African systems of knowledge that are not necessarily bound by the normative conventions of Western science defined through a certain episteme. Mudimbe brings about the idea of *gnosis* derived from the Greek word *gnosko* which means seeking to know, inquiry, methods of knowing, investigations or acquaintance with someone. He distinguishes *gnosis* that is bound by African traditionalism and ways of reasoning, which are different and unique, from the Western episteme. He argues that:

> Often the word [*gnosis*] is used in a more specialized sense, that of higher and esoteric knowledge, but one strictly under the control of specific procedures for its use as well as transmission. *Gnosis* is, consequently, different from *doxa* or opinion, and, on the other hand, cannot be confused by episteme understood as both science and general intellectual configuration (Mudimbe, 1988: ix).

[33] Two out of the three selected South African Weekly newspapers editors interviewed were whites. Observations in the news rooms also revealed that there were more white males working for the newspaper organizations.

Mudimbe's title *"The Invention of Africa"* is therefore a methodological tool, "it embraces the question of what is and what is not African philosophy and also orients the debate in another direction by focusing on the possibility of philosophy as part of the larger body of knowledge of Africa called "Africanism" (Mudimbe, 1988: ix). In conceptualizing such a possibility Mudimbe questions the authenticity of the subjects of such discourses that can be regarded 'real African' and are informed from African *gnosis*. Who has the moral authority to represent or talk about an African discourse? Who has the rights and credentials to produce it, describe it or comment about it? Is it African scholars of philosophy or scholars of African philosophy? And what does their contribution mean to African philosophy? The former have been instrumental for the rejection of the Hobbesian "man in the bush" myth by separating the "real" African from the westernized African and to strictly rely upon the first. However, they have often been insufficient in themselves for they have failed to explain African philosophy beyond the parameters of Western conventional epistemology or normative conventions. Consequently, Mudimbe looks upstream with caution for results on precisely what makes such an objective African reality possible regarding "discourses of African societies, cultures and people as signs of something else." Mudimbe's approach is a revelation of the level of caution required before making conclusions or predictions on the possibility of genuine African philosophy as distinct from the West (Mudimbe, 1988: x). Mudimbe analyzes the emerging trends concerned with the idea of reconstructing and reinventing narratives and experiences about Africa and "the idea of Africa" as opposed to the understanding rubberstamped by colonialists and missionaries whose views have broadly framed Western episteme when representing the continent (See Mudimbe, 1994).

Hountondji's (1996) thesis "*African Philosophy, Myth and Reality"* seems to echo the weakness of African Philosophy, a term which she boldly refers to as a myth. After mentioning several scholars of African philosophy in the continent, those inspired through Christianity such as: Placide Templels, Alexis Kagame, Mgr Makarakiza and Antoine Mabona and several lay authors such as: Kwame Nkurumah, Leopold Sengoh, Adesanya and William Abraham, she concludes that these scholars have made use of African traditions and oral literature in such a way that they have "projected onto them their own philosophical beliefs hoping to enhance their credibility thereby" (Hountondji, 1996: 62). Hountondji is convinced that the brand of philosophy

masquerading as authentic, collective and homogeneous African philosophy is actually a personal philosophy. She argues that:

> That is how the functioning of this thesis of a collective African philosophy works: It is a smoke screen behind which each author is able to manipulate his own philosophical views. It has nothing beyond this ideological function: It is indeterminate discourse with no object…it is therefore clear [for example] that the Bantu philosophy of the one is not the philosophy of the Bantu but that of Tempels, that the Bantu-Rwandais philosophy of the other is not that of the Rwandais but that of Kagame (Hountondji's, 1996: 62).

Nevertheless, the most interesting issue is how Hountondji (1996) conceptualizes African philosophy. Even though she contends that African philosophy may be lazily sheltering behind the authority of a tradition and projects its own theses and belief onto that tradition, she accepts the potency of the emergence of African philosophy, and therefore its existence, by qualifying the importance of the origin of the authors of such discourses. She introduces the idea of speaking of African philosophy in a new sense arguing that:

> We must draw a line between African and non-African writers, not because one category is better than the other, or because both might not, in the last analysis say the same thing, but because the subject being African philosophy, we cannot exclude a geographical variable taken here as empirical, contingent, extrinsic to the content or significance to the discourse and as quite apart from any questions of theoretical connections (Hountondji, 1996: 64).

From the above perspective, although the works of authors such as Placide Tempels (mentioned earlier) deal with an African subject and have played a significant or "decisive role in African ethnophilosophy," they belong to European scientific literature "in the same way as anthropology in general, although it deals with non-Western societies, is an embodiment of Western science, no more and no less" (Hountondji, 1996: 64). So what makes works of authors like Mudimbe (1988; 1994) critical is the fact that they have emanated from the perspective of an African writer as stated by Hountondji. Their geographical value and contingency has boosted their authority making them important in the advancement of African philosophy. However, they

have themselves not escaped criticisms. They have been accused of anthropological and philosophical deconstructionism, reductionism and obscurity regarding the history of African history and culture and their representation in discourses of Western scholarship (Wylie, 1996). They have also been criticized for assuming that there is an "inherent centrism of the Western episteme in all representations of Africa (even African ones)" (Kresse, 2005: 7). However, the works have often been credited for curving out possible pathways for African philosophy "beyond the impasse between ethnophilosophy and adaptation of Western philosophy to Africa." Mudimbe (1988; 1994) "raises hopes for authentic African systems of thought which can be revealed through anthropology of knowledge" (Masolo in Kresse, 2005: 7). Mudimbe's (1988; 1994) works are important in this study because they analyze the representation of Africa in the Western discourse and by African scholars. His works approach the problematic Western media representation of Africa from the Foucauldian epistemology to debates on rationality (Midumbe in Bongmba, 2001).

He "outlines the epistemological ideology behind Western discourse and the resulting double consciousness that it has created in African intellectuals concerned with the idea of how Africa has been represented in the Western discourse" (Mudimbe in Bongmba, 2001: 57). Mudimbe's (1988; 1994) works are important contributions regarding Western media representation and Africa since, in their deconstructive sense they raise questions of otherness, "directed first towards its construction by Western discourse and second towards otherness as understood by African intellectuals who, working largely within the epistemological legacy of the West, are attempting to reclaim a marginalized otherness" (Mudimbe in Bongmba, 2001: 57). Mudimbe in Bongmba (2001) further argues that following colonial occupation, the colonizer constructed a dichotomizing discourse that, first and foremost, separated the "traditional" and "modern" in literature, "oral" versus "written"; and about communities, "urban" versus "rural." Colonialists set up cultural and religious institutions to cement these dichotomies. These institutions created a marginality space for the imagination of traditionalism and the projection of modernity of colonialism – the latter would work to guarantee that colonialism would necessarily bring about "modernity" (and later democracy as argued by Hyden, Leslie and Ogundimu, 2007) where, in this case, modernity would imply the abandonment of anything African or traditional (Mudimbe in Bongmba, 2001). Mudimbe in Bongmba (2001: 58) further argues that "Africa became the

boundary that demarcates white and black, civilized and uncivilized.

The most interesting point in this debate is how Africa is conceptualized as the inferior partner. In other words, anything African is perceived to have come from elsewhere outside the continent. Such notions of a normative human culture should be rejected. Take metaphysics for example, and the contention is that there is a clear differences between how science of the concrete (materialism) and science of the abstract (idealism) are used to reason. The argument is that both these sciences are different and parallel systems of knowledge. The latter means that they replace the opposition established between science and magic (Mudimbe in Bongmba, 2001). African scholars have therefore challenged the evaluative scale and ideological presupposition of the social sciences in an attempt to subvert colonial discourse. Mazrui (2005: 68) echoes Mudimbe's argument terming it "whistle blowing against ideologies of otherness…" where the invention of Africa is traced back to similar Western explorations. Mazrui (2005) contends that Africa has been re-invented in different stages citing the example of the birth and spread of Islam both in the North and South of the Sahara, the impact of European capitalism and subsequent colonization and globalization. Mudimbe's (1988; 1994) works are important in this study considering the relevance of re-inventing Africa and deconstructing Western discourses prevalent in media representation. Contextual factors such as natural features, cultural characteristics, and values contribute to the reality of Africa as a continent and its civilization as constituting a totality unique and different (Mudimbe in Bongmba, 2001). However, Mudimbe's thesis, *"The Idea of Africa"* (1994), has been criticized for attempting to construct a master-discourse regarding African history or a divine history of African histories (Wylie, 1996).

Allimadi's (2002) work equally looks at the consequences of the repeated negative depiction of Africa and how the West has repeatedly condoned enslavement and colonization, genocide, contempt, hatred, and racism towards black people to a point where black people have suffered as a result of the negative media images. Allimadi (2002) singles out three episodes in Africa's history and how they were represented by the Western media to underscore his discontent. The first one is the Rwandan genocide which was dismissed by the Western media as a "tribal" affair ignoring the underlying factors (Allimadi, 2002). The second one is that of Kenya in the 1960's

where the Western media demonized Jomo Kenyatta for leading the *Mau-Mau* (Liberation fighters) uprising when Kenyans battled the British occupation of their land. The third and last episode is the focus of this study where the Zimbabwean president has been demonized by the Western media for not respecting human rights and democracy when he authorized land seizures from large scale white minority farmers for redistribution to black Zimbabweans (Allimadi, 2003; Scoones, 2010). Such representations, constituting excessive Western universalism, were often met with criticism by pan-African scholars (Ranger, 2004). Ranger (2004: 222), for example, quoting an admirer of President Mugabe, Professor Tafataona Mahoso, quickly points out that "the Mugabe demonized in the Western press was not the 70-year-old President as an individual but Mugabe as the embodiment of pan-African spirit." He further argues that:

> Mugabe is now every African who is opposed to the British and North American plunder and exploitation…So, old Mugabe here is not the person of Robert Mugabe. Rather, it is that powerful elemental African memory going back to the first Nehanda and even to the ancient Egyptians and Ethiopians who are now reclaiming Africa in history as the cradle of humankind…The Zimbabwe opposition and their British, European and North American sponsors have exposed themselves as forces opposed to Mugabe as pan-African memory, Mugabe as the reclaimer of the African space, Mugabe as the African power of remembering the African legacy and African heritage which slavery, apartheid and imperialism thought they had dismembered for good…It is not accidental that both the opposition to Mugabe and its sponsors sought to denigrate African liberation history as outmoded and undemocratic traditions…The West stresses mechanical, even computerized recall, in the place of what Mary Daly calls 'deep ancestral memory.' In the place of original elemental memory which reconnects the once disconnected and liberates them, the West now prefers speed and efficiency which are often mistaken for information and knowledge. What the West takes for memory is mechanical recall, superficial regurgitation of formulaic catechism which are taken out of context because they must be both uni-polar (centralized) and globalised – rule of law, transparency, free enterprise and human rights (Mahoso in Ranger, 2004: 222).

Allimadi (2002) argues that European travelers who visited Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries and wrote stories about the continent acted as the original media for capturing the wrong memory of Africa and were responsible for disseminating racist images about Africa[34] (Fuller, 2004). Allimadi (2002: 5) states that:

> The media racist representation of Africans and black people in general, have been so effective that many contemporary white writers still view black people through the prism of bigotry created by their forefathers over several centuries. In order for this modern day white writers to write balanced and informative articles about Black people, they must first re-read many of the publications that have formed white people's perception of Blacks (Allimadi, 2002: 5).

Allimadi (2002: 3) contends that Western news organizations often are accomplices and apologists for the negative portrayals in Africa. He argues that "I am not so naive to believe that any book will eliminate offensive and racist representation of black people…there are powerful entities that benefit from the deep seated prejudice that has historically distorted Western media's representation of Africa." So how can African journalists redeem Africa from the deep seated prejudices? Nyamnjoh (2010) argues that assumptions underpinning African journalistic practices are not informed by the fact that Africans are currently involved in Africanizing their modernity and modernizing their Africanity. Therefore, a complex dichotomy that is far beyond the simplistic Western one regarding Africa is necessary. This requires a broader understanding that the perception of journalism varies in many African countries. The worst thing to do is to assume that there is homogeneity about the best ways of being and doing to which all Africans aspire as they walk into modernity and civilization (Nyamnjoh, 2010).

[34] Fuller, A. (2004). *Scribbling the Cat*. New York: Picador. Alexander fuller was born in England in 1969 and in 1972 she moved with her family to a farm in what was then Rhodesia. After that country's civil war in 1981, the Fullers moved first to Malawi, then to Zambia. The Herald described the book as "evocative about smells and sight of Africa." However, the book is full of sweeping generalizations and exaggerations about the conditions and experiences in Africa. The book is one of the examples of books with stereotypical representations that Allimadi (2002) criticizes for the distortion of the reality in the continent.

This disjuncture is at the heart of the dilemma currently facing journalism in Africa whose efforts are geared towards creatively approaching African affairs with great sensitivity and nuance in order to embrace African humanity. Such constraints imply that African journalists are playing second fiddle, applying a journalism of mimicry and bandwagonism (Nyamnjoh, 2010). The latter applies to the South African Weeklies analyzed in this study. The Weeklies simply reported the situation in Zimbabwe as would be expected of any Western media. Nyamnjoh (2010: 14) further argues that:

> Because journalism has tended to be treated as an attribute of the 'modern' societies, it is only proper that African journalism and the societies it serves, are taught the principles and professional practices by those who know what it means to be civilized…aspiring journalists must, like containers, be dewatered from the mud and dirt of culture as tradition and custom, and filled a fresh with the tested sparkles of culture as modernity and civilization (Nyamnjoh, 2010: 14).

This being the case, African journalists operate in a world where everything has been pre-described for them by others where they only implement things without the opportunity to think and rethink (Nyamnjoh, 2010). Nyamnjoh, (2010: 15) hypothesizes that "if journalism privileges a hierarchy of humanity and human creativity and that the latter in Africa is presumed to be in abyss, then such journalism is bound to be prescriptive , condescending, contrived, caricatured, and hardly in tune with the quest by Africa for equality, recognition and representation." The same argument can be applied to democracy in Africa where a closer inspection shows how journalism has been articulating and appreciating reality through the prescriptive lenses of those who are convinced that their ideas of humanity and creativity are incontestably rich for uncritical adoption by emerging others (Nyamnjoh, 2010).

Mudimbe (1994) quotes Amselle in an interesting analysis that brings forth the possibility of unity among varying discourses. Amselle in Mudimbe (1994) questions ethnophilosophy arguing that it has sanctioned reasoning about 'reality' since its guiding principle centered on the

distinction between contentious objects of reason. Within this framework, the conceptualization of African political systems has been constructed through a thread of tensions that define the existence between the two competing objects of reason, e.g. state versus segmentary societies, the market versus subsistence economies and Christianity or Islam versus paganism etc. An interesting question is posed regarding the regularity of ethnographers finding the modern in traditionalism which is, indeed, a paradox. Amselle's work written in French features a collection of nine essays that introduce another form of 'reason' founded on the basis of the quest for truth in multicultural societies. This kind of reason is less concerned with differences (distinction) and questions of what concepts pre-existed the others. Rather, it establishes the manner in which differences are integrated to form a totality that is universal (Amselle in Mudimbe, 1994). Therefore, Amselle breaks the tensions that often exist about the universality of democracy by extending views that are sympathetic to cultural relativism (cultural empathy) but also question ethnophilosophy and ethnocentrism as argued below:

> This reason instead of distinguishing and separating, would bear witness to the indistinction or original syncretism of elements in a social totality and thus at least solve the dilemma opposing the universality of human rights and cultural relativism, a dilemma which, in terms of political values, actualizes the tensions between universality as totalitarianism and cultural relativism as an expression of democracy (Amselle in Mudimbe, 1994: 53).

Amselle presents a rationality that "refuses to reduce African culture and the body of its social practices and negotiations to an immobile essence" and, at the same time, gives a "critical appraisal of the politics of universality (Amselle in Mudimbe, 1994: 53). Mudimbe (1994) quotes Herskovits who states "when one pays attention to the declension of the concept of civilization and culture in the singular and the plural; the singular always postulates the unity of humankind, the plural its diversity and cultural variation" (Herkovits in Mudimbe, 1994: 49). Herskovits criticized Henry E. Garret, a psychology professor who argued that racial differences and inequalities are empirical facts that were being opposed by a conspiracy of apostles of the

"equalitarian dogma" (Herskovits in Mudimbe, 1994: 49). Herskovits's criticisms outline two different and complementary orders of reflection:

> On the one hand, there is an explicit ethical argument contending in the name of science and reason, that there is a historicity proper to each human group and even each individual. This historicity can account for differences between cultures and between individuals, but no scientific valid evidence has ever been produced to show that these differences, either in general intelligence or particular aptitudes, are related to race. On the other hand, a more discrete order, strongly pressed, yet implicit, alludes to a major epistemological issue (Herskovits in Mudimbe, 1994: 49).

Herskovits in Mudimbe (1994: 49) quotes Foucault to illustrate how "Western culture has contributed in the name of man, a being who, by one and the same interplay of reasons, must be a positive domain of knowledge and cannot be object of science." Such views are central in questioning ethnocentrism in order to give room for cultural diversity. Culture approached in its diversity presents humanity with perhaps the best possibility of finding closure to the ever arching question of 'objective truth' that would speak well to the collective predicament of mankind. Herskovits in Mudimbe (1994: 49) argues that:

> The very core of cultural relativism is the social discipline that comes out of respect for differences – of mutual respect. Emphasis of the worth of many ways of life not one, is the affirmation of values in each culture. Such values seek to understand and to harmonize goals, not to judge and destroy those that do not dovetail with our own. Cultural history teaches that, important as it is to discern and study the parallelism in human civilizations, it is no less important to discern and study the different ways man has devised to fulfill his needs (Herskovits, 1994: 49).

Hesrkovits points out the importance of allowing democracy in Africa to materialize in a manner that respects African historicity, culture and values which should be represented by the media in Africa or African journalists who must tirelessly work to reproduce discourses that are sensitive

to Africa's historicity and civilization ambitions. This should be done with the hope that, out of such discourses, there can emerge a powerful and vibrant African democracy and a media system that is in synchrony with the Western ones, yet, unique and different in its approach to the understanding and representation of the world around it. The problem has been that African journalism has uncritically adopted liberal democracy without questioning its architects. The latter have played God and the results have been a clash of values, for the West embraces individual liberty while Africa embraces cultural communities, ethnic belonging, province or region first before state and nation. This reality paints a gloomy picture even to the most optimistic pan-Africanists about the success of democracy in Africa in the present context (Nyamnjoh, 2010). Nyamnjoh (2005) criticizes the version of liberal democracy implemented in Africa by the common argument that:

> Liberal democracy and Africa are not good bedfellows. Implementing liberal democracy in Africa has been like trying to force onto the body of a full figured person, rich in all the cultural indicators of health with which Africans are familiar, a dress made to fit the slim, de-fleshed Hollywood consumer model of a Barbie-doll entertainment icon. But instead of blaming the tiny dress or its designer, the tradition has been to fault the popular body or the popular ideal of beauty for emphasizing too much bulk, for parading the wrong sizes, for just not being the right thing. Not often is the experience of the designer or the dressmaker questioned, nor his/her audacity in assuming that the parochial cultural palates that informs his/her peculiar sense of beauty should play God in the lives of regions and cultures where different criteria of beauty and the good life obtain (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 25).

If democracy as implemented in Africa has been faulted for its failures, what options do Africans have? Is there an episteme, outside the frameworks of conventional normative Western ways of knowing or reasoning that are uniquely African, and are self-sufficient, in rationalizing cultural experiences and traditional forms of being or civilization, that can replace the Western democratic ideology? This thesis does not intend to argue that African humanity, creativity and culture are instead superior to those of the West and, therefore, should replace them or survive on

their own. Such an argument does not help the situation because it only sustains the same power modality. Rather, it is more rational to argue that both Western and African discourses exist alongside a certain historical episteme, a reality that will demand subjective inquiry when examining their character, which means that both should be given an equal opportunity to thrive as parallel systems of knowledge where none imposes anything on the other. If anything, they should interact to produce richer discourses of human civilization (See Mudimbe, 1988; Mudimbe, 1994; see alo Mudimbe in Bongmba, 2001; Hountondji, 1996).

If Africans are crying foul that democracy is a Western concept and IMF's and World Bank's activities in Africa, such as ESAP, have destabilized the political-economy of the continent, then they should seek ways of challenging (Mbeki made a fair contribution through NEPAD and African Renaissance) these institutions innovatively to speak to the 'realities' on the ground rather than playing victims. Regarding the practice of journalism in Africa, it is true that ideologies of journalism could be Western but this does not imply that they are all totally inapplicable to the African context. For example, if this thesis chooses to give greater premium to Mano's (2005) debate about competitive paradigm regarding journalism over that of the dominant paradigm, as has traditionally been the case, then Africa stands to benefit. Mano (2005: 58) argues that competitive paradigm sees journalistic media in terms of sources of information and societal watchdogs. "The Journalist is depicted as a servant of the public interest." This is opposed to the dominant paradigm where "journalists are subject to control by political elites, media owners and their superiors…the dominant paradigm depicts journalists as people who seek to please their masters in the newsrooms in which they work." If journalism can genuinely be a source of information and a societal watchdog as posited in the competitive paradigm, then this is something to celebrate both for Africa and the West. In addition, if we agree that the competitive paradigm is a Western conceptualization then, surely, it is one of those concepts that can be applicable in Africa for the benefit of Africans – how to apply it may seem to be the challenge. Moore (2001b:909) sums it up excellently:

> Progressive intellectuals and journalists may portray the World Bank's and IMF's activities in Africa as the 'recolonisation' of the dark continent, but they are nearly as

deterministic and Eurocentric as less sympathetic writing and often still fail to advance beyond various revised versions of dependency theory. 'Globalisation' seems to be the same old story for Africa (Moore 2001b: 909).

3.1.3 Conclusion

Newspapers in Africa such as the South African Weeklies can go beyond the superficial representation of events in Africa to play both a critical, inclusive democratic and developmental role that suits the African continent. However, the above assumption can only be qualified if a consensus is reached that Western values of civilization, humanity and creativity are the best and should be adopted by significant others – a discourse that has been rejected by pan-African scholars. So what are the alternatives for 'African modernization'? Can the press, for instance, spearhead a democratic revolution characterized by the idea of liberating the community as opposed to the individual to suit the African context? Or will this necessarily imply a return to communism? Generally, ideas of democracy have been well received in many parts of the world due to the fact that they are underpinned by the universality of human rights and freedom common to all mankind. Out of several issues that influenced the South Africa Weeklies representation of events in Zimbabwe, the idea of human rights and democracy played a big role. One cannot, therefore, afford to excessively criticize the Weeklies for the negative representation or misrepresentation of events in Zimbabwe but fail to recognize the broader discourses that pre-define journalism in the broader African continent. Even though the macro and micro environments within which the media in Africa operates are dictated by peculiar histories, cultural values, creativity and notions of humanity that differ from those of the West, the universal value of human rights is more binding. However, it can be impossible to apply a brand of journalism that requires thinking and rethinking in an environment where things have been pre-defined. Arguably, the opportunity to be creative about Africa is undermined by the pre-defined Western reality. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible to apply a brand of journalism that reflects a general consensus regarding the entire humanity.

Why is the latter a big challenge? Newspapers operating within the Western discourse follow a conventional routine. For example they would habitually employ a delicate balance when

constructing news through the utilization of sources to frame issues. If democracy and good governance are the guiding principles in the environment or society in which the press operates, then the press is obliged to construct prescriptive discourses that can help strengthen democratic institutions of governance to guarantee liberty, if in their view, those institutions are operating outside the normative acceptable threshold, not only in comparison to the West but within a globally acceptable consensus – both the West and Africa can surely benefit from good institutional governance. This has been the case with the South African Weeklies and the Zimbabwean situation. Even though the Weeklies were superficial and sensational, they played a critical role in that they set precedence for the much needed pressure, both locally and internationally, for the restoration of political and economic stability in Zimbabwe. In the Western dominant paradigm, political stability is presumed to be a pre-condition for economic development, improved governance, employment creation, poverty alleviation and investment in better health and education systems. These are important issues whether they are being implemented in Africa or the West. However, such media roles were beyond the scope of this study. The aim of this study was to investigate the kind of meaning emerging out of the ways in which the South African Weeklies represented the Zimbabwean situation and the factors that influenced such kinds of representations. A closer inspection revealed that, in actual sense, the manner in which the South African Weeklies represented the situation amounted to misrepresentation. The works discussed in this section attempted to give insight and highlight the common ways in which Africa, and particularly Zimbabwe, is represented by Western press, which the South African Weeklies are modeled under, that should not be taken for granted

3.2. Critical political-economy of the media, theories of news production and cultural studies

This section discusses critical political-economy of the media, theories of news production and cultural studies as complementary theoretical frameworks used in this study. Critical political-economy of the media discusses representation from a macro level. At this level, it explains factors that shape and influence how the media represents reality. Among the political factors that are important is how the political system and culture influence media agency including the levels of editorial independence. The influence of economic factors includes media ownership patterns, ways of funding media and how they shape editorial choices and practices. Theories of news production were used to understand the actual process of representation, that representation is a process that involves construction of news in particular ways. Cultural studies captured the understanding of the deeper meaning embedded in media content as representations. The approach recognizes that media does not operate in a vacuum but rather in the context of a society's culture that cannot be separated from prevailing socio-economic and political realities that shape how certain aspects of reality are represented. Media representations are shaped through language resulting in the possibility of a multiplicity of meaning.

3.2.1 Critical political-economy of the media

Critical political-economy of the media is primarily concerned with broader structures of media production or wider power relations in which the media is situated (Curran, 2000b). The external political-economic and cultural environment in which organizations operate must be considered as variables that influence the news production process. This should be done to avoid a more media-centric internal approach of the meaning of news as representations of reality. These social structures include a number of issues. Among these issues are the differences in the political influence and credibility of news sources and their capacity to control information. It also includes the importance of particular structures of ownership and control together with the market driven nature of mass news communication. In addition, it includes the extent to which

the broader ideological climate may affect the thinking of journalists (the first gatekeepers), editors and news sources (McGregor, 1997). All these are factors that are taken into consideration by critical political-economy of the media when analyzing how the South African Weeklies represented the reality of events unfolding in Zimbabwe.

3.2.1.1 Political factors

The media operates in a political culture that shapes and influences its operation (Ogenga, 2011). McNair (1998: 83) argues that "in liberal democracies, there is a low degree of political control of the media and a high degree of tolerance among political elites for the unwelcome and critical subjects which journalists in such systems write and say." Ogenga (2010:3) argues that "Journalists are supposed to criticize and act as watchdogs against the state's tendency to abuse power…otherwise they do not have any reason to exist… Critical and pluralistic journalism is viewed as a safeguard against the possibility of a return to authoritarian rule…and as a watchdog against the abuse of political power." The South African Weeklies operate under liberal democracy and they are not owned or directly controlled by the state.

Ogenga (2010: 3) further observes how critical political-economy as an analytical framework conceptualizes the media under a liberal democratic arrangement. The media is an institution that "has some degree of autonomy and freedom to report and even criticize the government" but certain authoritarian tendencies still prevail through censorship and control. Ogenga (2008:124) further argues that "the media occupies a central role in the advancement of democracy and should be upheld as an institution that advances democracy" (see Ogenga 2012). However, such a role is to be expected of any media driven by discourses of Western ideas of humanity, creativity and liberty. Several factors would then influence media operation in such a framework. Key among such factors is politics which includes the power of government officials to manipulate and exercise control over journalists through censorship and media regulation. This is done under the veil of safeguarding national interests or national security and for selfish political interests. Since under such an arrangement journalists are supposed to hold politicians 'accountable' for their actions and expose corruption, they become targeted with legislation such as licensing and control that are meant to censor them (McNair, 1998). In other occasions,

journalists forge an economic relationship with the state in cases where the media is partly funded by the state. When this happens, the state exercises some degree of control of the media and influences its operation (McNair, 1998). Critical political-economy of the media as analytical framework gives an understanding of how politicians can shape media content through state apparatuses and the privileged access they have to the media as official sources.

3.2.1.2 Economic factors

Economic factors do influence the media in a variety of ways. The idea that news is a product with an attached value allows for the production of cultural content which is commoditized (Williams, 2003). The media manufactures news as a product with a market value to sell to its target audience to maximize profits just like any other business organization in capitalism (Moscow 1996). Journalists can construct news stories that will encourage readership to attract specific audiences to advertisers. In a sense, media owners are in a position to control the kind of news stories that will appeal to their readers' interests and, at the same time, not offend advertisers. These economic factors can sometimes lead to sacrificing journalistic freedom, creativity and integrity at the altar of owners and advertisers who exert a major influence on the content. Journalists for instance, cannot afford to give negative publicity to their advertisers since they rely on them for income.

Critical political-economy of the media brings to the fore the idea of media ownership and how it influences the processes of production and eventually the content. The manner in which the media operates is shaped by their owners, the market environment and financial support. Considering the economic factors, the media manufactures cultural content that sustains capitalism (See Curran, 2000b; Chomsky, 2003). Ramaphosa (1999: 20) argues that "it is an accepted fact that media ownership plays a central role in deciding the interests it serves and the perspectives it presents... media owners are chief among the factors which influence media content." They appoint journalists who share the same ideologies in the market driven system to managerial positions to sustain their interests and the interests of a particular class. They rely on a broad range of institutional mechanisms, such as appointments and promotions of staff, to

ensure that the media reflects or promotes their own views (Ramaphosa, 1999). They also rely on mechanisms such as 'house style guides' in news writing to develop a culture that ensures news content maintains a particular ideological slant.

News and investigative reports that journalists produce have a value attached to them for maximizing profits (Chambers, 2000). Amongst the broad range of news values that the Weeklies would consider, human rights and democracy appeared top on the agenda for all the three newspapers analyzed, that is, *The Sunday Independent, The Mail & Guardian* and *The Sunday Times*. In many instances, the media is obliged to meet the needs of owners, the audiences, advertisers as well as media employees thus influencing media content (See Gandy, 1997; Picard, 1989). The media has to generate content that reflects the ideologies of the owner but at the same time this can be contrary to the needs of the advertisers and the interest of the audience and against the psychology of individual journalists. The media thus juggles a delicate balance to ensure all the parties are satisfied. Serving the interests of advertisers and audiences is paramount to how the media sustains itself, but this should also be done within the framework of the interests of the owners.

3.2.2 Media ownership and control

Media ownership influences the ways in which media covers issues. Various issues emerging in the media reveal the power of certain individuals or organizations over the news process. Curran (2000a) explains how corporate ownership of the media can influence media content. In most cases, media owners have commercial interests that sometimes contradict the watchdog role. Owning or controlling a media institution, for example, empowers the owner to hire and fire journalists. Media owners can manipulate politicians during elections or circulate or suppress information or ideas. The media as an institution is primarily concerned with meaning-making which is necessarily associated with a set of relationships between people that have turned into institutionalized behavior and work practices. This institutionalized professional environment involves the emergence of power relationships between people involved in such institutional settings (Roberts, 1999). Louw (2001: 2) argues that "unraveling agendas, interests and struggles

in such settings give an insight into the meaning inherent" in media messages. The idea that the South African Weeklies were driven by the discourse of human rights and democracy can be seen as a right wing ideological approach to politics and society. This differed remarkably from the left wing approach that characterized state owned media in Zimbabwe. The latter approach convinced the media in Zimbabwe that the state was under threat from neo-imperialists.

The other important factor that influenced the South African Weeklies' coverage of the situation in Zimbabwe is that they are privately owned and commercially driven. Their content is influenced by the ideas of capitalism and the free market. Commercial factors include sales and advertising, subscriptions, ways of financing and funding the media and the idea of competition in order to capitalize on news content. The newspapers selected in this study, for example, target affluent readers, a group in which whites are over represented, to fulfill market objectives. The content of such newspapers thus attracts readership from potential targets of advertising messages. In such a scenario, professional values are sometimes influenced by commercial factors which results in particular ways of representation. Sensationalism becomes a strategy to sell newspapers. The majority of newspapers in South Africa are owned by four newspaper groups: Independent Newspapers, Avusa (formerly Johnnic Communications), Naspers and CTP/Caxton. The following table[35] indicates the newspapers that were selected for analysis in this study, their owners, circulation and readership.

[35] See statistics from http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info/sa_glance/constitution/news.htm it is important to note that these statistics are subject to change since readership and circulation change over time. Retrieved 23 April 2009 from www.southafrica.info

Publication	Readership	Circulation
The Sunday Times (Owned by Avusa)	Over 3.5 million readers	506 147
The Sunday Independent (Owned by Independent Newspapers)	179 000 readers	41 464
The Mail & Guardian (Trevor Ncube is the majority shareholder)	428 000 readers	Average weekly sales 50 225

One remarkable issue is how the media relates to sources of information.The media forms a symbiotic relationship with sources that can be relied upon given the journalistic pressure of time among other reasons. Journalists can choose the kind of sources to voice in their stories and at the same time have an upper hand in deciding which parts of the story are selected and utilized. Gatekeeping is used as a mechanism of ensuring some form of information is privileged over others depending on the contesting groups and the media's ideological position on the issues being contested. Ideologies of the owners are, most of the time, represented in media content (Ramaphosa, 1999). The media can frame issues and reinforce stereotypes to protect dominant ideologies.

The links between shareholders and media owners should not be taken for granted. Such links serve to benefit both parties by sustaining the maximization of profits (Curran, 2000a). The Weeklies in South Africa have shareholders who could be sharing the same ideologies as those of the owners. While critical political-economy of the media was used in this study to understand how political and economic links influence media content, it was also used to understand prevailing commercial pressures that the media is subjected to and the influence of advertising. Louw (2001:158) argues "…newsroom practice is entangled with the needs of the advertising department, not because of direct advertising pressure upon editors, but because commercial media have to collect, package and deliver audiences to the advertisers." In such a situation, media content has to appeal to the audiences who are in turn sold to advertisers. Therefore,

media content is shaped and influenced by the needs of the audiences and advertisers.

3.2.3 Theories of news production

Theories of news production were analytically or theoretically useful for exploring the factors that shaped processes of representation of the Zimbabwean situation. The theories consider media structures as part of society, focusing on political, economic, organizational and professional elements affecting news sourcing and production (Tuchman, 1978; Schudson, 2000). Broader social structures and relationships shape news reporters, their choice of sources, and the sources' relationship to journalists, news organization editors and competing demands dictated by professionalism. Hanitzch (2007:5) argues:

> There are many structural constraints which shape and limit the work of journalists: few personnel, time and material resources, editorial procedures and hierarchies, textual constraints, availability of sources, access to scene and information in general. Journalists consistently work under conditions of heavy time pressure and limited resources and tight competition. To the extent that time space and resources are so limited, journalists need to construct complex and complicated conflicts in terms of ready-made narratives which are easily understood by the audiences (Hanitzch, 2007:5).

Journalists are under time pressure to supply the market with news commodities. In addition, the idea that news is a commodity, social responsibility roles of the media versus market needs and traditional news values influence reporters. News involves a process of selection and construction. Journalists select stories according to journalistic values such as credibility, prominence, novelty, proximity and time (Schudson, 2000). Credible sources are used to frame issues to give them a particular angle or perspective. This is a process that involves selection and construction. Such a process requires that some perspectives be given prominence over others through the sources utilized and others ignored considering where they are ranked under the journalistic value judgment. Hall et al (1978:58) argues that "professional rules give rise to the practice of ensuring that the media statements are wherever possible, grounded in 'objective' and

authoritative statements from accredited sources."

Theories of news production considered broader social relations that determine news construction and ultimately representation of the Zimbabwean situation. Theories of news production, to some extent, overlap with critical political-economy of the media and cultural studies at the level of how macro-level and cultural factors influence the micro-level organizational ones and ultimately the process of news production. Some micro-level organizational and professional factors have been mentioned earlier. They include journalistic values that shape news and the reliance on official sources (Williams, 2003). In addition, news is a product that needs to sell as part of the news organization's commercial interest. However, journalists are governed by institutionalized roles driven by institutional needs, professionalism and practices that shape and influence how they construct news and represent issues (Louw, 2001).

This study was not only concerned with how power structures influence media operation and content as argued in critical political-economy of the media approach, but also how media texts or content impact broader economic structures to serve the needs of the 'market.' It also included the symbolic cultural resources that are used as ideological schemas in the politics of signification – the media is not located in a vacuum but within a particular society. The latter has varied degrees of consensus about what is regarded as 'normal' or 'morally' acceptable. Therefore, journalists cannot be separated from the culture and society they live in – the same applies to media institutions. It is highly likely that there will be a clash of values as journalists in Africa try to implement ideas that were conceptualized using a value system designed to suit the Western context. The argument advanced here is not aimed at taking media structures and routines for granted by assuming that they are immutable. However, it makes sense that any attempt to modify media structures and professional routines cannot be done from the position of an individual journalist. Even the most committed journalists that have carved out a name for themselves have limited power to change the system from within. Even though political and economic systems such as democracy are virtually universal today, they are experienced differently in different countries. Perhaps the challenge for African journalism is to rethink its

copy and paste approach and re-conceptualize ideas that are more relevant to the local context.

3.2.3.1 Political factors

Broader macro-level political factors influence the process of news construction at a micro-level (Fourie, 2001). The South African press in general is expected to play a socially responsible role, functioning as a 'watchdog' and a custodian of 'human rights' (McNair, 1998; Manning, 2001). However, this function is sometimes undermined by the interests of a capitalist, market based economy. Journalism under the system of liberal-democracy is one characterized by the principle of intellectual freedom and pluralism which is associated with democracy (McNair, 1998). Intellectual freedom and pluralism present a dilemma in African societies that have traditionally embraced community belonging. However, to argue that such a condition is permanent is to deny the fact that African societies are increasingly modernizing their traditionality and embracing individual values in a dynamic fashion. The same would apply to the challenges journalists are faced with in Africa. McNair (1998) indicates how journalists work within a political environment which contains a certain amount of regulation, control and constraint, exercised through a variety of formal and informal channels.

Sometimes media controls and regulations are justified by the need for good governance and social cohesion. At times, these measures are a product of political self-interest (McQuail, 1992). Journalists (as watchdogs) play an important role in defining where the line is drawn when balancing the interests of the owners and those of the public or audiences. McNair (1998: 83) argues that "journalists constantly struggle against the political apparatus for their freedom to report and analyze events, and to be prepared to defend this role against the state's tendency to control and restrict the flow of information." They are able to act as watchdogs due to their privileged place in the cultural industry. The editors of the three South African Weeklies analyzed in this study mentioned the difficulties in reporting the situation in Zimbabwe due to the restrictive media laws in that country. Election politics influenced the representation of the Zimbabwean situation to the extent that most journalists preferred using pseudonyms as a safety mechanism. The sources utilized also insisted on remaining anonymous. As a result, credibility

was compromised. Organizational work practices and journalistic routines on a micro-level are self-regulated within the boundaries of broader macro-level political and economic factors forming a relationship that greatly influence representation and vice versa.

3.2.3.2 Economic factors

Compaine (2001) identifies two ways in which economic forces impact journalism. First, journalism is a huge business industry, owned and controlled by private individuals and conglomerates (Roberts, 1999). McNair, (1998:101) argues that "Journalists seem to be the private property of these individuals and conglomerates, and they are free within the law to use them as they like." Journalists are employees, strongly influenced by those who own or control the organizations. McNair (1998) explains the tensions between editorial and commercial imperatives in cases where journalists publish stories at the expense of advertisers and vice versa. In addition, while journalism is an industry, it is also a commodity offered for sale in the 'free market.' Journalism relies more on subscriptions and advertising to meet its market demands (Fourie, 2001). Advertising is a critical economic factor that impacts the construction of news today (Burton, 2005). Journalism, like all commodities, must have a 'user value' and an 'exchange value' in order to create the demand needed by capturing the desires of potential customers (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Golding &Murdock, 1997). Journalism must work within certain language parameters that have considerable impact on the content, style and presentation (Bagdikian, 2000). Journalists must compete with each other for market share (Manning, 2001).

3.2.4 Organizational and professional factors

Organizational and professional factors affect the process of representation. These factors include the choice of sources and what is considered newsworthy regarding news values. Hall et al (1978:53) argues that "the structure of selection can be seen in the routine organization of newspapers with respect to regular types or areas of news…since newspapers are committed to regular production of news, these organizational factors will affect what is selected." Hall et al (1978:53) further argues that:

> The professional ideology of what consists as good news – the news man's sense of news values – begins to structure the process. At the most general level, this involves an orientation to items which are out of the ordinary, which in some way breach our 'normal' expectations about social life…extraordinariness does not exhaust the list, as a glance at any newspaper will reveal events [many] which have got negative consequences, and events which are part of, or can appear to be part of, an existing newsworthy theme, are all possible news stories (Hall et al, 1978:53).

Why are some stories selected as news and others omitted? Priorities can be given to some stories and not others according to their newsworthiness based on journalistic value judgments (McQuail, 2000). As earlier stated, this selection criteria based on news values is sometimes referred to as gatekeeping (Shoemaker, 1997). The criteria assist in the framing of stories to further categorize events considered newsworthy (Tuchman, 1978).

3.2.4.1 News construction and representation

News is constructed through a routine process of selection, presentation and emphasis which influences the way in which particular issues, events, individuals or groups are represented. Manning (2001) indicates how journalism is a practice that involves a process of manufacture/ fabrication or construction which culminates in representation. However, journalists do not fabricate stories deliberately, although the pressures that come with the 24 hour production of news can lead to the construction of particular accounts of events unfolding. Manning (2001: 50) states that "the production of news each day, week or on a rolling 24-hour basis, involves the routine gathering and assembling of certain constituent elements which are then fashioned to construct or fabricate an account of the particular news event." Frames are principles used to select, emphasize and re-present 'reality' (Gitlin, 1980). News frames are replicated across the journalistic profession where they assume a natural process of selection and omission leading to some form of stereotypes. These frames assist in the categorization of news as mentioned earlier (Gamson et al, 1992). Hall et al (1978: 53) argues that "the media do not simply and transparently report events which are naturally newsworthy in themselves. News is the product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to socially constructed set of categories."

Early research focused on editors and individual psychological factors affecting the selection and production of news. However, organizational pressure and technical determinants were added to the psychological traits of news editors as the possible reasons why news media representations of reality were imperfect distortions rather than perfect reflections of reality (Manning, 2001). News organizations came to be understood as functioning bureaucracies or factories that use raw material from sources to construct news as finished products. News organizations are staffed by personnel who are trained to conform to the culture of the organization (Manning, 2001). Therefore, there is need to consider institutional and organizational routines and their place in the wider political-economic and cultural environment. Manning, (2001: 52) argues that "what appears in our daily newspapers is the product of routine procedures of information gathering

and processing." However, it is important to note that the output of news organizations varies depending particularly upon the framing of news information in a variety of formats, constructed to suit the reception needs of a particular audience (Cottle, 1995).

3.2.4.2 News routines that influence how news is constructed

Organizational routines and procedures influence the way in which news is constructed (Hall et al, 1978; Tunstall, 1971; Sigal, 1973). The most important ones that deserve consideration are time and deadlines that demand that news must be fresh. The cycle of news deadlines drives journalists into a routine within the news organization and they develop a number of techniques and organizational practices in order to accommodate this cycle as an imperative. A typical news day creates a cycle under which journalists work to beat time as a news value. So meeting the deadline is part of the routine and many of the other practices of news journalism can be understood as measures designed to ensure that fresh supply of information is fashioned into news copy in time to meet each deadline as it rolls around (Tunstall, 1971; Sigal, 1973). Murdock in Hall et al (1978: 57) argues:

> The incessant pressure of time and the consequent problem of resource allocation and work scheduling in news organizations can be reduced or alleviated by covering pre-scheduled events; that is, events that have been announced in advance by their conveners. However, one of the consequences of adopting this solution to scheduling problems is to increase the newsmen's dependence on news sources willing and able to pre-schedule their activities (Murdock in Hall et al, 1978: 57).

Time and deadline pressures create a dependency upon official sources which are considered to be newsworthy precisely because they are credible, powerful and they affect the daily lives of news audiences in innumerable ways (Anderson, 1993; Schlesinger & Tumbler, 1994). The extent to which such pressures may privilege the powerful in a routine and systematic way (with regard to struggle over news agendas) poses questions of the nature of the relationship between official sources and journalists and the extent to which the less positioned, politically marginal

can compete (Chinball, 1977; Fishman, 1980; Ericson et al, 1989). Manning (2001: 58) argues that:

> […] due to the pressure of time, predictability is built through the news production process by relevant sources and routine diaries. The diary is a key document in any news office. It records predictable events that automatically merit coverage due to public interest. It is also a register of less significant events vying for inclusion into the 'automatic' category. In a sense, production of the diary is news production in advance, except that it is based on mere knowledge that events will unfold rather than observation of them unfolding. The diary is the implicit script for news (Manning. 2001: 58).

Events are diarized as different 'beats' assigned to different journalists before they unfold, a procedural strategy that is done in order to beat time. The time pressure involved in the continuous roll out of news requires that journalists have fresh views on news even though there have not been any major developments. Such pressures have brought about an increased reliability on sources and the danger here has been that some sources, those that can demonstrate the ability to deploy more material and symbolic resources, are likely to seize the lion's share of news opportunities to secure access to the media than others (Manning, 2001).

In this routinized atmosphere of heightened interaction and faster news cycles, there is little time for sustained investigative reporting. Instead news angles on stories are secured through human interest themes, exclusive interviews with elite members, or speculative interviews offered by either elite members or authoritative commentators. In this sense, it may be harder rather than easier for other sources, probably outside the political mainstream to break in (Doyle, 2002). One cannot begin to fully comprehend the nature of news that is offered to audiences unless one understands the centrality of time and space, deadlines and resource management within the news organization (Manning, 2001). Apart from time pressures that ensure journalists select news stories in advance, there is also the style book that dictates how they should write those predicted stories after gathering them. News is written following the style book format. Formats are never neutral in their ideological implications. Newspapers actually issue 'style books' to

journalist to ensure that all copy is written to a distinctive style and format associated with particular papers. However, these also, in effect, produce an ideological as well as a presentational 'house style' (Cameron in Manning, 2001). In the context of social contest, conflict and struggle, news formats play critical role in either enabling or disabling the range of viewpoints and discourses sustained by vying social interests (Croteau & Hoynes, 1977).

3.2.5 Sources

Sources have the power to decide what information they withhold or give out to journalists depending on the interest they have on a particular issue. Sources are increasingly being involved in the process of gatekeeping by either facilitating or constraining the movement of information through the channels they control, thus affecting the introduction of an item into the media (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). Journalists tend to form symbiotic relationships with sources with authority, credibility and those who are readily available. In this symbiotic relationship, some sources become more utilized than others (McGregor, 1997; Van Ginneken, 1998). The sources mainly utilized are usually government and expert officials since they are recognizable and credible owing to their status of prestige which makes the audiences easily trust them (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Louw, 2001). The symbiotic relationship between journalists and sources, where journalists constantly use some and not others creates a powerful frame within which news is constructed. The more powerful the source, the more likely he or she will be used in the news production process (Ndlela, 2005; Schudson, 2003). The overreliance is not necessarily a positive thing because it can lead to the publishing of inaccurate or misinformed stories because the authenticity of such sources are rarely questioned or verified (McNair, 1998). The fact that certain sources are repeatedly used means some forms of representation become dominant.

Considering that sources informing journalists are drawn from existing power structures, the construction of news can tend to support the status quo. Most news sources are institutional and belong to an elite group in society indicating the possibility of the perpetuation of the dominant ideological ways of understanding issues or frames (Soloski, 1997; Davies, 2008). Sources were part of the issues questioned in this study. *The Sunday Independent* and *The Sunday Times*, for

example, argued that they extensively relied on MDC sources because of the fact that the party was readily available and that it was difficult to access ZANU-PF sources. *The Mail & Guardian,* however, indicated that ZANU-PF sources were available but on conditions of anonymity which was problematic when it came to verifying their authenticity.

3.2.6 Media framing

Frames are the principles of selection, emphasis and presentation which give a partial account of what actually happens (Gitlin, 1980). Media framing is a mechanism of influence in which journalists employ a system of interpretation in presenting an issue to the public. In other words, media coverage is characterized by an active construction, selection and structuring of information to organize a particular reality in a meaningful manner for the public (Norris et al, 2003). Framing of issues influences how those issues are represented. Norris et al (2003:14) argues that framing occurs "when the media makes some aspects of a particular issue more salient in order to promote a certain problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation." Norris et al (2003) argues that the proximity of events and how much coverage those events are given is influenced by cultural frames, both professional and societal.

Cultural and journalistic values influence how issues are likely to be represented. The cultural traditions of both the society in which the journalist operates and their own professional class can lead to potentially different representations of reality. This potentially different representation is partly due to audience interest where similar stories can be presented differently (Norris et al, 2003). News values like proximity and prominence play an important role in framing. News is colored and framed with a local tint when events abroad are interpreted and framed; they often carry with them the domestic perceptions of those events. Journalists search for local angles to reflect the biases in their stories. They can be ethnocentric in putting their concerns and structural frames first (Norris, et al 2003).

The South African Weeklies have been covering the situation in Zimbabwe as a crisis. Hall (1978) argues that the media can produce popular consent through signification of a crisis. The media play its part in combination with other primary institutional definers (politicians, police, and the court) in representing this crisis. The media definitions are however secondary in relation to news. Hall in Gurevitch, Curran and Woolacot, (1982:27) argues that "the media has a structured relationship with primary news definers giving them a crucial role in reproducing the definitions of those who have access to the media as accredited sources." The media often constructs reality by following a routinized treatment in representing the crisis. Firstly, by framing the problem definition, then secondly, defining causal relationship and lastly, treatment recommendation. The media utilizes official sources in this process. It is important to note that the media operates in a cultural environment that greatly influences its signifying practice. The latter involves the politics of signs in language (Shohat et al, 1994). Representation does not begin from a clean slate – it is influenced by several factors leading to a variety of meanings (Sonderling, 2001).

3.2.7 Cultural studies

This study utilized a constructionist approach to representation in cultural studies which means that representation is analyzed from the understanding that it is a product of social construction. Various conceptual ideas are represented through the use of signs that are widely accepted as systems of representation in language by a particular cultural community. This approach thus recognizes the public-social character of language and its fluid nature (Hall, 1997). Meaning is constructed using representational systems, concepts and signs (Steinberg, 1994). According to the constructionist approach, the material world, where things and people do exist, should not be confused with the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate (Hall, 1997; Sonderling, 2001). Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. They have a problem with the perception that the material world is inherently meaningful to all observers in a similar fashion. Rather, the language system or whatever system is used to represent concepts is what creates meaning (Sondering, 2001). Hall (1997: 25) argues that "it is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and

representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about the world meaningfully to others."

Cultural studies consider the need to go beyond the surface of the text, to go beyond the taken for granted meaning of a text and look deeper into the underlying meaning of such texts. Human beings internalize particular organized cultural meaning styles that surround them. These meanings are the resources that help them master the social milieu and in the process reshape the very meanings (Louw, 2001). McQueen (1998: 139) argues that "the word representation literally means re-presentation. To represent something means to take an original, mediate it and play it back." Representation is perceived to necessarily alter the reality of the original since it involves making a claim on and about reality (Grosberg, Lawrence et al, 2006). Although representation always stakes a claim on reality, it is not necessarily a reflection of reality (Ferguson, 1998). But why is representation very critical in the society? Representation is useful because it is a practice that plays a central role in the production of culture (Hall, 1997). A detailed discussion of media representation follows in the next section.

Nevertheless, human beings partially give things meaning by how they use them, or integrate them into their everyday practices. That is, how they represent them using images, narratives and the emotions and values they attach to them (Dyer, 1993). In this sense, representations are never completely accurate resulting in a variety of them. However, the ones that have become generally accepted depend on how they have functioned in influencing public perceptions in such a way that they have become common sense, widely accepted without room for contention (Ferguson, 1998; Ruotolo, 1998). Meaning is therefore influenced by the level at which a particular cultural group accesses the necessary cultural artifacts to construct and therefore represent its reality (Grossberg, Whatella & Whitney, 2006; Curran, 1996). Meaning allows members of a particular group to set the rules, norms and conventions by which their social life is governed. The member of such a group must therefore share the same 'cultural codes' to be able to think and feel about the world and thus interpret it in roughly similar ways. In this regard, systems of representation allow group members to think, feel and develop conceptual emotions and feelings about things which are or may be 'out there' (Grossberg, Whatella & Whitney,

2006).

3.2.8 Media representation

Representation refers to the construction in any medium (especially the mass media) of aspects of 'reality.' Such representations may be in speech or writing as well as still or moving pictures. The term refers not only to the process involved in construction, but also to the product and its reception by the audience. Representation is an attempt to interpret reality in order to make sense and meaning. Therefore, it is not necessarily a reflection of reality (Mcqueen, 1998; Grossberg, Lawrence et al, 2006; Hall, 1997). In representation, the term 'reality' is problematic. It is difficult to give an account of what is actually real because reality can be socially constructed through texts (images, photographs, illustrations, words etc) in language leading to different kinds of meaning. Reality is always represented – what we treat as direct experience is mediated by perceptual codes (Ferguson, 1998; Manning, 2001). There is potential for different kinds of meaning in media representation due to the polysemic nature of media texts. Every media form is a representation of someone's concept of existence using a coded language that can be read by an audience. The media does not operate in a social vacuum. The media is part of the society and exits within a certain culture which cannot be divorced from the political and economic realities in that society.

Hall (1997) has argued that representation does not entail a straightforward presentation of the world and the relationships in it. For Hall (1997), representation is not similar to reflection. It is a deliberate attempt to make things mean through framing them rather than the transmission of a pre-existing meaning (Briggs & Cobley, 2002). One way in which framing operates is through stereotyping which simplifies rather complex issues (Ndlela, 2005). The media does this by selecting, magnifying and reducing certain aspects of the social phenomena in order to represent them as fixed, natural, obvious and ready to consume (Hall, 1992). Medhurst (2002: 315) rightly notes that "since there is never enough time or space to describe people in all the rich complexity that their individuality deserves, short-cuts have to be taken, comparisons made, generalization risked, and labels attached." The media is in the business of cultural production and its

representation is influenced by the broader cultural, socio-economic and political realities and ideologies of journalism which, unfortunately, lean towards the West and North America. All media texts (including news) are re-presentations of reality. Meaning, they are intentionally constructed and targeted to specific subjects. They are entirely artificial versions of what is perceived as real. However, it is important to note that media broadens our perception of reality without which our perceptions will be very limited. Therefore, the media plays a critical role in helping individuals come to terms with what they would want to consider real.

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter was divided into two sections. The first section cited several scholarly works on the Western media representation of Africa among them, Ndlela's (2005), Akpabio's (2008), Willem's (2005) and Agutu's (2008). With the exception of Agutu's (2008) study, the other studies focused on the representation of the Zimbabwean situation by the international media, particularly Norwegian, Botswanan and British media. Agutu's study focused on the coverage of the general elections by the Kenyan media. Other studies that focused on how the Western media represents Africa discussed in this chapter includes those of Mudimbe (1994), Mudimbe (1988), Mazrui (2005), Nyamnjoh (2010) and Allimadi (2002). These authors generally contend that Africa has been represented negatively by the Western media. They therefore set the foundations that are necessary for deconstructing such misrepresentation by, first and foremost, hypothesising the possibility of re-inventing Africa through African *gnosis* of philosophy. The second section focused on the theoretical approach that was used in the study. Critical political-economy theories of the media, theories of news production and cultural studies were used as complementary frameworks to help understand the complexities in media representation and to account for why the South African Weeklies represented the Zimbabwean situation in the way that they did. While critical political-economy is concerned with the macro-level factors that influence representation, such as broader political ideologies, media ownership and control, advertising, the perception of audience as a market and news as a product with a user value, theories of news production are concerned with the micro-level factors that influence the process of news production such as institutional mechanisms, work practices and ideologies of

journalism as a profession. Cultural studies deals with the potentiality of multiple meanings due to the polysemic nature of language. The theoretical approach used in this study is holistic and was useful in the analyzes presented in this study that sought to understand how three South African Weeklies represented the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation from 2000-2008.

Chapter four

Methodology

4.0. Introduction

The methodology used in this research involves more than one method. A triangulated approach was used to lead to unique lines of action different from other methods. Thus, triangulation implied the consideration that reality is constantly changing. The approach was therefore meant to accommodate such dynamics. The units of analysis in this research were social objects conceptualized in relation to the socio-economic and political context of the study. These objects presented the prevailing reality, and their meaning arose out of the experiences arising from the prevailing context of the study. Triangulation technique addressed the limitation of bias arising from the use of only one method. The three methodologies that were triangulated in this study are quantitative and qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis. However, qualitative content analysis was predominantly used because research in representation of reality by the media is usually qualitative by nature. Quantitative content analysis method was used to count the frequency of occurrence of three major units of analysis namely; political, economic and social units.

These units were identified as textual dimensions wherein they helped inform qualitative analysis. Qualitative method involved the use of thematic or qualitative content analysis that included semiotics and ideological analysis. The sampling technique used was random. The technique gave room for flexibility when quantifying articles for analysis in the three selected newspapers. It also extended the chances of inclusion of articles to be analyzed given the limitation faced regarding consistency of articles selected in some newspapers like *The Sunday Independent.* The latter had no stories appearing between the year 2000 and 2001 due to the fact that *The Sunday Independent* stopped filing stories in the year 2000. However, filed stories were available from 2002 to 2008.

4.1. Triangulated approach

Denzin (1978) insists that social phenomena should be analyzed using multiple sociological perspectives to cater for the possibility of errors and for closing research gaps between these perspectives. A triangulated approach provided a variety of perspectives to examine the objects of the study. For example, if content analysis alone was used, an in-depth understanding of the textual meaning of the selected dimensions of texts and their ideological positions would not have been realized (Denzin, 1978). This means that when triangulation was adopted, its definitions served to make my final observation in some way different from previous ones or anticipated ones. Thus the approach implied that the line of action taken lent unique interpretation as the reality or circumstances in which the method was used changed – 'reality' is a social process and often subject to continuous change (Shubutani in Denzin, 1978).

The units analyzed in this study presented the prevailing realities in Zimbabwe and their meanings therefore arose out of the observer's own experiences. It was hoped that definitions attached to the units of this research would be agreed upon by other observers wishing to investigate the situation in Zimbabwe (Denzin, 1978). The units analyzed related to the socio-economic and political events unfolding in Zimbabwe in the last two decades. Indeed, any researcher would demand a certain degree of agreement concerning the units of analysis utilized in this study but consensus will never be reached for certain reasons such as the kind of methodology chosen, researcher subjective bias and the fact that the world of observation is not static. To some extent the interpretations in this study are unique to the researcher and therefore reflect past experiences, personal idiosyncrasies and current mood (Denzen, 1978). Lastly, the world of observation is in a state of continuous change.

Campbell and Stanely in Denzen (1978) observe how populations get destabilized over time and space. The election fraud and violence in Zimbabwe in 2002, for example, was fundamentally different from similar actions in 2008. Thus comparisons attached to the units demand sensitivity to the meanings attached to the units observed by those generating the meaning because of the differences in the operational social process (Denzen, 1978). Quantitative content analysis method was used to count the frequency of occurrence of various units of analysis explained

later in this chapter, and to pave the way for qualitative analysis. Qualitative method went beyond the numbers to give a more nuanced explanation of the chosen textual units to uncover their hidden meanings.

4.2. Quantitative content analysis

Quantitative content analysis identified and counted the frequency of occurrence of specific dimensions of chosen texts, mentioned earlier, in order to explain how they represented the reality of the situation in Zimbabwe and their wider social significance. For example, politics defined through elections, was characterized by the repeated representation of the electoral process as neither free nor fair. This was done through a narrative thread that emphasized the existence of electoral malpractices through the use of certain textual devices and narrative genres (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock, 1999). The same could be said for how economics and social upheaval textual dimensions were represented. Although quantitative content analysis counted the frequently used words, phrases, sources, images, and photographs to represent issues related to the Zimbabwean situation, it did not critically analyze the deeper meanings and subtleties of the frequent occurrences. This called for the use of qualitative content analysis (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998).

Quantitative content analysis was only necessary to count the occurrences of the aforementioned textual dimensions in order to have an idea of the patterns formed. This paved the way for understanding how the situation in Zimbabwe is represented or constructed in the selected texts (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock, 1999). Representation works through repetition, therefore, recurrence of phenomena in texts is common. This helps in creating meaning about a situation. What recurs is the product of a process of selection and combination or representation. Although quantitative content analysis initially fragmented texts into constituent parts which were counted, it reassembled these constituent parts at the analysis and interpretation stage to examine which ones co-occur in which context, for what purposes and with what implications (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold, 1998). For example, the representation of elections was counted and analyzed. The analysis pointed out that elections were neither free nor fair and were

the reason behind the economic collapse and social upheavals since they coincided with them. The representation indicated that elections had serious consequences for the socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe.

4.2.1 Textual dimensions analyzed

There were three main themes analyzed in this study namely; politics, economic collapse and social upheavals. Under politics, the sub-theme analyzed, from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective, was elections. Elections were chosen as a textual dimension because of the controversies and allegations of violence, intimidation and rigging. The freeness and fairness of elections is an issue in Africa and a media focus. Under economics, the sub-theme that was analyzed using a similar approach was 'economic collapse.' A relationship of the economic collapse was made through the counting of occurrence of two phrases: "illegal land invasion" and "high inflation" in the stories as references to 'economic collapse.' The two phrases represented the economic conditions in Zimbabwe. They were chosen in order to investigate whether or not they could be related to 'economic collapse.' Under the social upheaval theme, the sub-themes counted and analyzed, also using a similar approach, were three namely; Operation *Murambatvina* or restore order; influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa, and cholera. The three textual dimensions were chosen for analysis to find out whether they represented social upheavals.

However, since it was difficult to establish the meanings of the above textual dimensions simply as recurring statistics, qualitative thematic content analysis and ideological analysis was used to generate meaning. The analyzes looked at the significance of how the textual dimensions related to the broader structural relationship (micro and macro-level factors that influence representation) and how these relations reveal the influence of certain political and ideological positions. To understand how micro and macro-level factors influence news coverage, interviews were also conducted with the editors of the three selected newspapers for a thorough understanding of how they used various texts to represent meanings and the ideological slant of the texts (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold, 1998).

4.3. Qualitative content analysis

The qualitative approach that was used in this study is a directed approach to content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In this approach, existing theory or prior research is used to identify key concepts or variables as initial coding categories. In this case, as noted earlier, the coding categories were identified from three major themes: politics, economics and the social upheavals derived from the theoretical approach. The operational definitions for each category were thus determined using the theory. The directed approach has been referred to as deductive category application (Mayring, 2000). Theoretically, the study conceptualized news media content as a product of construction through representation. The goal of a directed approach to content analysis is to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory.

The theories of representation used in this study helped focus the research question and provided predictions about the variables selected for analysis and their relationships. Thus theories helped determine the initial coding scheme or relationships between codes that were analyzed (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The three major themes were theory driven considering that the study utilized political-economy of the media, theories of news production and cultural studies as theories in media representation. The directed approach, for example, recognized the social production of news through the consideration of the theories of news production. The general elements and processes of news production are premised on the idea that news is shaped by being set in relation to a specific 'consensus' in the society. Events that go against the grain of the societal consensus are deemed newsworthy. Consensus is usually legitimized and institutionalized as a means of action (Hall et al, 1978). Hall et al (1978: 67) in his book "*Policing the Crisis"* shows the relationship between crime and news. He argues that:

> The media remains highly sensitized to crime as a potential source of news. The reporting of crime marks out the transgression of normative boundaries, followed by investigations, arrest, and social retribution in terms of sentencing of the offender. The reporting at greater length, of certain dramatic instances of crime, then, arises from and stands out against the background of this routinized treatment (Hall et al, 1978: 67).

However, Hall (1978: 67) notes that "what makes some crime stories stand out against others is the idea of news values such as proximity, novelty and topicality." In the same manner and following Hall's (1978) argument, there is a particular institutionalized and legitimized socio-economic and political 'consensus' in modern liberal democracies. The consensus has legitimized issues such as the political rights exercised through elections. It also includes the end results of a well-organized political and policy regime that translates into economic and material prosperity in terms of the provision of basic needs to the citizens such as food, shelter and education (key issues in human rights discourses). The assumption is that when political policies are well integrated and harmonized with economic needs of a country through legitimate institutions, they are bound to benefit the poor majority in weak states and help legitimize the incumbent political regime (Brett, 2005).

South African Weeklies generally focused on Zimbabwe because it seemed as if there had been a transgression of the normative values that define neoliberal democratic states. This was evident in the manner in which Zimbabwean politics was characterized by elections that were neither free nor fair. The latter led to poor policies that affected the economic stability of the country and ultimately the living standards of Zimbabweans. Considering the normative values of democracy, the media is likely to make its own value judgment on the situation in Zimbabwe going by the crime model in Hall's (1978) case. Whether or not the media will find the situation newsworthy depends on such value judgments. The analysis of the extent to which South African Weeklies reported the situation in Zimbabwe revealed an important insight. The latter concerned whether or not the manner in which the situation was represented followed a similar pattern of routinized treatment that Hall (1978) posits. The elections in Zimbabwe were bound to be reported in a particular stereotypical manner – a manner likely to indicate that they were in crisis and therefore prescriptions to restore political 'consensus' would be recommended. News was therefore coded in a language that indicated a consensual breakdown which had to be restored. Moore (2006: 203) indicates the dichotomy through which the Zimbabwean crisis has been constructed in the journalistic world. It has been constructed as either a "radical nationalist redistributive project carried out as historical redress in the face of neo-liberal orthodoxy, or the breakdown of norms of liberal governance through the machinations of an authoritarian political

figure." Moore (2006) further argues that the former position, articulated as pan-African project, has been dominant in the state controlled media in Zimbabwe while the latter has been popular with the independent media or what he terms opposition media and the neo-conservative press in South Africa and the West. With such an obvious journalistic dichotomy inevitable when constructing the Zimbabwean crisis, the study was tasked with the exploration of the two distinct oppositional narratives (content). This was done in order to establish the motives behind the approach taken by the conservative Weeklies in South Africa. This called for the use of a directed approach to content analysis which was useful in identifying the textual dimensions that required coding in order to arrive at valid findings. Coding began immediately with the predetermined codes (Hsieh &Shannon, 2005).

4.3.1 Semiotics

Semiotic analysis (a qualitative method) was also used to analyze textual dimensions (Hansen et al, 1998). Semiotic analysis unpacked not only the denotative meaning of texts, the literal meaning of texts (the taken for granted meaning), but also the connotative meaning (the hidden meaning) (Gunter, 2000; Bignell, 1997). The latter is often where ideology is at play and usually requires an ideological analysis to understand the hidden meanings (Van Dijk, 1998; Watson and Hill, 2000). Semiotic analysis is concerned with the use of signs, signifiers and signified in language, and a range of possible meanings that emerge due to the polysemic nature of language. It also underscores the importance of culture and the fact that culture organizes our response to signs. Communication can only continue depending on the level of cultural similarities. While signifier and signified unpack how people give things meaning regarding the Zimbabwean situation, semiotics analyzes how meaning is generated through the representation of the situation by the selected South African Weeklies. The contention is that the materiality of events and social and cultural phenomena are not ends in themselves, they define a network of relations. Therefore, understanding the relations between social and cultural phenomena gives insight into their meaning (See Tomaselli, 1996). Concepts such as metaphor and metonym (figures of speech), simile and intertextuality in language were important to look at in light of how meaning is constructed. Metaphors refer to communication by analogy. Simile is a weaker

sub-category of metaphor which uses 'like' or 'as.' Metaphor is based on identity while simile is based on similarity. Metonymy relates to communication by association (Tomaselli, 1996). Intertextuality refers to how texts borrow from each other consciously or unconsciously. Semiotic analysis gave a clearer understanding of how meaning is created covertly and understood from the utilization of the above mentioned concepts through media representation. Such an understanding demanded a textual and ideological analysis that considered the utilization of these textual devices in the narrative to construct meaning.

4.3.2 Purposive sampling

Sampling is defined as a technique that allows the researcher to select objects or subjects of research that are relevant in answering research questions or proving a particular hypothesis, concept, preposition or theory (Denzin, 1978). Purposive sampling technique, as used in this study, demanded that only editors be selected because they were the people of interest in the study by virtue of their position as key gatekeepers. However, it is important to note that purposive sampling is non-probability which makes it subject to bias and error. Non-probability sampling simply means sampling without using random selection methods. Although the ideal way of sampling is by random selection of targets (probability sampling), random sampling was not applicable considering the nature of the study. The study was concerned with finding out the factors that influenced the selected South African Weeklies' representation of the situation in Zimbabwe from the producers or those who act as gatekeepers of such texts. However, random sampling was applied when selecting newspaper stories for analysis.

The interviews done with the three editors generally focused on issues related to images of Zimbabwe, influencing factors when covering Zimbabwe, covering Zimbabwe from South Africa, editorial policy or guidelines that govern covering Zimbabwe, pressures on coverage or reporting, influences of media owners on reporting, utilization of sources and audience needs. Questions were also related to the perception of the audience as a market and how their needs affected reporting. The findings from a directed content analysis offered supporting evidence for the theories used in this study. The latter argues that media representation is an attempt to use words, objects, signs, symbols, still and moving pictures by various media outlets (especially mass media) to construct aspects of reality and, therefore, is not a mirror reflection of reality.

4.4. Selection criteria of analytical events in Zimbabwe between the years 2000-2008

The time frame and the selection criteria of the analytical events in the three newspapers chosen for analysis in this study were based on the consideration of the important events happening in Zimbabwe from 2000-2008. These events attracted the attention of the three newspapers. The events were selected from specific months (as they appeared) in these newspapers in the aforementioned years. The events were related to political, economic and social upheaval issues in Zimbabwe. The three selected newspapers are published weekly. However, the consideration of weekly newspapers did not suggest that the daily newspapers were not covering similar issues. This study specifically chose to deal with weekly newspapers because through their feature articles, they demonstrated more about how a situation is represented than daily newspapers by devoting more time to analyzing issues. It is also important to state that this was not a case study. Therefore, the findings of this research are limited to the three newspapers that were selected for analysis and thus cannot be used as a basis for broad generalization.

Under the political theme, the major event was the elections. As indicated earlier, elections were chosen because in Zimbabwe, they have been controversial with incidences of violence, intimidation and rigging. One central question about this category of events is whether the prevailing conditions in Zimbabwe were conducive for "free and fair" elections and whether issues surrounding the elections amounted to political crisis. The study analyzed how the South African Weeklies covered each election from 2000 to 2008 – three months before and three months after each election. The elections included in the study are the 2000 and 2005 parliamentary elections and the 2002 and 2008 presidential elections. In each election year, the election coverage of one newspaper, per month, was examined. For example, in the June 2000 elections, *The Sunday Independent's* coverage of elections between May and July was examined. The stories covered revolved around campaigns by the ruling party and the opposition and the actual elections.

With respect to the economic category, the events selected centered on reports of economic collapse. In particular, they included reports of 'food shortages' (April and May 2002 and March 2002), 'illegal' land invasions (March to May 2000), and hyperinflation (November and December 2008 and March 2002). These events were chosen because they were widely reported by the South African Weeklies. Zimbabwe was depicted as moving from a "bread basket" to a "basket case." It was interesting to find out whether the representation of the 'illegal' land invasions could partly be linked to the severe food shortages and the decline in white commercial agricultural production. These events are important because they were given extensive coverage during the periods in which they occurred.

Under the social upheaval category, the major events were Operation *Murambatsvina* (i.e. restore order) in March and June 2005, the cholera outbreak in November and December 2008, and the influx of Zimbabweans into neighboring countries, especially South Africa, in June 2008. All these issues received considerable attention by the Weekly newspapers. Operation *Murambatsvina* cost some 700,000 Zimbabweans their homes or livelihoods or both (See Vambe, 2008; Potts, 2006; Matonhodze, 2008; Tibaijuka, 2005; Moore, 2005). The Zimbabwe government collectively mounted a brutal, ill-managed campaign against its own citizens meant to displace the population that formed the stronghold of the opposition in urban settlements[36]. Cholera killed thousands of Zimbabweans and was extensively covered by the three South African Weeklies. Unlike the number of newspapers chosen for the analysis of elections (one newspaper per title), two newspaper editions of *The Sunday Times, The Sunday Independent,* and *The Mail & Guardian* were selected in the months when the events occurred to examine how the papers covered the economic collapse and social upheavals. The study used the newspaper issues that came out during the month coinciding with the events depicting economic collapse or social upheavals. Probability sampling was used for selecting the newspapers and the stories to be analyzed.

In addition to the quantitative and qualitative content analysis, the study used in-depth interviews to gain a better understanding of the philosophical and practical issues that informed the South African Weeklies' coverage of the Zimbabwean situation. Interviews were also

[36] Retrieved 16th August 2009 from www.internationalcrisisgroup.org

conducted to ensure that the institutional and structural factors that influence media content are taken into consideration. Although the approach was also meant to include institutional analysis, which takes the form of document analysis on policy documents, *Sunday Times* was reluctant to provide their editorial policy. *The Sunday Independent* and *The Mail & Guardian* indicated that they only have unwritten institutional guidelines as part of the culture of their organisations. They also indicated that they do not have any particular policies on covering Zimbabwe and that they relied on the general press code of conduct as enshrined by the South African constitution that applied to other stories as well and not just Zimbabwean stories (see Denzin, 1978).

Three semi-structured interviews that lasted two hours each were conducted with the editors of *The Sunday Times, The Sunday Independent,* and *The Mail & Guardian*. The editors namely; Mondli Makhanya, Peter Fabricious and Nick Dawes, respectively were interviewed. Nick Dawes and Mondli Makhanya were interviewed in their newsrooms in Rosebank, Johannesburg, while Peter Fabricious was interviewed in a location outside of the press offices in Parkview, Johannesburg. Before the interviews, the editors were issued participant information leaflets explaining the nature and implications of the research and they signed a consent form agreeing that their interviews be tape recorded and their names used for publication.

4.4.1 Limitations

The main limitation in this study was based on the fact that even though 64 newspaper editions were selected, the same story was likely to be used for the three themes (politics, economics and social upheavals). For example, the *The Mail & Guardian* April 8th to 14th story, "Flawed System Must Go" (Thabane, 2005) was used both for the analysis of politics/elections in Zimbabwe and economic collapse. This resulted, more or less, in repetition when explaining the factors that influence news construction in different chapters, especially considering that the study was dealing with three complexly interlinked themes; namely, politics, economics and social upheavals. This is basically due to the routinized practice of news construction and representation. One of the results of the practice is that news will have some common features

that are repetitive. Therefore, explanations about the factors that influence the production of news about politics, economic and social upheavals are bound to be repetitive – this is one common feature of the theory of representation. The other limitation was based on the fact that the newspapers selected in the study happened to be the mainstream newspapers of the conservative establishment in South Africa. Regular and occasional readers could easily tell their ideological positions and subtle agenda. The study could have possibly benefited from the inclusion of left-leaning newspapers.

4.5 Selection of media

Three newspapers – *The Sunday Times, The Sunday Independent,* and *The Mail & Guardian* – were selected for the study. The selected papers contained in-depth reports on Zimbabwe because the journalists had more time to research and analyze issues as opposed to the straight forward cycling of daily news in daily newspapers. As already mentioned, weekly newspapers had feature articles that covered stories more in-depth than daily newspapers. The three newspapers were also selected because of issues related to ownership, commercial strategy, circulation, readership, content, and target market.

4.5.1. *The Sunday Times*

The Sunday Times[37] is published by AVUSA formally known as Johnnic Communications and prior to that as Times Media Limited (TML). AVUSA is owned by a coalition of black business groups and trade unions, the National Empowerment Consortium. The consortium bought TML from Anglo American's Omni Media Corporation in 1996. The National Empowerment Consortium's takeover of Johnnic coincided with the establishment of a joint venture between British Group Pearson's and TML, under which the former acquired half of TML's *Business Day* and *Financial Mail*. Pearson's and TML subsequently set up the Internet publishing operation I-Net Bridge. *The Sunday Times*[38], which is South Africa's biggest Sunday newspaper, is thus

[37] Retrieved 09 June 2009 from http://www.avusa.co.za/aboutus/brands/default.aspx?pageid=302511
[38] See http://www.sundaytimes.co.za

privately owned by AVUSA. AVUSA also publishes the *Sowetan, Business Day, Sunday World, Daily Dispatch, The Herald, Weekend Post, Algoa Sun, Ilizwi* and *Our Times*. The group also owns music publishing company Gallo Music, movie distributor Nu Metro, the Exclusive Books chain of bookshops, and Struik, New Holland and Map Studio publishers.

The Sunday Times creates revenue through advertisements and product positioning where they strategically position the paper through promotions and competitions. They have subscription charges as well as syndication through *The Sunday Times* syndication service where readers can use content or buy things such as pictures of the latest people in the news from *The Sunday Times* database. They also rely on sales as the largest paper in South Africa[39] in terms of readership and circulation with a readership of over 3.5 million and a circulation rate of 506 147. It does not have any bureaus in Zimbabwe and therefore relies on correspondence, wire services and agencies for stories about Zimbabwe. *The Sunday Times* targets the urban lower middle and upper middle class readers with commercial and human interest content such as news, insights, sports and soccer, magazine, travel and food, money, career and politics.

4.5.2. *The Sunday Independent*

The Sunday Independent[40] is published by Independent Newspapers, owned by Irish tycoon Tony O'Reilly. It acquired a stake in local newspapers in 1995 when it took control of Argus Newspapers in the 1990s and renamed it Independent Newspapers. Argus, then owned by Johannesburg Consolidated Investments through Anglo American, was South Africa's major newspaper group. By 1990, it was selling more than 50% of all daily newspapers in the country. The Argus Company thus, currently known as Independent Newspapers, used to own newspapers in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia. In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Newspapers Limited (Zimpapers) formerly called the Rhodesian Printing & Publishing Company was controlled by South African-owned Argus Media Group in the 1980s (Waldahl, 2001). It is currently not clear whether they have any shares in Zimpapers. The company publishes 13 free weekly community newspapers in Cape Town, and holds a number of profitable commercial

[39] Retrieved 09 June 2009 from http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info/sa_glance/constitution/news.htm
[40] Retrieved 09 June 2009 from http://www.sundayindependent.co.za

printing and distribution contracts in all areas. Zimpapers publishes two dailies, The *Herald* in Harare and *The Chronicle* in Bulawayo.

Independent News and Media (South Africa) Limited is thus a wholly owned subsidiary of Independent Newspapers. It publishes 14 daily and weekly newspapers in the country's three major metropolitan areas. *The Star* is the group's flagship daily newspaper. Other dailies are *The Cape Argus*, the premier isiZulu newspaper *Isolezwe*, *Daily News, Cape Times, The Mercury, Pretoria News, The Diamond Fields Advertiser, Business Report* and *Daily Voice*. Independent's Sunday newspapers are the *Sunday Tribune, Independent on Sunday* and *The Sunday Independent*, with *The Post* published on Wednesdays and Fridays. The group enjoys aggregate weekly sales of 2.8-million copies and reaches about 63% of English newspaper readers. *The Sunday Independent* has a circulation rate of 23 000 and a readership of 41 464.[41] It is read by the decision makers of the new South Africa. The Independent newspapers receive about 48% of total advertising spent in the paid newspaper market. *The Sunday Independent,* as one of its publications, creates revenue through commercial content – news, opinion, business, marketing, advertising, sports and book sections. They also charge subscription fees and rely on sales. Their commercial strategy is based on positioning the newspaper as a quality paper for the upper market readership. The newspaper content covers opinions, reviews, and features through the *Sunday Dispatches* section which gives in-depth reports in business and marketing and in-depth international coverage. Independent's broadsheet dailies carry various supplements and substantial advertising.

4.5.3. *The Mail & Guardian*

It is owned by shareholders and the majority shareholder of the newspaper is Trevor Ncube (a Zimbabwean entrepreneur)[42]with 87.5% shares making him virtually the owner. *The Mail & Guardian* has commercial content focusing on national news and Africa. It also has an opinion section, business news, a special section on the popular Madam and Eve comic strip, and the famous political satirist Zapiro catering to audience interests. It also relies on sales and advertising. *The Mail & Guardian* has a circulation rate of 50 225 and a readership of 428 000

[41] Retrieved 09th June 2009 from www.sundayindependent.co.za
[42] See http://www.mg.co.za

and only operates in South Africa. It also has no bureaus in Zimbabwe. However its owner, Trevor Ncube, is the Executive Chairperson of TS holdings[43], which is the majority shareholder of two independent newspapers in Zimbabwe –*The Independent* and *The Standard*. *The Mail & Guardian* targets the top Living Standard Measure (LSM), including the political and business classes. The publication attracts readership that is above market aggregate in both income and education categories. A total of 64 newspaper editions under the newspaper titles discussed above were analyzed. To have an idea of how the newspaper editions were selected, see the table below.

4.5.4 Number of newspapers per month

Year	**Dimension**	**Month**	***Sunday Independent***	***Mail &Guardian***	***Sunday Times***
2000	Economic collapse	April	1	See 2002	1
		May	1	1	1
		June	1	None	None
	June Elections	June	1	1	1
		July	1	1	1
2002	Elections	February	None	1	1
		March	None	1	1
		April	None	1	1
	High inflation	March	See 2008	2	See 2008
	Economic	March	See 2000	2	1

[43]Retrieved 09th June 2009 from http://www.afdevinfo.com/htmlreports/org/org_63031.html

	collapse				
		April	1	1	1
2005		February	1	1	1
	March Elections	March	1	1	1
		April	1	1	1
	Operation *Murambatsvina*	June March	None 1	2 None	2 None
2007	Border Jumping	June	None	None	June 2008 1
2008	High inflation	July, November, December.	1, 1, 2 (respectively)	See 2002	1
	Elections	February	None	1	1
	March Harmonized Election	March	None	1	1
		April	1	1	1
	Cholera	November December	None 2	2 None	2 None

TOTAL 64 newspaper editions analyzed.

4.6. Selection of articles, time frame and themes

Articles covering the socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe were selected with themes informed by the theoretical framework. The selection criteria for the total number of newspapers used was based on a simple random technique whereby one newspaper was randomly selected one month before, during and after elections. However, two newspapers were selected in the months that coincided with social upheavals, namely: Operation *Murambatsvina*, hyper-inflation, border jumping and cholera. One newspaper was chosen a month prior to, during and after the elections for the analysis of elections as a theme because of the high frequency of elections coverage from the year 2000 to 2008. Elections were covered periodically unlike events such as Operation *Murambatsvina* and cholera which occurred sporadically in one particular year from 2000 to 2008. Elections were held in Zimbabwe in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008 respectively. Probability sampling method was used for selecting the number of newspapers to be analyzed because the study also used a quantitative approach to statistically count the frequency of certain thematic occurrences in the news content that were related to the chosen themes. The counting was used as the basis of making qualitative judgments.

The number of articles sampled depended upon the number of stories on Zimbabwe that appeared in a particular newspaper edition. Random sampling allowed the sampled units higher chances of inclusion in the final set of observation (Denzin, 1978). Logic of ongoing inclusion underlies the sampling process (see Glasser & Strauss, 1978 in Denzin 1978). Random sampling or probability sampling was also used in the study because the newspapers selected were not Zimbabwean but South African and therefore covered stories about Zimbabwe periodically and not every day or every week. Chances were that in some days or months there was no coverage of Zimbabwe while in others more than one story appeared on Zimbabwe. The time frame for the selected newspapers analyzed was five years. This is because the articles in the chosen newspapers were limited to the election period.

4.6.1. Politics

Articles included under the theme of politics were those covering elections such as campaigns, political parties, political-party personalities, and reports on governance and corruption, South Africa's role as a mediator and those that were related to the formation of the Government of National Unity. However, it was elections as the general theme that was analyzed. Elections as a term and a countable textual dimension, and the number of times it appeared in a story, was quantified to be able to comment on the frequency with which it occurred and the meanings therein. The selection of the articles included was based on major political personalities and stakeholders in the electoral process, political issues and institutions regarding the Zimbabwean situation during the period of the study. The election years and months were chosen as follows:

Election year	**One month before election**	**Type of election**	**One month after elections**
2000	May	Parliamentary election & referendum (June)	July
2002	February	Presidential (March)	April
2005	February	Parliamentary (March)	April
2008	February	Harmonized elections (March)	April

4.6.2. Economics

Articles included under the theme of economics were those covering economic collapse. The phrase ‘food shortages’ and ‘illegal land invasions,’ covered over the period of April 2000 and ‘hyperinflation’ in 2002 and 2008, as countable dimension of texts selected in the articles, were quantified or counted. This was done in order to be able to comment about the frequency in which they occurred and the meanings embedded in them. The years and months selected for the coverage of economic events were as follows:

Chosen Year	**Chosen Month**	**Issues analyzed**
2000 2002	April, May March	Economic collapse ; Land invasion, food shortage
2002 2008	March July, November, December	Hyperinflation

4.6.3. Social upheavals

Articles chosen under the social upheavals theme were those covering Operation *Murambatsvina*, influx of Zimbabwean refugees into South Africa and cholera. These dimensions and their frequencies in stories were counted in order to understand what they meant in a broader context. The articles were chosen as follows:

Chosen Year	**Chosen Month**	**Issues analyzed**
2005	March, June	Operation *Murambatsvina*
2008	June	Border Jumping (influx)
2008	November, December	Cholera

4.6.4 Conclusion

This study utilized a triangulated approach to content analysis which means the use of more than one method. The textual dimensions analyzed in this research were related to the socio-economic and political events unfolding in Zimbabwe in the last two decades. A triangulated approach first meant quantifying the number of occurrences of these dimensions or themes and their sub-themes and uncovering their meanings qualitatively. The line of action taken was therefore one that considered the fact that reality is constantly changing and had to accommodate such changes. Triangulation addressed the limitation of biases arising from the use of only one method. Quantitative content analysis method was used to count the frequency of occurrence of various textual dimensions analyzed and to inform qualitative analysis. Qualitative method includes the use of thematic or qualitative content analysis, semiotics and ideological analysis. The newspapers that were analyzed were randomly chosen. Random sampling allowed for flexibility in quantitative selection and analysis of articles in the three selected newspapers. This was based on the assumption that because the newspapers analyzed were South African they had limited chances of having Zimbabwean stories every day. Random sampling extended the chances of inclusion of articles to be analyzed.

Chapter five

Counting political, economic and social upheavals content

5.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the actual newspaper stories that were quantified thematically for further analysis at the qualitative level in this study. Elections, as a textual dimension and a sub-theme under politics, and the number of times it appeared in a story was counted. Stories related to elections were chosen in one edition of *The Mail & Guardian*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sunday Independent* in the 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008 election years. The newspaper editions carrying stories related to these elections were chosen one month before and after the elections making it a three month analysis. The frequency of occurrence of the term elections was counted. While some editions in the selected newspapers had only one story on elections, others had more than one. The number of articles appearing in this chapter, according to the selected newspaper editions, depended upon how many articles those editions dedicated to Zimbabwean elections. One edition was randomly selected per month within the three months that constituted the analysis of each election in the aforementioned years. However, two newspaper editions were selected in the months that coincided with 'economic collapse,' operation *Mrambatsvina*, 'influx' of Zimbabweans into South Africa and cholera. The frequency of occurence of the phrases 'economic collapse,' operation *Murambatsvina*, 'influx' of Zimbabweans into South Africa and the term cholera was counted in order to generate qualitative commentaries about them.

5.1 Elections

Stories related to elections were chosen in one edition of *The Mail & Guardian, The Sunday Times* and *The Sunday Independent,* from 2000-2008, one month before and after the elections as follows**:**

5.1.1 2000 elections

In the year 2000, six stories about the Zimbabwean elections were selected: Two stories from *The Mail & Guardian,* three from *The Sunday Independent* and one from *The Sunday Times*. In *The Mail & Guardian* April 28 to May 4 2000 edition, one article appeared with the frequent use of the term elections in the story. The article published on page 28 is titled "Zim's mobs get license to intimidate." Elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared three times.

In *The Mail & Guardian* May 5 to 11 2000, the story "Zim crisis: Our wake-up call" appeared. The term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared once.

In *The Sunday Independent* July 5 2000, the story "More farm invasions by war veterans continue to unsettle Zimbabwe" appeared. The term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared five times.

In *The Sunday Independent* June 30 2000, the story "The MDC offers a lesson to white South Africans" appeared. The term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared once.

In *The Sunday Independent* May 20 2000, the story "Bloody clash in Harare claims lives" appeared. In this story the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared twice.

In *The Sunday Times* 11 June 2000, the story "UN election team to abandon Zimbabwe" appeared. In the story, the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared once.

5.1.2. 2002 elections

In the year 2002, ten stories appeared in the selected editions of *The Mail & Guardian* and *The Sunday Times*. No story was selected from *The Sunday Independent.* The reason being that their archive stopped clipping stories related to the Zimbabwean situation in the year 2000 therefore it was almost impossible to find stories on elections in 2002. Ten articles were selected, seven appearing in The *Mail & Guardian* and three from *The Sunday Times.*

In *The Mail & Guardian* edition February 8 to 14 2002, seven articles on Zimbabwe appeared. In the first article titled: "A tale of two rallies" under the international section on page 16, the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared only once.

In the second article titled: "South African stance on Zimbabwe remains unchanged" under the international section on page 16, the term elections as a countable dimension appeared a record ten times.

In the third article titled: "Why have elections? They are colonial," appearing on page 14 of the international section, the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared seven times.

In the fourth article titled: "A crisis larger than one election," appearing on the analysis section on page 14, the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared six times.

In the fifth article titled: "Death toll on the rise," appearing on page 14, the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared twice.

In the sixth article titled: "Mugabe and the mountaineer," also appearing on page 14 of the commentary section, the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared five times.

In the last article titled: "Zim needs a miracle," appearing on the comment and analysis section on page 22, the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared three times.

Three articles appeared in *The Sunday Times.* The first article appeared in *The Sunday Times* edition February 24 2002 titled: "Step by step into chaos." In the article, the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared eight times.

The second article appeared in *The Sunday Times* March 24 2002 titled: "Don't abandon Africa because of Mugabe." In the article, the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared six times.

The third article appeared in *The Sunday Times* April 14 2002 titled: "Servant of Libya." In the article the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared twice.

5.1.3. 2005 elections

In the year 2005, 13 articles appeared. Six of the articles appeared in *The Sunday Independent*, four of the articles appeared in *The Mail & Guardian*, and three of them in *The Sunday Times*. In *The Mail & Guardian* edition February 11 to 17 2005, three articles on Zimbabwean elections appeared. The first article is titled: "Why poll got our X: The MDC speaks out on its reasons for deciding to take part in Zimbabwe's general elections." In this story, the term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared nine times.

The second article is titled: "Mugabe hits the husting: We are losing all 22 seats in Matabeland provinces to the opposition because the top leadership was careless." In the story, the term elections as a countable dimension and a theme appeared five times. The last article is titled: "An election to quicken Zims's sunset." In the story, the term elections as a countable dimension and a theme appeared ten times.

In *The Mail & Guardian* April 8 to 14 2005, one article titled: "Flawed system must go appeared." In the article, the term elections as a theme and a countable dimension is mentioned a record 17 times.

In *The Sunday Independent* February 20 2005, one article appeared. The article is titled: "Too late for a free and fair election in Zimbabwe: But SADC could still salvage something by looking through the smoke and mirrors and having it postponed." In the article, the term elections as a theme and a countable dimension appeared eight times. The article is accompanied by a photograph of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai addressing a rally. The caption reads: "Morgan Tsvangirai Zimbabwe's main opposition leader addresses supporters at a rally in Mbare. He said he was confident he would win a majority."

In *The Sunday Independent* March 20 2005 edition, four stories appeared and a cartoon. The first story appearing on the front page is titled: "Mugabe gives hungry masses food for thought." In the story, the term elections as a theme and a countable dimension appeared two times.

The second story appeared on the *Sunday Dispatch's* section titled: "Bogey of imperialism mask Zimbabwe human tragedy." In the story, the term elections as a theme and a countable dimension appeared 12 times.

The third story also appeared on the *Sunday Dispatches* section. It is titled: "Ruins have become the new archetype of ZANU-PF." In the story, the term elections as a theme and a countable dimension appeared seven times.

The fourth story appeared on *The Sunday Independent* leader page titled: "SADC must flex its muscles over Zim poll sham." In the story the term elections as a theme and a countable dimension appeared eight times. The story was accompanied by a cartoon titled Roberts' believe it or else," mocking democracy in Zimbabwe characterized by a sham election, food shortages, absence of freedom of expression and press freedom and the neo-imperialism blame game.

In *The Sunday Independent* April 3 2005 edition, one story titled: "Zimbabwe needs us" appeared in the leader page. The term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared three times in the story. The story was accompanied by a cartoon mocking Zimbabwe's elections.

In *The Sunday Times* March 20 2005, the story titled: "Will SA's poll observers in Zimbabwe be free and fair?" appeared. In the article, elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared a record 27 times.

In *The Sunday Times* April 3 2005 the article titled: "Zimbabwe: The next step" appeared. In the article, elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared nine times.

In *The Sunday Times* February 20 2005 the article titled: "Mugabe asks for election whitewash" appeared. In the article, elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared six times.

5.1.4 2008 elections

In the year 2008, eleven stories appeared on elections. Five stories appeared in *The Sunday Times*, Three in *The Mail & Guardian* and three in *The Sunday Independent*. *The Mail & Guardian* February 29 to March 6 2008 edition covered two months (February and March). In this edition, two articles appeared on Zimbabwean elections. The first article titled "RACE FOR ZIMBABAWE: Tactics, prospects and obstacles of the three election contenders" appeared on the front page. The article was further accompanied by three photographs of Robert Mugabe, Simba Makoni and Morgan Tsvangirai. In this article, the term elections appeared seven times in the story.

The second article was a jump story, appearing on the front page and on page four of the Friday Magazine section. The story is titled: "'Mad Bob': Man or monster?" It is a review of the book '*Dinner with Mugabe*: The *untold story of a freedom fighter who became a tyrant'* by Heidi Holland. In the story, the term election, as a theme and a countable dimension, was not found.

In *The Mail & Guardian* April 18 to 24 2008 edition, one article appeared with frequent occurrences of the term elections. The article titled: "Mugabe's good son: The President's softly-softly approach to Mugabe resembles the reluctance of a son to openly correct an authoritarian father" was published on page 27 in the comment and analysis section. The term elections as a theme and a countable dimension appeared three times in the story.

In *The Sunday Times* March 30 2008, five stories appeared on elections. The first story is titled 'Heady rush as tyrannized people sense tipping point' (Raath, 2008). The term elections as a theme and countable dimension appeared three times. The article is accompanied by a

photograph of a middle aged man casting his vote. The caption read: "SEEING IT THROUGH: A partially blind man casts his vote in Zimbabwe's elections."

The second story appearing in the same edition of *The Sunday Times* March 30 2008 is titled: "Zimbabweans trek home to vote." The story appeared with a sub-heading: "If you are Zimbabwean you should be home voting for change... It's our only weapon against tyranny and repression." The term elections as a theme and a countable dimension appeared three times.

The third story is titled: "Mugabe must go and he must go now." The story is accompanied by a huge photograph with a woman in the foreground kneeling in prayer while in the background there is a long queue of Zimbabweans casting their votes. The caption reads: "praying for change - A woman calls on higher powers while hundreds of Zimbabweans queue to vote early yesterday in the capital, Harare." In this story the term elections as a countable dimension appeared five times.

The fourth story is titled: "A refugee too scared to go back and cast her ballot" (Makweba 2008) The article is accompanied by a close up photo of a white MDC activist, with a caption that reads: "DESTITUTE- MDC activist Althea Roberts." The term election as a theme and a countable dimension appeared once in the story. The fifth and last story is titled "A new sound at the poll: Laughter." The term elections as a theme and a countable dimension appeared twice in the story.

In *The Sunday Independent* April 13 2008 edition, three stories on Zimbabwean elections appeared. The first story, which was the headline, is titled: "Summit on Zim 'coup' crisis stalls: With Mugabe fuming in Harare and Mbeki trying to play down the election fiasco, regional leaders were still trying to break the impasse last night." The term elections as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared five times in the story. The story is accompanied by a photograph by Reuters of Mbeki and Mugabe walking hand in hand. The caption reads "President Thabo Mbeki walks hand in hand with Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe after Mbeki's arrival in Harare, where he held talks with Mugabe on the country's election deadlock. He then proceeded to Lusaka to attend an emergency summit on the crisis."

The second story is titled: “Hopes for returning home dashed: A week ago, Zimbabweans in South Africa were getting ready to go back to their country. Now all that’s left is talk of war.” The story is accompanied by a close up photograph of two Zimbabwean refugees. The caption reads: “Refugees Sam Mavhunga and Aron Makuza were getting ready to go home to Zimbabwe... But now it’s all over, isn’t it? Mugabe’s stolen it [the elections] and no one’s going to do anything about it. We need to go to war.”

The third story appeared on the leader page titled: “Mugabe is losing the chance to save his skin.” The story was accompanied by a cartoon showing Mugabe in a knock-out situation in a boxing bout with Morgan Tsvangirai standing at the left corner of the ring, while the referee counted one to ten. However, the referee, who represents the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), kept on repeating the ninth count amusing the spectators.

5.2. Economic collapse

A total of 12 stories were selected with reference to economic collapse in Zimbabwe. Five stories appeared on economic collapse in *The Sunday Times*, six stories in *The Sunday Independent* and one story in *The Mail & Guardian*. The newspaper editions were randomly selected for stories on economic collapse in the years that coincided with the economic problems from 2000 –2008.

In *The Mail & Guardian* March 8 to 14 2002 edition, one article on economic collapse titled: “Boom or bust for Zimbabwe: Only political change will put the economy back on its feet” (Robertson, 2008) appeared. It was further accompanied by a cartoon of Robert Mugabe sniffing the last remains of food from a plate presented to him by an unidentified man whose long hands, the only visible part of his body, looked wretched and covered in a tattered shirt.

The Sunday Independent December 7 2008 edition had three stories on economic meltdown. The first story, appearing in the headline, is titled: “Zimbabwe crashes: Call for action as the dollar plummets and humanitarian disaster overwhelms the country.” Economic meltdown as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared two times in the story.

The second story titled: “Africa would support tough stance on Zim.” Economic collapse as a theme and countable dimension, represented by the phrase ‘economy on its knees,’ appeared once.

The third story is titled: “Mugabe is the Tyrant, not the MDC” had the phrase “agricultural aid,” mentioned once, as an identified theme and a countable dimension. The phrase was used to suggest that the economy had collapsed.

In *The Sunday Times* December 7 2008 edition, the story “There’s a simple, African plan that will get Zimbabwe back on its feet” appeared. It used the terms ‘economic collapse’ and ‘feeding the nation,’ mentioned once, that were identified as the dimensions representing the economic situation in Zimbabwe.

The Sunday Independent May 01 2005 article titled: “Zim Crisis as food, fuel, forex run out” appeared with the phrase “economic meltdown” mentioned twice as an identifiable theme and countable dimension.

The Sunday Times July 6 2008 article titled: “Animals pay the price of life in Zim” appeared with the phrase, “food shortages,” mentioned twice, as identified themes and countable dimensions.

The Sunday Independent April 9 2000 article titled: “Crisis deepens as Mugabe digs his heels – Southern Africa region as a whole stands to lose from deteriorating political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe” appeared with the phrase “economic collapse,” mentioned four times, as the identified theme and a countable dimension.

The Sunday Independent June 26 2000 article titled: “Economic crisis overshadows Zimbabwe’s poll” appeared with the phrases “economic mismanagement” and “economic chaos,” appearing once, as identifiable themes and countable dimensions.

In *The Sunday Times* May 7 2000 the article titled: “Its Democracy, not land that is at stake in Zimbabwe” appeared with the term “economic meltdown” as a theme and a countable dimension mentioned only once.

In *The Sunday Times* February 20 2000, the article "SA should help save Zimbabwe, not Mugabe" appeared. Four phrases identified as themes and countable dimensions appeared once each. The first phrase was "economic collapse." The second was "economic plight." The third was "economic turmoil" and the fourth was "economic ruination."

In *The Sunday Times* March 17 2002 article "Now Mbeki must show leadership" the phrase "economic collapse" as a theme and a countable dimension appeared once.

5.3 Social Upheavals

5.3.1 Operation *Murambatsvina*

Stories related to social upheavals in the three newspapers were randomly selected in the years that they occurred (2005). Two stories appeared in *The Mail & Guardian* and one in *The Sunday Independent*. It is unclear why, in that year, it seems as if nothing appeared in *The Sunday Times* regarding Operations *Murambatsvina* as far as the random samples selected were concerned. However, two editions of *The Mail & Guardian* were selected in the month of June and one edition of *The Sunday Times* in the month of July 2005.

In *The Mail & Guardian* June 10 to 16 2005 edition, the story titled: "Out in the cold" (Mutasa, 2005) appeared. The story is sub titled: "last month the Zimbabwean government launched a crackdown on 'illegal' houses and businesses. The thousands displaced have got nowhere to go and little hope for the future." In the story, the term Operation *Murambatsvina* as an identifiable theme (under social upheavals) and a countable dimension appeared once. The article is accompanied by a photograph of a weeping middle-aged woman and a child in the background next to a demolished house.

In *The Mail & Guardian* May to June 2 2005 edition, the story titled: 'Bob plans R3m bash' appeared. The story is sub-titled, "as Harare burns, Mugabe is planning a lavish anniversary celebration." The term Operation *Murambatsvina* as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension is mentioned once.

The Sunday Independent July 2 2005 article titled: "The horror of Bob Mugabe's final solution – We must clean the country of the crawling mass of maggots, says the police commissioner as hundreds of thousands are put out in the cold" (Jambaya, 2005) appeared with the term Operation *Murambatsvina* as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension mentioned twice.

5.3.2 Cholera

Stories on cholera appearing on the selected newspaper editions were randomly selected. Six articles were selected from the three newspapers. Three of the stories appeared in *The Sunday Independent*, two in *The Mail & Guardian* and one story in *The Sunday Times*.

Two editions of *The Mail & Guardian* were selected in the month of November. The first story appearing in *The Mail & Guardian* November 21 to 27 2008 is titled: "Zimbabwe gets sicker: As politicians go on squabbling hundreds are dying in the streets." The terms cholera as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared once in the story.

In *The Mail & Guardian* May 16 to 22 2008, the story titled: "Zim: AU must mediate" appeared in the comment, analysis and letters section of the newspaper. In the story, the term cholera as a theme and a countable dimension appeared once. The story is further accompanied by a photograph of a Zimbabwean woman carrying a baby on her back crossing under a fence that borders South Africa and Zimbabwe. The caption reads: "desperate Zimbabweans try to cross the border illegally." The photograph does not however indicate the source of the information (it was taken by an unknown person).

In *The Sunday Independent* November 30 2008, the story titled: "Cholera: true death toll is being hidden – officials accuse the Zimbabwean government of suppressing information" appeared with the term cholera as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension mentioned four times.

The Sunday Independent 14 2008 edition had two stories on cholera. The first story titled: "SA pressure for Zim action now" appeared with the term cholera as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension mentioned five times.

The second story titled: "Water bomb about to burst: Experts warn that South Africa's water crisis needs urgent attention at all levels to avert catastrophe" appeared with the term cholera as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension mentioned once.

In *The Sunday Times* November 30 2009 story titled: "To live in Zimbabwe is to die: The cholera crisis is placing immeasurable strain on a nation already on its knees," the term cholera as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared six times. The story is further accompanied by two photographs. The first one is by Associated Press showing a group of women drawing water from a nearby well. One of the women is wearing a campaign T-shirt with Mugabe's image gesturing 'endurance to the struggle.' The caption reads: "barely a drop to drink- People wait to scoop water from a well in Harare suburb this week. Hundreds of the city residents have died of cholera, which is spread by contaminated water and food."

The second photograph is of a victim of cholera. It depicts the plight of Sipiwe Mangwende. She is shown holding a dry municipal tap outside her house. The caption reads: "Sipiwe Mangwende was infected with the disease by contaminated Municipal water." The photograph was taken by Rowan Phillip (the author of the article).

5.3.4. Influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa

Only one story appearing in *The Sunday Times* was selected on the influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa. It is very unclear why it was difficult to randomly come across stories related to the influx in the three selected newspapers in the study. However, the 'influx' of Zimbabweans into South Africa was a phrase frequently mentioned in stories related to elections, cholera and economic collapse but not as the master narrative defined through bold headlines. Nevertheless, in *The Sunday Times* edition of June 29 2008, the article story titled: "Bloodied and bruised but glad to be in South Africa" appeared. In the article the phrase "border jumping" as an identifiable theme and a countable dimension appeared twice.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter counted the frequency of occurrence of specific textual dimensions and the number of times they appeared on the selected newspaper editions in the study in order to unpack their meanings and to make qualitative judgments. Elections, as one of the dimensions and a sub-theme under politics, and the number of times it appeared in a story was counted. Stories related to elections were chosen in one edition of *The Mail & Guardian*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sunday Independent* in 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008 one month before and after the elections, making it a three month analysis. While some editions in the selected newspapers had only one story on elections, others had more than one. The number of articles appearing in this section per newspaper edition depended upon how many articles that edition dedicated to Zimbabwean elections. Two newspaper editions were randomly selected for the counting of themes related to economic collapse, operation *Mrambatsvina*, influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa and cholera in the year(s) coinciding with these events. Basically, the same criterion used to count the dimensions of texts related to elections as a theme, under the broader theme of politics, was used for economic collapse and social upheavals themes.

Chapter six

Zimbabwe through the South African lens

6.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses the South African Weeklies' representation of the socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe through textual analysis. The analysis proceeds through three approaches. The first approach examines the politics of elections and the manner in which it has been represented. The second regards how 'economic collapse' is represented focusing on the land reform program. The third deals with the representation of social upheavals as a result of contested outcomes of elections. The analysis focused on the textual genres and narrative devices used in representing the situation. The former dealt with headlines, photographs, captions and cartoons while the latter concentrated on metaphors, analogies and intertexts in selected stories. The analysis revealed how the Weekly newspapers constructed the discourse of regime change through the phrase "Mugabe must go." The narrative thread from the newspapers highlighted how the articles prescribed measures of restoring consensual calm in Zimbabwe pointing out the need for unseating Mugabe in order to implement democratic practices and control hyperinflation.

Such narratives constituted the 'common sense' knowledge of the situation in Zimbabwe considering the broad framework in which they have been 'legitimized' by different stakeholders largely from the right wing. Much of this legitimacy is done through the different sources that are used by journalists to explain events in Zimbabwe. The roles of such sources should therefore not be taken for granted. Sources by virtue of their authority and 'credibility' constantly provide journalists with the raw materials, 'ideological schemas,' which are used to construct accounts of events unfolding in Zimbabwe. Consequently, meaning about the situation in that country depended upon the range of options available in the schema. The latter is what is problematic since it is where competing discourses are restricted when explaining the 'reality' of events in that country. It is important to note that Mugabe cutoff both the local and international press and,

as such, was excluded from the primary news definer role if we consider the previous argument about sources. It is worthwhile to note that news about Zimbabwe would have been framed differently if Mugabe was included in the primary news definer role. The South African Weeklies presented a stereotypical and sensational view of Zimbabwe similar to the way that the Western press portrays all of Africa. It is also worth noting that such representations emanate from the fact that the mainstream South African press is commercial and works from a particular journalistic tradition which influences the way it covers events (human rights and democracy). The way the South African Weeklies represent the Zimbabwean situation reflects their utilization of sources, their institutional framework and the extent to which they reinforces or challenge readers' assumptions about events unfolding in that country. It also highlights issues of editorial independence, press freedom and freedom of expression where the latter is normally conflated. Kupe (2010: 23) argues that:

> […] in the post-Apartheid context, the debate on the political-economy of the media and questions of power and the shaping of society have been, at best, muted and, worst, have surrendered to a discourse that narrowly focuses on editorial and programming independence as the sole expressions and manifestations of media freedom and freedom of expression limiting alternative discourses on how a society can exist. Journalists themselves can be a threat to freedom of expression especially when you look at their ideological orientations when constructing news. For journalists and liberals, the focus is on editorial decision making, which includes choices about what news items are selected, the angles that are taken and the decisions to publish…most media in South Africa might be embedded in frameworks of reporting which privilege the interests of elites in society in relation to economic policy (Kupe, 210:23).

The South African Weeklies' reporting of Zimbabwe reveals a deeper agenda – to unseat Mugabe from power so that Western norms of democracy and human rights, 'preconditions for economic development,' can be realized. Although most international press coverage of Africa is negative, the coverage of the Zimbabwean situation merits some degree of negative coverage. However, this coverage should reflect the extent to which the public discourse among South Africans and Zimbabweans agree with the 'negative' analysis of what is happening in

Zimbabwe. The South African Weeklies are reflecting the views of those South Africans and Zimbabweans that are convinced that Zimbabwe is faced with a problematic situation. It is such audience assumptions that the press must challenge rather than reinforce. The representation of Zimbabwe is achieved through icons and symbols that connote the existence of a problematic situation in the country. The textual analysis of the representation indicates that for Zimbabwe to restore democratic practices and recover economically, Mugabe must go.

6.1. Elections

Elections received the most coverage by the three selected Weekly newspapers largely because they were perceived to be neither free nor fair. Moreover, the political crisis surrounding the elections was viewed as the main reason behind the 'economic collapse' and social upheavals. The selected Weeklies used certain textual devices and narrative genres to represent the situation. The following table (Table 1.) illustrates the forms of textual and narrative representation and frequency of occurrence of specific reference to elections.

Table 1: Elections: Forms of Textual and Narrative Representation and Frequency of Occurrence (2000, 2002, 2005, 2008)

Forms of Representation	**Number of Specific References to Elections**	**Number of References to Zimbabwe**
Headlines	91	131
Photographs and captions	7	21
Cartoons	5	9
Analogies and intertexts	10	14
Metaphors	7	9

Table 1.1 below illustrates the percentage of stories dedicated to the coverage of three interlinked themes; elections, economic collapse and social upheaval.

Countable dimension	**Percentage of occurrence**
Number of stories on elections	65%
Number of stories on economic collapse	20%
Number of stories on social upheaval	15%

Table 1.1. Table representing the frequency of occurrence of elections, economic collapse & social upheaval stories

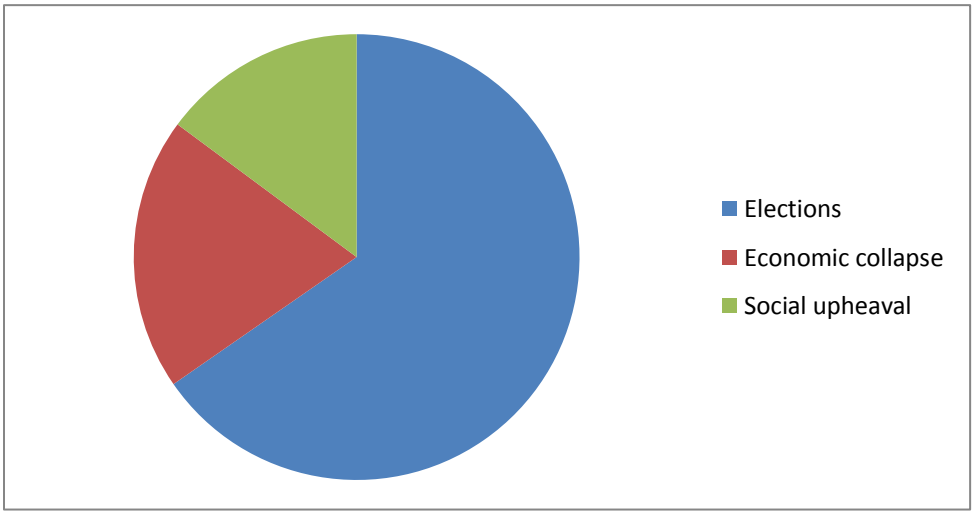


Figure 1. Pie chart representing the frequency of occurrence of elections, economic collapse & social upheaval stories

Considering the above frequency of occurrences, 23 percent of the total number of stories about elections indicated that they were neither free nor fair. 72 percent of stories about economic collapse indicated that it was a consequence of failed elections and 5 percent of stories on social upheavals linked the upheavals to failed elections and economic collapse.

6.1.1 Representation through narrative genres

The selected newspapers utilized certain narrative genres in constructing stories about elections, economic collapse and social upheavals. These were photographs, captions, metaphors and cartoons. The graphs below (figure 2) represent the frequency of occurrence of the genres as they appeared in the 64 newspaper editions analyzed in the study in reference to economic collapse and social upheavals. The frequency of occurrence of narrative genres, that is, photographs, captions and cartoons used to represent elections was more than those of economic collapse and social upheavals. There were no cartoons on social upheavals.

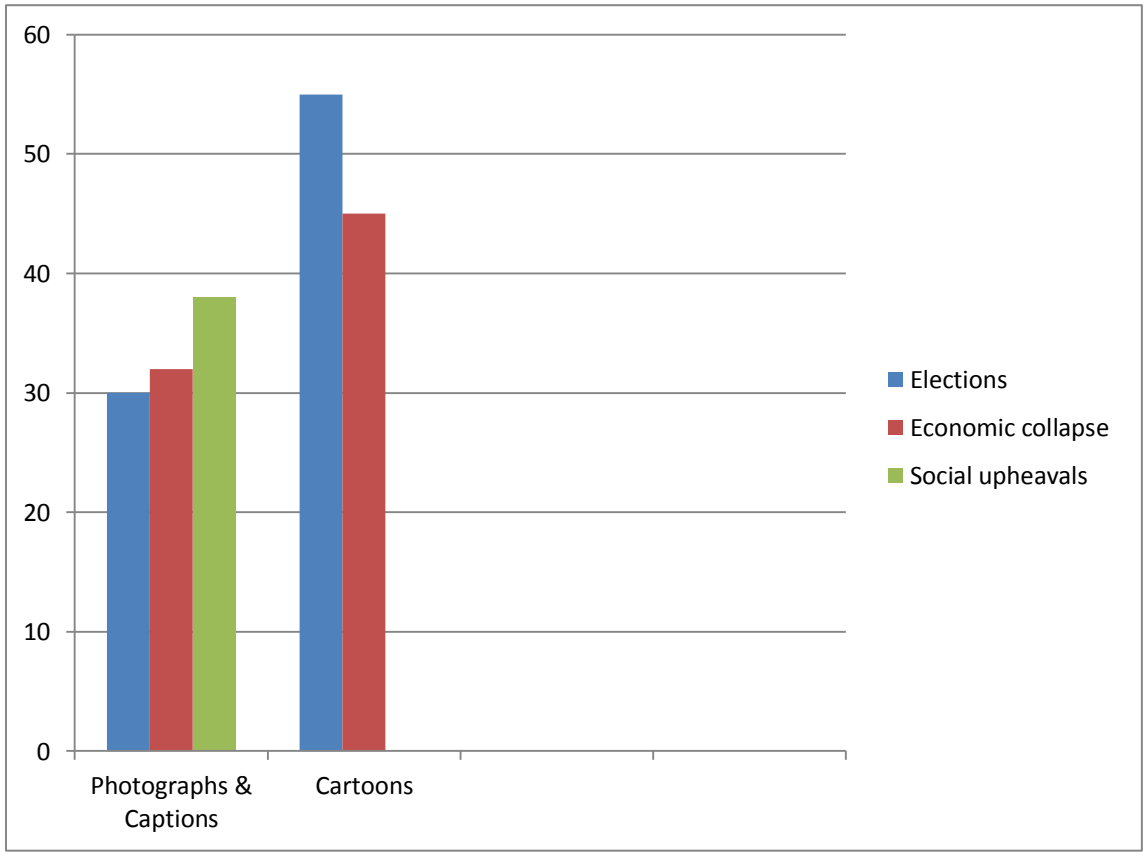


Figure 2. Graph representing narrative genres and how frequently they were utilized under the three themes (elections, economic collapse and social upheavals)

The cartoons used to represent the Zimbabwean elections were more than photographs and captions. This is because it was easier to capture the idea of electoral fraud using political satire than the case of photographs. The photographs are usually expected to be authentic by virtue of the discourse that sanctions the operational ideologies of the selected newspapers as formal. The photographs appearing in such newspapers are, naturally, expected or meant to reflect the seriousness of the papers in reference to the events unfolding in Zimbabwe (Bignell, 1997). Cartoons also act as open texts that allow for greater semiotic movement on the reader.

Narrative genres	**Frequency of occurrence**
Photograph & captions	30%
Cartoons	55%

Table 2. Table representing the frequency of occurrence of narrative genres used to represent elections

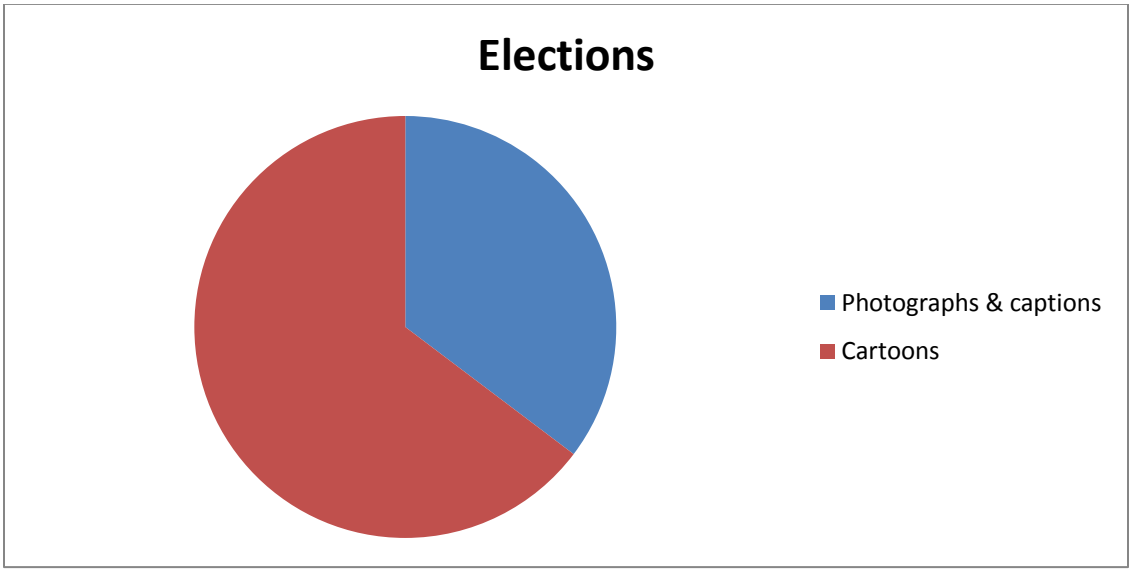


Figure 2. Pie chart representing the frequency of occurrence of narrative genres used to represent elections

In figure 2 above, since photographs and captions only accounted for 85 percent of the total frequency of occurrence, it is debatable if a blank 15 percent space is worth including in the pie-chart as a 'positive' unit or a dimension. A blank is not a number but a deficit that represents absence and cannot account for anything or claim materiality because of its irrationality. The pie-charts in this chapter were therefore calculated based on positive numbers or numbers beyond zero. Numbers below zero or those that represents absence can only be captured as deficits or, in the case of figure 2, negative 15 percent. The problem is that 15 percent is a positive number and cannot be represented using an empty space in the pie-chart. If this is done, it will imply negative 15 percent and in a sense be problematic in the pie-char. The pie-chart might have not been the best means of representing frequencies but the idea is that some elements appeared more than others in the representation, of course, with a margin of error. The methodology argued that the quantitative findings or representations simply paved the way for richer qualitative assessments and explanations.

6.1.2 Representation through textual devices

The selected Weekly newspapers equally utilized certain textual devices in constructing stories about elections, economic collapse and social upheaval. These were headlines, analogies, intertexts and metaphors. The graphs below (figure 3) represent the frequency of occurrence of the textual devices as they appeared in the 64 newspaper editions analyzed in the study in reference to elections, economic collapse and social upheavals.

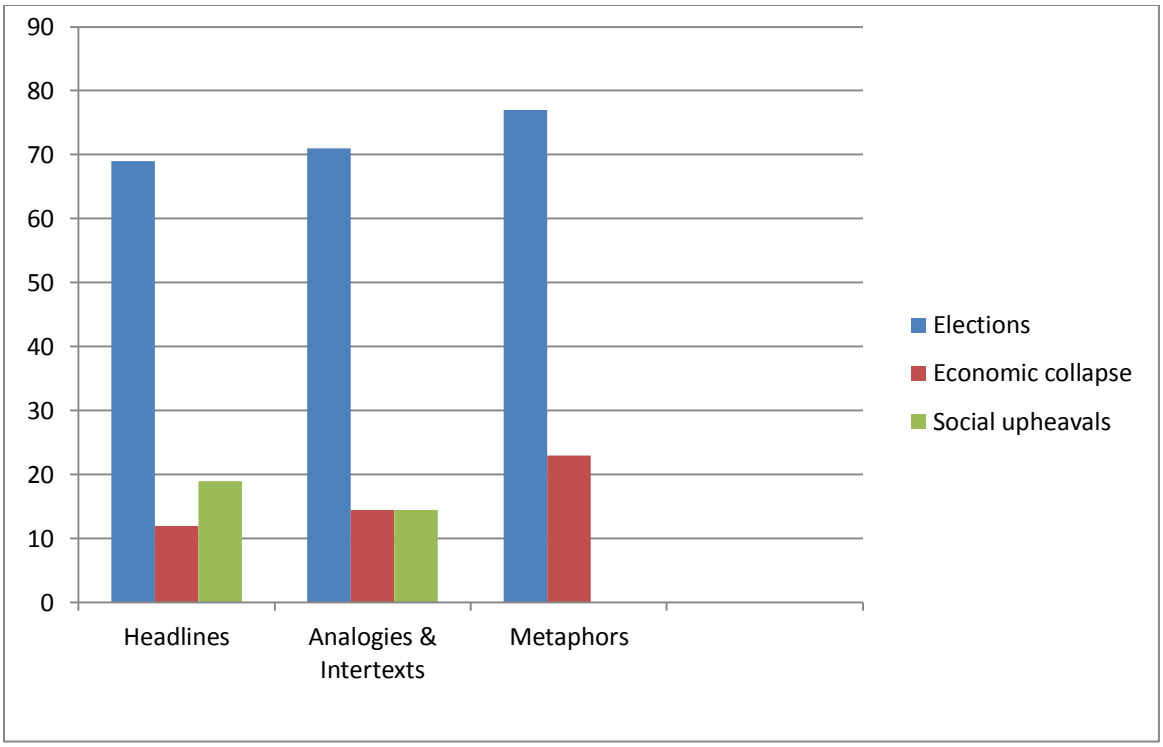


Figure 3. Graph representing textual devices and how frequently they were utilized under the three themes (elections, economic collapse and social upheavals)

The frequency of occurrence of textual devices, that is, headlines, anologies, intertexts and metaphors used to represent elections was more than those of economic collapse and social upheavals. Metaphors dominated the representation of elections. There were no metaphors on social upheavals. Elections received the highest frequency since they were considered flawed and were compared to other failed elections in Africa. See the table 3 and figure 4 below:

Countable dimensions of texts	**Frequency of occurrence**
Headlines	69%
Analogies and intertexts	71%
Metaphors	77%

Table 3. Table representing elections and the frequency of occurrence of textual devices utilized under the three themes (Elections, economic collapse and social upheavals)

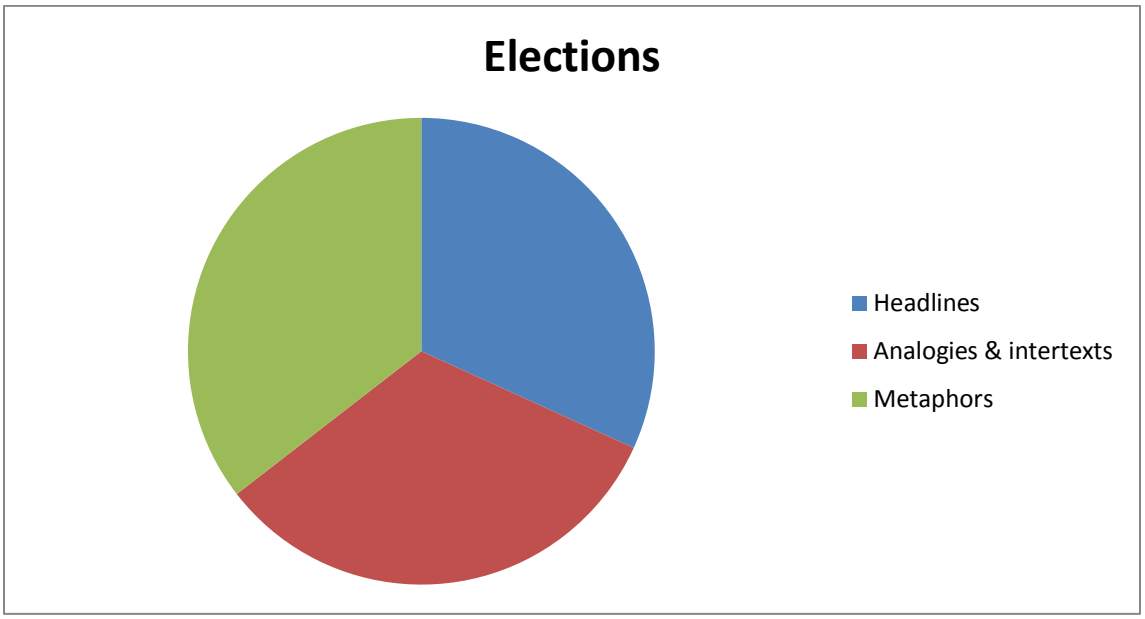


Figure 4. Pie chart representing elections and the frequency of occurrence of textual devices utilized under the three themes (Elections, economic collapse and social upheavals)

The pie-chart above (figure 4) gives an idea of the frequency of occurrence of headlines analogies, intertexts and metaphors about elections. The same was done for economic collapse and social upheavals.

6.1.3 Headlines under elections

The analysis of the headlines used to represent the Zimbabwean elections proclaimed the elections neither free nor fair. Though the headlines represented elections as a two horse race between ZANU-PF and MDC, they ruled out the possibility of an MDC victory through the argument that Zimbabwe is plagued with electoral malpractices engineered by ZANU-PF. The headlines ruled out the possibility of free and fair elections in Zimbabwe even though they constructed a discourse that seemed to support the desire for an MDC victory. The headlines also emphasized the need to vote 'for change' in Zimbabwe to remove the 'tyrant' and 'dictator' Robert Mugabe, with headlines such as: "A refugee too scared to go back and vote" (Bunyekezwa, 2008), "Mugabe Must go and he must go now" (Govender & Rank, 2008), "heady rush as tyrannized people sense tipping point" (Raath, 2008), "flawed system must go" (Thabane, 2005), an "elections to quicken Zim's sunset" (Win, 2005), "Too Late for a Free and Fair Election in Zimbabwe" (Kapemba, 2005), "Step by step into chaos," (Meredith, 2002) etc. Dor in Media Monitoring Unit (2009:16) discusses the *Editing Parameters and Tool for Critical Media Consumption*. He talks of placement of newspaper stories (headlines) and the extent to which it reflects on what is said in the story. He argues that readers and consumers would think that what is placed in the headline is what happens in the story which is usually not the case. He argues that:

> In most cases, this sort of signaling has crucial influence in how consumers interpret news. A meticulous investigation of news material reveals that the aspects that the editors choose to highlight in the headline are not necessarily obvious choices. Other information could just as easily be promoted to the headlines, in which case the news could be perceived quite differently. In many cases, headlines actually distort what is said in an article. In more than a few cases, the connection between the headline and an article is almost incidental. The fact that most news consumers 'scan the headlines' and do not read every word in an article underscores the significance for this criterion (Dor in Media Monitoring Unit, 2009:16).

Readers would easily tell the intentions of the headlines used by South African Weeklies when reporting the Zimbabwean situation – they were meant to push for change. However, the editor of the *The Mail & Guardian,* Nick Dawes did not readily accept that his paper was pushing for regime change. He argued that journalists do not consciously construct stories but rather, there are some issues related to institutional mechanisms that are problematic. These issues sanction the practice of mainstream conventional journalism which means that journalists are obliged to follow certain normative practices when constructing news. In addition, there are questions of ideological and editorial independence sanctioned by media ownership that make journalists report stories with a particular slant. As Peter Fabricious argued:

> We don't have policies tailor made specifically for Zimbabwe ... We don't have a political mission to change Zimbabwe. Our mission is to report what's happening and to comment fairly ... I don't think our mission is to see Mugabe out of power even though that is what we would like to see happen… You do it in such a way that you don't even know. One of the most significant bet of journalists…like the picture of Morgan Tsvangirai beaten up, it was smuggled out of Zimbabwe and if SADC hadn't seen that picture, theoretically, they would have not pressured Zimbabwe to form a unitary government. The images of the picture were mentioned by SADC when they met to discuss where to go with Zimbabwe. [44]

Most headlines on elections constructed a discourse of change. Headlines such as: "Mugabe must go and he must go now," "Race for Zimbabwe," "Flawed system must go," "Zimbabwe: the next step" and "An election to quicken Zim's sunset" are good examples. Other headlines expressed suspicion with the electoral process. Examples are headlines such as: "Zim's mob gets license to intimidate," "Zim crisis: Our wake-up call," "Step by step into chaos," "Mugabe asks for election whitewash," "UN election team to abandon Zimbabwe," "A tale of two rallies" and "South African stance on Zimbabwe remains unchanged." The constant negative portrayal of Zimbabwean elections signaled the desire by South African Weeklies to change regime in that country. For instance, while the headlines such as "Mugabe's good son" (Gevisser, 2008) described Mbeki's soft approach on Zimbabwe," the headline "Don't abandon Africa because of

[44] Fabricios. P. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 200-2008*. Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

Mugabe" warned against neglecting the situation in that country. The latter seemed to argue that the problems faced by Zimbabwe should not be personalized. Paradoxically, personalization emerged as one of the techniques the Weeklies used to represent the situation. Good examples of personalization are evident in headlines such as: 'Mad Bob': Man or monster? (Zvomuya, 2008), "Servant of Libya" and "Mugabe hits the husting." Some headlines just described the situation by constructing a conflicting discourse of despair and optimism such as "Bogey of imperialism masks Zimbabwe human tragedy," and "A new sound at the poll: Laughter."

6.1.4 Elections in Zimbabwe as news

It is important to note that the reporting of news about elections was determined by the consensus about the value criteria guiding the South African society which emanates from the international hegemony about democratic elections. In a nutshell, the value is measured against the background of free and fair elections. Therefore, South African Weeklies, operating under liberal democracy, paid extensive attention to the manner in which the Zimbabwean election broke the 'consensual calm' defined through free and fair elections as a normative democratic practice. However, the concern is not whether or not the Weeklies were biased in their coverage of the ruling party or the opposition during the elections but that the leader may wish to argue one case over another. Cases of ideological polarization regarding the political economy of Zimbabwe have been well captured in the literature review chapters. For example, the leader may wish to establish the existence of electoral conflict rather than electoral harmony. It may even emphasize those facts which lend weight to his/her argument and play down those facts which would run counter to his/her argument through framing and the utilization of sources.

It seems strange that such selection or weighting is regarded as out of the question on the news pages. News values are 'somehow' beyond the editors' control – they are selected using a myth making criteria that assesses their degree of worthiness. The criteria explain why some stories would appear in some newspapers and not others (Bignell, 1997). News is a product of editorial decision making, which includes choices about what news items are selected, the angles that are taken and the decisions to publish. Nick Dawes explains how institutional framework, which sanctions institutional mechanisms and work practices, influences how *The Mail & Guardian*

represents issues. He notes that: "Broadly speaking, we [*The Mail & Guardian*] are a social democratic newspaper in terms of our views ... Our fundamental kind of identity as a newspaper and as an institution is that social justice is very important to us…so that's our fundamental guiding thread" (Nick Dawes[45], editor in chief, *The Mail & Guardian*). Braham in Gurevitch, Curran &Woolacott (1982: 270) argue that:

> […] it is a complete misconception of the functions of the press to imagine it can or does control what is news. For the press to say that they print 'news as it is,' or that news is inviolable, is in effect to say that if the content of the news page is ugly, this is because the press acts as a mirror faithfully reflecting the ugliness of the society. Even if this analogy is appropriate, it should be remembered that a mirror does not only reflect what is ugly. It is more appropriate to visualize the media as a searchlight, illuminating some areas while leaving others in the shadow. What appears in the pages of a newspaper is obviously a very small proportion of what happens in the world outside. But it does not follow that the 'few' stories that are printed are representative of the many stories that reach the newspaper office, let alone those that do not get that far (Braham in Gurevitch, Curran &Woolacott, 1982: 270).

A newspaper must have some general criteria to determine which stories are reported or discarded, though such rules may change dramatically. In this case, news stories about Zimbabwean elections constituted almost a boycott or censorship of positive favorable news – not always by intent, but certainly by habitual neglect (Breichner, 1967). Big stories on Zimbabwean elections are considered as those that the South African audience can identify with like the ZANU-PF 'sponsored' land invasions that interested the white South Africans as Peter Fabricious explains below:

> There has been an issue on Zimbabwe, people saying that we were playing to the fears and the prejudice in the interests of the white readers because it was white farmers who were initially the victims of ZANU-PF policies. There may be some elements of truth in that but I think we were targeting the informed readership which also includes a growing

[45] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

> black middle-class and the story also started off being, maybe, more appealing to white readers for obvious reasons. Whites were quite interested and sympathetic to what was happening to white farmers in Zimbabwe and concerned, but I think more and more people realized that this was not just about the land seizures but a broader campaign by Mugabe to suppress the opposition generally in order to retain power. I think that will be the prevailing view for most black and white readers. As that process happened, as peoples understanding of Zimbabwe increased, the appeal of our stories broadened.[46]

Nick Dawes, editor in chief of *The Mail & Guardian,* shared the same sentiments. His arguments seem to echo the question of why newspapers don't usually challenge their readers' perceptions but rather reinforce them to meet market demands. In the case of Zimbabwe, as Nick Dawes explains, there has been a perception among the audiences that there are attempts by ZANU-PF to maintain its control on power and attempts by people to disrupt that hegemony, one way or another. And another thing that also flared from that is the aspects of consequences of that attempt to remain in power. The editors therefore assume that there is a market 'out there' or audiences whose interest they have to satisfy. See the excerpts from the interview with Nick Dawes below:

> We are driven by the needs of the audiences which come to bear but yes, I think the needs of the audiences are crucial and by the relationship between those needs and the unfolding events on the ground... We have to serve both Zimbabwean and South African readership. So that means that we have to have slightly different, certain choices than purely local newspapers might.[47]

Nick Dawes gives an example of how they have to add something to what is available in local Zimbabwean media otherwise it is of no point for those readers. He further argues that on the other hand, they are not a Zimbabwean newspaper and therefore cannot cover everything. They have to choose what seems to them in a given week to be a key driver of the key national story. Part of the problem in news representation is how journalists and the media take things for

[46] Fabricious. P. (2010). *The Misepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.
[47] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

granted. Often invoking questions of how broader structures and ideologies impact on the practice of newsgathering as if such structures and ideologies are permanently fixed beyond change. Cultures in societies do change, even an episteme exists within a certain historical context and it is important that media scholars approach constraints in news construction with the optimism that these structures and ideologies can change. Such an approach will necessarily reverse the common assumptions by journalists or editors, like the ones interviewed in this study, that such constraints have been permanently established to influence news production in the way that they do, are immutable and cannot be questioned.

6.2 Economic collapse

Economic collapse was the second chosen theme. The textual analysis of the three selected newspapers reveals that their basic message is that Zimbabwe's economy is in a problematic situation due to the failure to hold free and fair elections. The analysis further reveals two interlinked ideas. First, the Weeklies suggest that electoral fraud and malpractices have guaranteed Mugabe victory and given him the opportunity to continue plundering the economy. Second, they see little chance of fixing the economy as long as Mugabe remains in power. These views were constantly represented through a variety of textual and narrative forms (see table 4).

Table 4: Economic collapse: Forms of Textual and Narrative Representation and Frequency of Occurrence (April and March 2000, March 2002, and July, November, and December 2008)

Forms of Representation	**Number of Specific References to elections**	**Number of References to Zimbabwe**
Headlines	16	131
Photographs and Captions	6	21
Cartoons	4	9
Analogies and Intertexts	2	14
Metaphors	2	9

It is important to indicate that the political situation in Zimbabwe has been characterized by chaotic electioneering periods that include fraud, intimidation and violence. The situation affected white commercial farmers, especially, through land invasions (Ndlela, 2005). The reasons why the invasions took place have been explained in a variety of ways. The dominant consensus points to the frustrations brought about by a 'failed' land resettlement program due to the Lancaster House willing-buyer willing-seller principle in the 1980s that granted Zimbabwe independence (Willem, 2005). Muzondidya in Raftopolous & Mlambo (2009: 172-173) state that "the willing-buyer willing-sellers principle ensured white commercial farmers' reluctance to sell their land" and frustrated the land redistribution. Bond & Manyanya (2002: 9) list a number of reasons, some of which have already been mentioned, for land invasions among them "colonially inherited debts, failed Economic Structural Adjustment Program, [and] government unbudgeted decision to intervene in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo." Chaumba, Scoones & Wolmer (2003: 540) introduce a variety of reasons for the farm occupations ranging from top-down directives to bolster support for the ruling party strongholds in rural areas, to the "localised desire for the restitution of ancestral land, to opportunist poaching." A more detailed discussion of economic collapse and how it was represented by the three Weekly newspapers is in chapter seven.

6.2.1 Headlines on economic collapse

A number of headlines appeared on the economic situation in Zimbabwe. Most of them suggested that the economy had collapsed. Headlines such as "There is a Simple African Plan That Will Get Zimbabwe Back on Its Feet" (Makhanya, 2008), metaphorically represented the need to restore the crippled economy. Other headlines such as "Boom or bust for Zimbabwe Only Political Change Will Put the Economy Back on Its Feet" (Robertson, 2008) and "Zimbabwe crashes" (Thornycroft, et al 2008) represented the poor state of the economy. The headline "Africa would support tough stance on Zim" (Monare, 2008) and "Now Mbeki Must Show Leadership" (Makhanya, 2002) indicated the need for leadership to solve the situation. Such leadership is exemplified in the South African and SADC brokered government of national

unity which undertook macro-economic and monetary reforms to reduce inflation in Zimbabwe. Other headlines such as "Animals pay the price of life in Zim" (Piliso, 2008) simply sensationalized the economic situation while others such as "It's democracy, not land that is at stake in Zimbabwe" (Leon, 2000), emphasized the struggle for democracy. A complete reading of the narratives behind the headlines used revealed the excessive use of metaphors. Metaphors dominated the representation of economic collapse in Zimbabwe. The latter was represented using a combination of signifiers that had negative connotation regarding the events unfolding in that country. Table 5 and figure 5 (pie chart) below indicates the frequency of occurrence of textual devices used:

Countable dimension of text	**Frequency of occurrence**
Headlines	12%
Analogies and intertexts	14.5%
Metaphors	23%

Table 5. Table representing economic collapse and frequency of occurrence of textual devices used

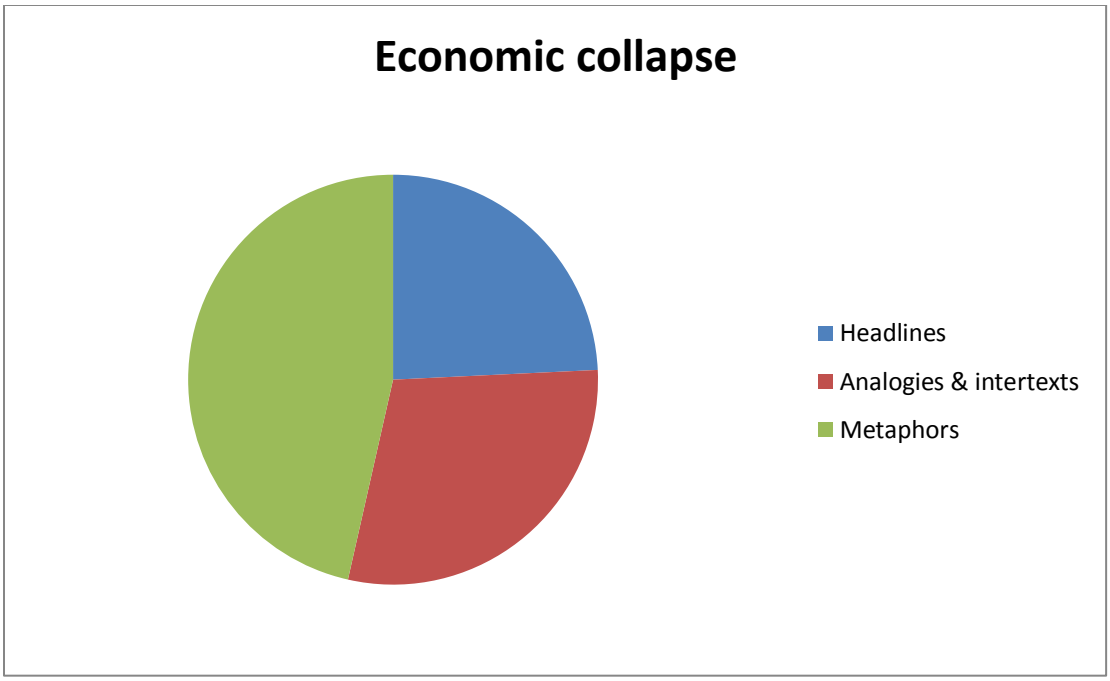


Figure 5. Pie chart representing economic collapse and frequency of occurrence of textual devices used

Economic collapse was easily represented through photographs although cartoons dominated. Photographs consisted of images of empty shelves, big bundles of notes and long queues in the banks. Cartoons focused on the persona of Robert Mugabe, who was and still is perceived to be responsible for the economic free-fall. See the table and pie chart on page 204.

Countable dimension of text	Frequency of occurrence
Photographs & caption	32%
Cartoons	45%

Table 6. Table representing economic collapse and frequency of occurrence of narrative genres used

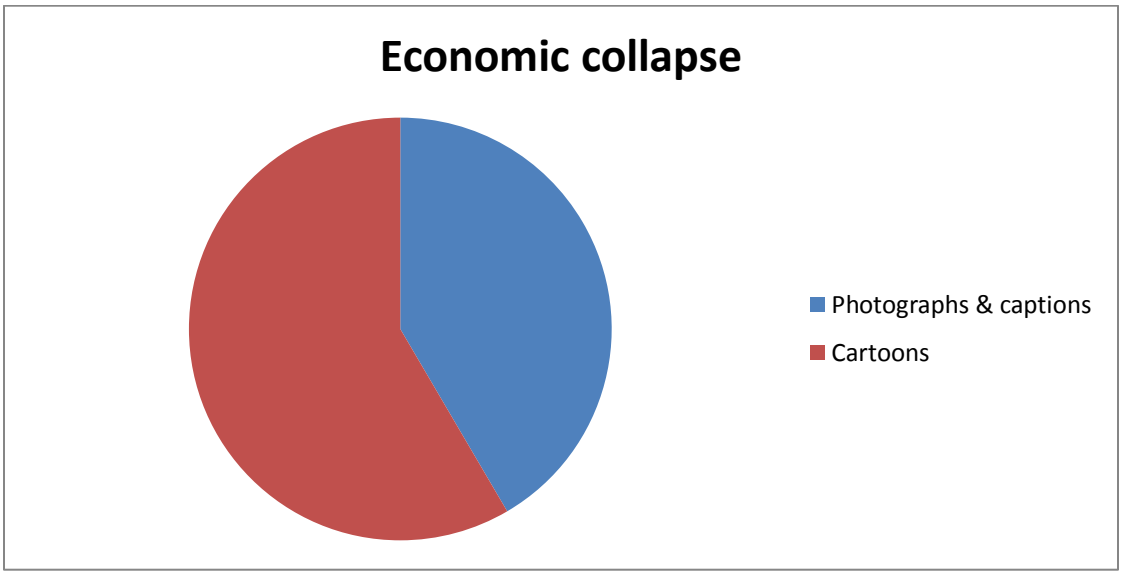


Figure 6. Pie chart representing 'economic collapse' and frequency of occurrence of narrative genres used

6.3 Social upheaval

Social upheavals were chosen as the third theme. The social upheavals in Zimbabwe were largely seen as a consequence of political and economic crises. The analysis of texts on Operation *Murambatsvina,* cholera and influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa shows that these issues were represented as a symptom of political disorder. This is due to the nature of elections characterized by malpractices, intimidation and fraud. The operation, for instance, was seen as a strategy to cause chaos, "politics of disorder," by the ruling party so as to remain in power (Brett 2005:91; Chari, 2008; Vambe, 2008; Munhande & Matonhodze, 2008; Tibaijuka, 2005; Potts, 2005; Potts, 2006; Bratton & Masungure, 2006; Bratton & Masungure, 2011; Musoni, 2010; Sachikonye, 2006; Moore 2008; Harris, 2005; Bracking, 2005). The social upheavals related to the three major events, Operation *Murambatsvina,* cholera and migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa were also reported through a variety of textual and narrative representations (see table 6 below).

Table 6. Social upheavals: Forms of Textual and Narrative Representations and Frequency of Occurrence (March and June 2005; November and December 2008)

Forms of Representation	**Number of Specific Reference to Elections**	**Number of Reference to Zimbabwe**
Headlines	24	131
Photographs and Captions	8	21
Cartoons	0	9
Analogies and Intertexts	2	14
Metaphors	0	9

The upheavals captivated a number of Zimbabweans in their own land and most of them massively migrated into South Africa as economic refugees. The migration introduced the common phrase 'influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa' into the public discourse on migration in South Africa. It also drew more public attention to the 'quiet diplomacy' discourse attributed to Mbeki's regime failure to take decisive action on the humanitarian crisis (Gevisser, 2007; Bond & Manyanya, 2002; Prys, 2008; Prys, 2009; Obe, 2006; Graham, 2006; Southall, 2006; Freeman, 2005; McKinley, 2004). *The Sunday Independent* treated the 'influx' of Zimbabweans into South Africa as a symptom of a bigger political problem in that country as Peter Fabricious explains below:

> […] that story [influx of Zimbabweans] was treated as being a political issue that was not being properly addressed by the South African government. There was an element of denying the problem, especially, by the Mbeki administration, which was the government … you know that Mbeki's administration tended to deny quite a lot of problems like the AIDS and xenophobia so there was denying the actual refugee problem from a sort of socio-economic perspective and the humanitarian aspect. Although there was a huge amount of contestation about the figures …it wasn't just Zimbabweans, but refugees from the continent generally… a lot of Mozambicans but, certainly, it was the influx of Zimbabweans that kind of pushed that problem to the point of violence ... So I suppose we tended to treat it as a political issue first and then humanitarian.[48]

Arguably, the cholera epidemic was represented as a symptom of poor governance and corruption in Zimbabwe. The underlying assumption was that poor governance robbed the government its ability to avail health related facilities that would guarantee better health care for Zimbabweans. In such a situation, the outbreaks of treatable and controllable diseases such as cholera have the potential for disaster. On the other hand, South Africa is blamed for having failed to deal decisively with the situation in that country. The indecisiveness is fingered for the massive migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa. See the excerpts below:

[48] Fabricious. P. (2010). *The Misepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

> We treated it [cholera] first of all as a symptom of the socio-economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe because it clearly was I mean, cholera can only flourish in circumstances of bad hygiene and Zimbabwe's case was really a direct or indirect result of decisions made by ZANU-PF for example, seizure of the farms, sort of collapsed the economy, no money to import chemicals to chlorinate the municipal water supply etcetera. And in South Africa, we treated it as an aspect, really, of a wider refugee problem, you know, that this problem must be recognized and services must be given to these people and also going back to the source of it…the politics of ZANU-PF had to be addressed, because they were ultimately responsible, A) for the cholera, B) for the fact that people infected with cholera come and cross the border. [49]

6.3.1 Headlines on social upheavals and news values

The headlines represented the problem as a symptom of failed elections and economic collapse. The headlines cited the government as evil, insensitive, barbaric and irresponsible. Headlines such as: "Out in the cold" (Mutasa, 2005), "Bob plans R3m bash: As Harare burns, Mugabe is planning a lavish anniversary celebration" (Gandu, 2005), "Destitution and despair in the new Zimbabwe ruins" (Ntuli, 2005), "The horror of Bob Mugabe's final solution" (Jambaya, 2005), "Bloodied and bruised but glad to be in South Africa" (Mthethwa, 2008) and "Zimbabwe gets sicker" (Jason, 2008) appeared. Braham in Gurevitch et al (1982) show how news values tend to neglect background material where events are likely to appear as sudden and unexplained or as having only direct and immediate causes. The contextual issues that surround an event tend to be absent or taken for granted in the news reports. Nick Dawes agrees that in some cases they were not nuanced but in some they were: "I think we are quite nuanced but sometimes we are not, obviously journalists should tend to focus on the present. We write news not history.[50],,

Journalists tend to focus on current dramatic events as they happen and sometimes work under pressure for a scoop. And of these dramatic and immediate causes of events, those which are

[49] Fabricious. P. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.
[50] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

readily associated with conflict, tension, threat and violence are the ones most likely to make it to the news. The idea that conflict, unrest and violence makes news may serve as a rule of thumb whether it is applied in the popular press or in the quality press. Headlines appearing in the selected newspapers in this study such as: "Death toll on the rise," "Zim's mobs get license to intimidate, A refugee too scared to go back and cast her ballot" (Bunyekezwa, 2008), "Heady rush as tyrannized people sense tipping point (Raath, 2008)," "Zimbabweans trek home to vote," "Out in the cold" (Mutasa, 2005) and "Boom or bust for Zimbabwe: Only political change will put the economy back on its feet" (Robertson, 2008) justify such arguments.

News values not only govern what will be selected as newsworthy, but also help determine how a particular story is framed or presented to the reader. Whatever ingredients a story has to recommend, it will be more acceptable, however unexpected or dramatic it appears, if it can at the same time, be readily slotted in the framework which is reassuringly familiar to both journalist and reader. The coverage of the Zimbabwean situation is very likely to change in tone and scale according to the prevailing views concerning the state of the events unfolding in that country, throughout the media as a whole or within an individual newspaper. For example, electoral violence and farm invasions could be portrayed as isolated incidents, the results of a conspiracy or as part of a growing wave of racial unrest. The sort of considerations that might influence the editor's decision on how to treat the story might include the similarities in historical trajectories of politics between South Africa and Zimbabwe, questions regarding land reforms and the ideological position of the paper which is shared by the owners.

Braham in Gurevitch et al (1982) further argues that reporting involves the selection of 'facts' which do not exist in a vacuum and since societies have different normative practices, the facts held by one society might differ remarkably from the other depending on which sets of assumptions are held. Journalists are not ideologically independent when reporting on Zimbabwe. They use a set of ideological assumptions. These sets of assumptions are defined as 'news frameworks.'[51]

[51] See Bignell (1997: 86). *Media Semiotics: An Introduction.* He argues that "the criteria of news value are useful in showing that despite different referents of news stories; news stories exhibit a number of consistent and repeated features. So the news value criterion can be regarded as a coding system which is knowingly or unknowingly used by journalists in order to structure and shape the meaning of events as news."

> Since journalists narrate news through codes of news value in general and of their newspaper in particular, the news discourse they produce cannot be the natural way of understanding news or the 'objective' account of facts. News is shaped by commercial, ideological and semiotic structures through which it is produced. This is not at all to accuse journalists of 'bias' or distortion, since such accusation assumes that there is such thing as 'unbiased' news story. Signs never denote a 'reality' objectively. They always encode connoted meanings which supports a particular ideological point of view (Bignell, 1997: 86).

Journalists are confronted with the need to meet their deadlines which forces them to have a set of preconceptions of what is related to what, a sort of 'ready reckoner.' If both journalists and readers, for instance, associate elections with conflict and the influx of Zimbabwean immigrants into South Africa as a threat, then reporters and editors, presented with a vast number of events from which to choose, pressured by deadlines and constrained by the limited amount of space available, may simply treat news about elections and influx of Zimbabwean immigrants into South Africa in a way which fits within this definition. In other words, what they are doing, as they must, is to present news that is unfamiliar by virtue of just having happened – in as familiar and easily digestible a fashion as possible. Headlines such as: "Why have elections? They are colonial," "A crisis larger than one election," "Mugabe and the mountaineer," "Zim needs a miracle," are good examples. There were more headlines used to represent social upheavals than analogies and intertexts as represented in table 7 and figure 7 below. Headlines used blamed the ruling party for the upheavals.

Countable dimension of text	**Frequency of occurrence**
Headlines	19%
Analogies and intertexts	14.5%
Metaphors	0

Table 7. Representing social upheaval and frequency of occurrence of textual devices used

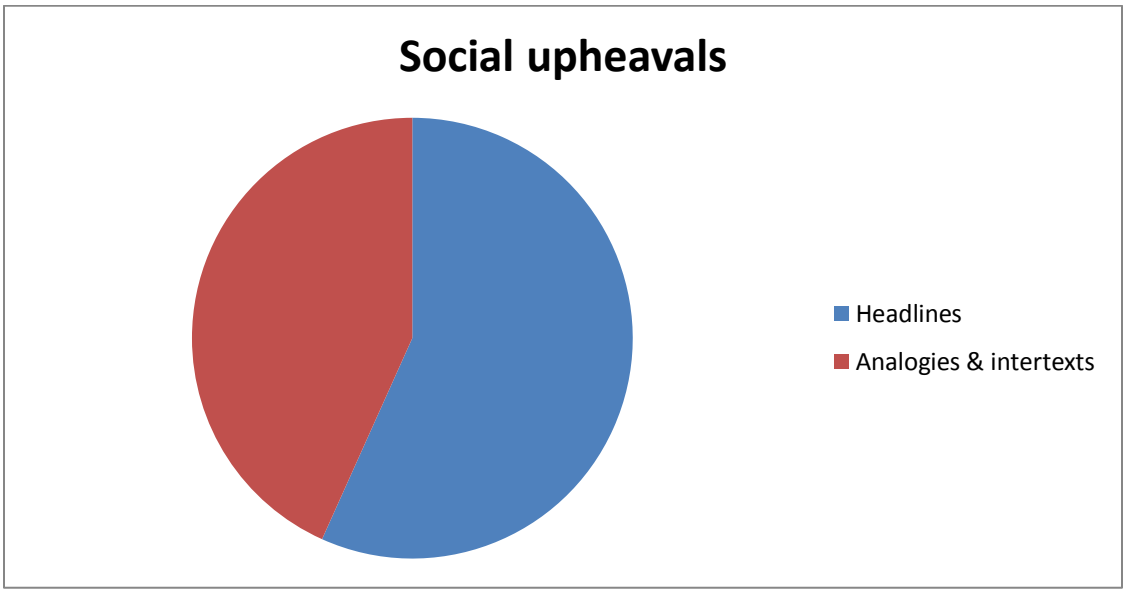


Figure 7. Pie chart representing social upheavals and frequency of occurrence of textual devices used

Photographs and captions dominated the representation of the social upheavals as shown in the table and pie chart below. There was no cartoon among the selected stories. The photographs used were those representing the victims of cholera, Operation *Murambatsvina* and those that migrated into South Africa 'illegally.' See the table and the pie chart on page 211.

Countable dimension of text	Frequency of occurrence
Photographs & captions	38%
Cartoons	0%

Table 8. Table representing social upheaval and frequency of occurrence of narrative genres used

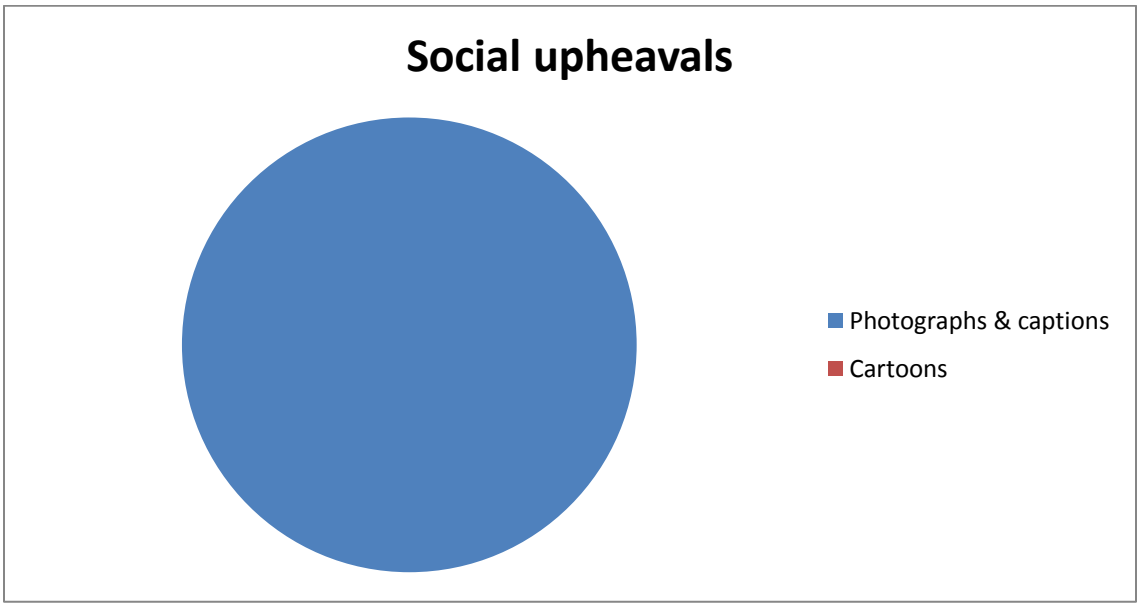


Figure 8. Pie chart representing social upheavals and frequency of occurrence of narrative genres used

6.4. Representation through narrative genres

The narrative genres that were used to represent the Zimbabwe situation are photographs, captions and cartoons.

6.4.1 Photographs and captions

The photographs and captions used reinforced the subject of the story. Tomaselli (1996) argues that text should not be confused with a conventional mass of words linked to the page of a book, or images projected on a screen but rather the mental reconstruction of the idea, the thought, the associations, the image mentally generated by the act of reading, decoding or interpreting. Reading involves an active negotiation on the part of the interpreter and sometimes the meaning understood by the author of the photograph is not understood by the decoder (discrepant decoding). However, considering news writing as a conventional process, the photographs that were used to represent the Zimbabwean situation were characterized by sensationalism and negativity as good news. The conventional process used thus allowed for a significant fit between the semiotic instructions of how to read news as a genre and the general message usually inferred by viewers. Thus, the photographs about the Zimbabwean situation were anchored to match the words in order to construct meaning. The meaning constructed was that which reinforced readers' perceptions of the situation in Zimbabwe rather than challenging them. The perceptions were linked to the conviction that Zimbabwe is faced with a problematic socio-economic and political situation. The Weeklies reinforced readers' perception through images in order to meet market demands and sell the newspapers as Nick Dawes explains below:

> I think images sell for many newspapers but for *The Mail & Guardian*, perhaps less. I mean, we use images in a more illustrative fashion. So firstly, let me say that it's unusual that you would have a very large graphic image from Zimbabwe on the front of the newspaper. You certainly will find images inside the paper that try to do as much as possible to illustrate the content of the story. I would say we publish quite a wide range of pictures. There are the very static ones of President Mugabe wearing a Sash and …saluting a crowd somewhere. I am sure we have used that once or more than once or

> twice. We have used pictures of kind of key figures in politics…so people know who these individuals are that we are referring to [in the content]. We got fewer of the kind of pictures of *Murambatsvina* and the violence …partly because our resources in respect to photographing Zimbabwe are limited and I think partly because our coverage tends to be fewer events-driven.[52]

An image alone in news is polysemic that is, open to a number of interpretations. To clarify what the image means and so to make the image relevant to the purpose of the news, texts are added. The image serves as a 'hook' while the text anchors meaning. The same photographs take a different connotation with different accompanying texts. The photographs that were used to represent Zimbabwean elections, for example, seem to reinforce the need for change in Zimbabwe and that the elections were neither free nor fair, characterized by intimidation and violence. *The Sunday Times* March 30 2008 headline "Mugabe must go and he must go now" was accompanied by a huge photograph of a woman in the foreground kneeling in prayers while Zimbabweans cast their votes. The caption reads: "Praying for change - A woman calls on higher powers while hundreds of Zimbabweans queue to vote early yesterday in the capital, Harare."

The photograph suggests that it is difficult to realize change, given that the conditions for elections are never free nor fair, and the fact that 'only divine intervention' can bring about the much needed change. *The Sunday Times* opinion and analysis article published on 30 March 2008 titled "Heady rush as tyrannized people sense tipping point (Raath, 2008)," is accompanied by a photograph of a middle-aged man casting his vote. The caption reads: "SEEING IT THROUGH: A partially blind man casts his vote in Zimbabwe's elections." The photograph suggests the idea that even the blind people can "see" the need for change and are determined to achieve it by voting and "seeing that it is indeed through" (the ballot box). The fact that conditions were not conducive for a free and fair election was captured by a photograph in *The Sunday Times* 30 March 2008 story "A refugee too scared to go back and cast her ballot" (Bunyekezwa, 2008). The article is accompanied by a close-up photograph of a white MDC

[52] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies* from 2000-2008. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

activist, with a caption that reads: "DESTITUTE- MDC activist Althea Roberts." The photograph connotes the plight of some white Zimbabweans seeking refuge in South Africa.

Other photographs captured the plight of the Zimbabweans. For example, in *The Mail & Guardian* March 8 to 14 2002 story "Boom or bust for Zimbabwe: Only political change will put the economy back on its feet" (Robertson, 2008) was accompanied by a cartoon of Robert Mugabe that ridiculed the situation in that country. Some photographs were meant to capture the emotions of the readers through sensationalizing and over-representing the plight of victims of Operation *Murambastvina*, cholera, and Zimbabwean refugees. For example, *The Mail & Guardian* June 10 to 16 2005 edition, the story "Out in the cold" (Mutasa, 2005) appeared with a sub-title that reads "last month the Zimbabwean government launched a crackdown on 'illegal' houses and businesses. The thousands displaced have got nowhere to go and little hope for the future." The article is accompanied by a photograph of a weeping middle-aged woman and a child in the background next to a demolished house.

The Sunday Times June 26 2005 story "Destitution and despair in the new Zimbabwe ruins" (Ntuli, 2005) was accompanied by a photograph of a bulldozer destroying a house in Harare. The caption reads, "MACHINERY OF STATE: A bulldozer destroys people's homes and houses in Harare as part of President Robert Mugabe's clean-up operation known as operation *Murambatsvina*." The same story was accompanied by another tiny photograph of a small boy walking through rubble from the destroyed houses. The caption reads, "PEOPLE LIVED HERE: A boy walks through rubble of some of the thousands of homes that were destroyed in Zimbabwe this month." The choice of words such as 'Machinery of state' connotes how Zimbabweans were at the mercy of state terror.

The Sunday Times February 24, 2002 article "Step by step into chaos" (Meredith, 2002) was accompanied by a photograph of injured farm workers after war veterans attacked their farm. The caption read, "AFTERMATH OF VIOLENCE: Joan Tapson talks to injured workers after war veterans attacked her son's farm." This was one of several images of white farmers that strongly suggested that the conflict was racial. Another *Sunday Times* March 20 story related to the elections titled: "Will SA's poll observers in Zimbabwe be free and fair?" is accompanied by a close-up photograph of an emotional Mugabe addressing a crowd in Harare in the run-up to the

Zimbabwe polls. He is wearing a sash and gesturing his trademark fist-salute symbolizing endurance in the struggle. The caption reads, "RALLYING SUPPORT: Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe addresses an election meeting in Gotu, South of Harare, in the run-up to Zimbabwe's poll which has already been blighted by claims of intimidation." These and many other images kept on reinforcing the discourse of state sponsored violence.

Dor in Media Monitoring Unit (2009) indicates that editors often add images that help create an emotional effect. News is colored in a certain way that stems from an editorial decision not from reality. One interesting fact about the photographs used by the three selected newspapers is that they were sourced from news agencies and other private sources, indicating that they were simply borrowed to construct the story. The photographs reflected the views of the journalists or editors and broader ideological views of the newspaper further informed by the ideological consensus of democratic societies such as South Africa. These views were sympathetic to the idea of protecting freedom of expression as a democratic practice and human rights as preconditions for economic development. Such views, which have become part and parcel of journalism's conventional practice, had to be considered when representing the situation in Zimbabwe. Editorial independence of newspapers therefore does not imply ideological freedom of journalists when reporting on Zimbabwe. The three editors interviewed: Peter Fabricious, Mondli Makhanya and Nick Dawes indicated that they did not have any particular guidelines on reporting Zimbabwe. They were guided by the idea of adhering to universal principles of human rights and democracy as fundamental values. Their conviction that human rights and democracy are universal values was therefore driven by what their critics on the left call excessive Western universalism.

6.4.2. Cartoons

The cartoons used are those that mocked the socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe. Just like the photographs and captions, the cartoons qualified or reinforced the existence of a problematic situation that needed urgent attention. They acted as political satires that ridiculed the main players in the Zimbabwean political situation with the intention of championing reforms and action. Even though, more often than not, the cartoon representations and other forms of representations amounted to misrepresentation, they have, arguably, exposed the situation in Zimbabwe and contributed to regional and international pressure for change. The local and international pressure, following the extensive coverage of Zimbabwe by the press, has enabled the realization of a Government of National Unity. In addition, these cartoons just like the photographs, acted as powerful open texts that could be read differently by the audience but, most importantly, they seemed to reinforce the subject of the stories. Most of the cartoons have been by Jonathan Shapiro and Tony Grogan. Shapiro is known for his powerful political satire and has always been mired in controversy, especially for his depiction of former ANC Vice President Jacob Zuma taking a shower as a measure to prevent HIV/AIDS infection.[53]See the excerpts below:

> Cartoonwise, some of the Zapiro cartoons… one of them that comes to mind particularly, was of the politics of the story, the regional political politics were very much the fact that a lot of people felt that the region and Mbeki and other SADC leaders didn't do enough to really put pressure on Mugabe even though they claimed they were doing… so there was once this very cartoon of them [regional leaders] , you know, Mugabe lying on the massage couch and all the leaders sort of putting pressure on him, you know, like 'is this hard as this feels?' Then Mugabe says 'oh, just a little bit further down… press there… that feels so good.' That is Shapiro's notion of regional pressure on Mugabe. Then another cartoon of Mbeki seating in his arm-chair smoking his pipe and drinking his favorite black label whiskey, while Mugabe is in the background beating the hell out of

[53] See www.zapiro.com. See also http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4879822.stm

> the opposition and Mbeki is saying something like 'excuse me Bob if you have a moment, could we discuss this?' All of them conveying the sense of no real will by the region to really stop Mugabe doing what he was doing.[54]

For more images and cartoons, see appendix 1. The following are some of the cartoons used to represent the situation:

In *The Sunday Independent* April 13 2008 edition, the story "Mugabe is losing the chance to save his skin," was accompanied by a cartoon showing Mugabe in a knock-out situation during a boxing bout with Morgan Tsvangirai, who is standing in the left corner of the ring, while the referee counts one to ten. However the referee, representing the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), keeps on repeating the ninth count, probably giving time for Mugabe to recover. The cartoon suggests that the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is corrupt and consists of officials appointed by Mugabe (see Appendix 1.1).

The Sunday Independent April 3 2005 story "Zimbabwe needs us," was accompanied by a cartoon that mocks the elections through the contentious voters' roll and the idea of ghost voters. In the cartoon, two ZANU-PF electoral officials are seen replacing the genuine voters' roll with a ghost voters' roll in a cemetery while one of them is busy copying names of dead people from tombstones. MDC officials are quoted on the opposite side of the electoral officials saying "there is no end to Mugabe's cunning. He scrapped the postal vote and brought in the ghostal vote." Two election observers, a man and a woman, are also seen in the background talking to each other. The man (resembling former South African President Thabo Mbeki) is quoted asking a humorous question "what could be more free and fair? Even the dead have a chance to vote" then an unfamiliar woman responds, "a very spiritual experience." The cartoon is a political satire that exposes electoral malpractices perpetrated by the ruling party and also ridicules the 'quiet diplomacy' employed by South Africa. It seems to argue that the presence of SADC observers and even MDC officials does not prevent ZANU-PF from rigging elections. It also indicates that the election observers (members of the SADC observer mission) are pro-ruling

[54] Fabricios. P. (2010). *The Representation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi Resturant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8am.

party since they were carefully chosen by Mugabe to observe the elections through partisan lenses (see appendix 1.2).

The Sunday Times December 7 2008 article titled "There's a simple, African plan that will get Zimbabwe back on its feet," is accompanied by a cartoon by Zapiro indicating the possibility of the Zimbabwean socio-economic problems (disease, famine, conflict and death) spilling into South Africa through Mbeki's quiet diplomacy. Echoing the discourse of the fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa and ridiculing Mbeki's diplomatic stand, the cartoon combines the common mythology of mysticism and adventure where disease, famine, conflict and death is embodied in four human skeleton creatures dressed in black-witch-like robes, two carrying sword-like weapons riding on four horses. One of the skeletons presents Mugabe with a certificate titled "quiet diplomacy" and sub titled "AIDS." However, Mugabe standing on top of human skeletons, arms folded on his chest stares blankly while Mbeki observes from the side. One of the skeleton creatures is addressing Mbeki and Mugabe saying "we're extending honorary membership [to disease, famine, conflict and death]." Mbeki responds "aren't you being a bit harsh on him [Mugabe]" while the other creature interrupts saying "Oh, he's already a member…we are talking about you [Mbeki]." Mbeki has been criticized for treating Mugabe with "kid's gloves," oblivious of the consequence of political maladministration to South Africa (Gevisser, 2007; Bond & Manyanya, 2002; Prys, 2008; Prys, 2009; Obe, 2006; Graham, 2006; Southall, 2006) (see appendix 1.3).

The Sunday Indepedent story "Africa would support tough stance on Zim" (Monare 2008) is accompanied by an editorial cartoon by Grogan showing Mugabe on the Presidential seat releasing sewage waste [corruption, racism, and anarchy] symbolizing his corrupt leadership. An unknown person, standing by, asks a rhetorical question: "Will no one topple him from his throne?" The cartoon reinforces the discourse of change in Zimbabwe even if it means toppling Mugabe or forcefully removing him from power (see Appendix 1.4).

The discourse of fear of a Zimbabwe in South Africa dominated the selected Weeklies' cartoon representations due to the close relationship between Mbeki and Mugabe. For example, *The Sunday Times* April 3 2005 story titled "Zimbabwe: The next step," was accompanied by a cartoon of Mugabe and Mbeki walking hand in hand crossing a fragile bridge over the crocodile-

infested Limpopo river. Three crocodiles, visible under the bridge, represented a crumbling economy, political violence and HIV/AIDS. The bridge represented Mbeki's quiet diplomacy (see appendix 1.5). The meanings from the analysis of these cartoons indicate the common way in which Africa has been represented by the international media. Africa has been represented as a continent ravaged by HIV/AIDS, corruption, tribal conflicts, despair, depression, famine, conflict, anarchy, racism, poverty and death (Ndlela, 2005; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Allimadi, 2002; Mudimbe, 1988; Mudimbe, 1994). The South African media, driven by the same epistemological foundation of journalism and ideological framework of understanding news or reality about Zimbabwe, followed a similar trend.

6.5. Representation through textual devices

The textual devices used to represent the Zimbabwe situation are metaphors, analogies and intertexts**.**

6.5.1 Metaphors

The metaphors used captured two interlinked ideas. Firstly, that Zimbabwe has a serious socio-economic and political problem due to flawed elections courtesy of Robert Mugabe (the tyrant) and his ZANU-PF government. Secondly, for Zimbabwe to recover from the situation, change is needed, suggesting 'Mugabe must go' even if it means through forceful removal. Words such as 'ousting' are used in some stories. The MDC, seen as the party that can bring about the much needed change in that country, is hailed and supported. Mugabe is compared to Uganda's Idi Amin, as well as Germany's Adolf Hitler and other African dictators. Such comparisons have negative connotations based on the historical association of atrocities committed by Amin and Hitler respectively. Such signifiers define the boundaries in which the narrative must be read by their subjects.

Signifiers used in *The Mail & Guardian* February 29 article "Mad Bob': Man or monster?" (Zvomuya, 2008), for example, had negative connotations. Although the writer poses the

headline as a question, the comparisons used limit other possible ways of reading the text. While it seems as if the text leaves the reader to decide whether Mugabe is a man or a monster, it advances arguments that seem to lend more weight to the latter position than the former. In so doing, the text closes the reading with the conclusion that Mugabe is, indeed, a monster. For example, the article is accompanied by a review of the recent book written by Heidi Holland titled "*Dinner with Mugabe: The untold story of a freedom fighter who became a tyrant*." The book acts as a metonym that juxtaposes the idea of a 'Man' with that of a 'monster' reinforcing the latter through textually linking it with the word 'tyrant.' In other occasions, metaphors compared Zimbabwe with a patient in hospital. *The Mail & Guardian* February 11 2005 story "An election to quicken Zim's sunset" (Win, 2005), for example, argued that:

> Most Zimbabweans are not stupid and they can see through the chicanery played out at elections time. What people want are clear signs of hope. It is like having a sick loved one in hospital. What you want to see when you visit them is some sign of a return to health: today she drank all her soup…the next day she walked two steps away from her bed. Since 2002, these signs have not been visible in our sick country.

Zimbabwe was considered sick due to the economic meltdown. *The Mail & Guardian* March 8 2002 story, "Boom or bust for Zimbabwe" (Robertson, 2008) compared Mugabe to a front runner in a demolition derby. It argued that Mugabe has left behind a trail of destruction as he raced to the finish line frantically trying to avoid being overtaken. Whoever wins, it further argued, a massive amount of work will have to be undertaken to put Zimbabwe's economy back on its feet.

6.5.2 Analogies and intertexts

The analogies and intertexts also served the purpose of driving forth change in Zimbabwe through drawing relationships with other countries that went through more or less similar situations in the struggle for democracy. Fiske (1987) argues that codes are agents of intertextuality through which texts interrelate in network[s] acting as a link between journalists, news, photographs and audience. Language and culture can only exists if meanings are largely agreed upon within and between particular groups of people. Fiske (1987: 14) argues that "the concept of text can be fully understood to have two dimensions: the text as product (the news article and photograph), and the text as the interaction between the reader and signs encoded into messages." He refers to the first one as 'inactive text' and the second 'activated text.' "News articles and photographs as inactive texts, for example, are produced, distributed by the newspaper industry while activated texts are created both by their producers and by their audiences" (Fiske, 1987: 14).

Berger (1989: 53) argues that "the meaning decoded from a text is not necessarily the meaning which the creator self-consciously encoded." The meanings that readers find in newspaper comic strips used to represent the Zimbabwean situation, for example, are seldom consciously placed there by their creators. These cartoon codes are 'open texts' or 'schematized structures' whose content is filled in by the reader. "Such blank outlines permit a great deal of semiotic movement on the part of the readers in making sense of them." The analogies, for example, relate Zimbabwe to failed states and Mugabe to world tyrants in an attempt to advance the idea of change in Zimbabwe and possibly trying Robert Mugabe at the Hague just like other tyrants.

It is important to note that when the selected newspapers made reference to the negative events in Zimbabwe they used intertexts and analogies that drew negative indexical attention to the objects they inferred to the interpretant. In this case, it drew attention to the negative events and atrocities that happened in Africa and elsewhere in the world related to electoral politics and failing democratic practices. It further prescribed the measures taken or how those events were averted (treatment recommendations) by the custodians or guardians of 'global democracy'

through world bodies. The bodies are comprised of united efforts from Anglo-Western countries embodied through the United Nations and the International Criminal Court (The Hague). These kinds of representations reinforce the discourse of change in Zimbabwe and the idea that it has to be advocated by internal and external forces.

The Sunday Times April 13 2008 story "Mugabe is losing the chance to save his skin," for example, argued that Mugabe would be equally well advised to contemplate the increasing inclination of the world to hold tyrants accountable for their actions." It cites the case of Augusto Pinochet of Chile and warns Mugabe of what befell him. The story called the government's 'Fast-Track' program the third *Chimurenga* and constructed a discourse of change through comparing Zimbabwe to other African countries that were once ruled by dictators. The story uses a first person narrative technique to reinforce the need for change. See the excerpt from the story:

> The first time I felt this was in 1991, waiting outside the polling station in a Zambian Village of Mazubuka and asked wrinkled little men and women coming out if they felt better. Yes, they all said. We want change. Within days, President Kenneth Kaunda was gone, after several years of bumbling, benign dictatorship that brought nothing but poverty was gone. Two years later, I felt it in the wet, lightless street of Blantyre in Malawi at 4am, where cues coiled around the buildings. I asked the people waiting in silent determination what they were going to do. Change, they said. And before long, Hasting Banda, the 100-year-old life President of the land of silent fear, was no longer president ... Now I am feeling the same thing with Zimbabwe. Everyone I speak to says change.

The story argued that the high court in Malawi requested the Malawi Electoral Commission to postpone a presidential election to allow for the verification of the voter's roll. It did so, and there is no reason why the same cannot be done in Zimbabwe. It further argued that there were inconsistencies, gaps and potential conflict within the existing legislative framework that needed to be clarified before Zimbabwe could hold credible elections. The problems with elections in Zimbabwe were compared to structural weaknesses that the Democratic Republic of Congo or Angola faced (See Moore, 2001a).

6.8. Conclusion

The textual devices and narrative genres used by *The Sunday Times, The Sunday Independent* and *The Mail & Guardian* to represent the situation in Zimbabwe are characterized by negativity and sensationalism. Their coverage of Zimbabwe suggests that the problematic situation in that country is as a result of "politics of disorder" (Brett, 2005:91). In particular, the problem is attributed to the failed elections, dictatorship, tyranny, and general decaying of democracy. There is a common thread of negative narrative that runs across the politics, economics and social upheaval themes that suggests the need for regime change to restore democracy and the rule of law in Zimbabwe. It raises issues of private property rights, human rights, and freedom of expression. Even though such issues should also be carefully deconstructed because they seem to emanate from Western discourses, they can find a common ground if well integrated with African systems of creativity and humanity. For example, human rights and freedom are fundamental issues that disregard many cleavages in the society today be it race, class and gender and therefore, they are applicable both in the West and in Africa. Therefore, any attempt to address the violation of such rights should be encouraged. In Africa, the obstacle has largely been the absence of political leadership.

Clearly, the frequency of the phrase "Mugabe must go" in the selected newspapers indicates that they were pushing for regime change since Mugabe, the leader, was presumed to be the obstacle to democratic progress and the key architect of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe. The argument from the semiotic analysis of texts and narratives used to represent the situation prescribes a "Mugabe must go" solution for Zimbabwe's recovery. However, it is worth noting that such representations stem from the fact that South African Weeklies, as newspapers from journalistic commercial institution, are influenced by several internal and external structures and broader ideological philosophies. The latter greatly determine the angles they take on issues and their decisions and choices about news regarding Zimbabwe. Going by the idea of objectivity, the Weeklies failed in upholding one of their fundamental values of balance since they downplayed pan-African discourses from the left spectrum of the debate about what has befallen Zimbabwe.

Most importantly, the fact that the selected South African Weeklies have a history of media monopolies linked to either political or economic interests or both is problematic. These interests have been central to shaping the discourse of the kind of society South Africa should be which is reflected in how they represent issues. Kupe (2010) notes how most media owners set an editorial framework that are business friendly and supports a free market economy (which Mbeki seriously criticized). Such a framework does not imply that stories criticizing business or the market economy will not be selected or published. But such coverage is not likely to amount to a call for the overthrow of the market economy or free enterprise. The latter is presumably sustained by a liberal democratic arrangement that is considered to be now under threat in Zimbabwe. The South African Weeklies took angles that tended to be critical of the violation of democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe, preconditions for economic development in a free market economy, on which their survival depends.

Chapter seven

Changing Zimbabwe: Representation of the Zimbabwean elections

> I don't think our views express the fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa…yes there is anxiety within the ANC that if the hegemony of a liberation party can be challenged [in Zimbabwe], and I think our broadly progressive readership probably thinks that, even those ones who are supportive, broadly supportive of the ANC would probably be critical of the fashion in which ZANU[55] has tried to cling to its hegemony. What we reflect is a certain kind of elite consensus which is supportive of change in Zimbabwe, which is supportive of multi-party democracy and open governance, certainly, we express that.
>
> (Nick Dawes[56], Editor in chief *The Mail & Guardian*)

7.0. Introduction

Generally, there is no aspect that represents politics in Zimbabwe other than elections. This study used representation strategies similar to those uncovered by Willems[57] (2005) in her analysis of the British media representation of Zimbabwe. Elections were given prominence by the South African Weeklies compared to economic issues and social upheavals during the selected time period (2000-2008). Elections were represented negatively – characterized by the absence of conditions that can guarantee their freeness and fairness. The negative representation was as a result of the fact that elections were perceived as fraudulent and full of malpractices. Further, the elections were represented as a two horse race between the ruling party and the opposition. The Weeklies pitted the latter against the former. However, the Zimbabwean government and its

[55] Zimbabwe African National Union has its history as a liberation party in Zimbabwe.
[56] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.
[57] Willems, W. 2005. Remnants of an Empire: British Media Reporting on Zimbabwe. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* © 2005 (University of Westminster, London), Special Issue, November 2005: 91-108.

South African counterpart, then under Mbeki, reappropriated these dominant representations to create competing counter discourses. The neo-imperialism debate was seen as a justification that would mask covert government sponsored violence and 'land invasions' during elections. In the introduction to this thesis, it is indicated that the problematic Zimbabwean electoral politics coincided with a series of other economic and social problems that the Weeklies heavily represented that this chapter now explores. The semiotic and ideological analysis of the representation reveals problematic relationships between elections, economic downturn and social upheaval in Zimbabwe. The analysis of the representation further shows that South African Weeklies were pushing for regime change.

This thesis argues that the representation exposed the situation and consequently constructed a discourse of change that contributed to the realization of a government of national unity. These forms of representation suggest that change of leadership was considered critical for restoring political order in Zimbabwe (Brett, 2005). The latter was viewed as the fundamental precondition for the advancement of democracy and economic prosperity. The South African Weeklies' representation was driven by its ideological conviction about the 'universalism' of human rights and democracy. However, such kinds of representation attempted to centralize reality by promoting a uni-polar Western perspective and, at the same time, were insensitive to the historical complexities of the Zimbabwean political-economy from the left side of the discursive spectrum. These forms of representation were necessitated by Western ideologies of news construction since ideologies help construct news through framing.

7.1. Elections and 'othering'

The representation of the Zimbabwean situation by South African Weeklies indicated a negative sensationalization of the Zimbabwean imbroglio with an apparent political agenda of demonizing President Robert Mugabe. The neo-conservative South African Weekly newspapers seem to concur with the regime change agenda of the West who have over the past quinqennium invented and magnified Mugabe as the epicenter of Zimbabwe's political conflict and hyped the flawed elections, allegedly attributed to Mugabe's self-rule agenda, as the cause of economic collapse and social upheavals in the country. This is evident in *The Sunday Times* opinion and analysis where the article published on March 30 2008 titled "Heady rush as tyrannized people sense tipping point" (Raath, 2008) utilized anonymous sources to push for change and to construct anti-Mugabe sentiments through analogies. Two similar polling situations in two African countries (Zambia and Malawi) are used to suggest the need for leadership change. However, the story does little to consider contextual variables regarding the political histories of the two countries which have been represented as if they impacted on the two countries compared uniformly**.** The *Mail & Guardian* April 28 to May 4 2000 article titled "Zim's mobs get license to intimidate," also utilizes analogy to draw the readers' attention to the seriousness of election violence and intimidation. The electoral malpractices are compared to *Gukuruhundi*[58] without giving details on what motivated the latter. Why would a government suddenly unleash terror on its civilians? The story could have done well in explaining such factors. It therefore amounted to superficial and ahistoric reporting. The article argued:

> So in a repeat of the pre-*Gukurahundi* days, state terrorism is unleashed against the most vulnerable people – those without an association to speak on their behalf, without economic clout. Those who cannot afford to send their wives and children to Australia or Newzealand, even to another township or village. There are similarities in the approach. One is general use of violence to attain a political objective (to crush ZAPU then, MDC

[58] *Gukurahundi* refers to state terror against civilians in Zimbabwe carried out in Matableleland, commonly known as the Matabeleland massacres briefly discussed in the background chapter due to its controversial nature (See Ratoupolos & Savage, 2004).

today). Another is not to go for the leadership (Joshua Nkomo then, Tsvangirai today) but to undermine their support by terrorizing the rural and urban poor.

The story, "Zim's mob get license to intimidate," is accompanied by a photograph showing Mugabe addressing a public rally. The story jumps to page four with another photograph showing a police officer next to a television journalist who is carrying his camera shoulder high with several onlookers, (mostly white) in the background, at the scene of an explosion. The caption reads: "No press allowed – Zimbabwe police remove reporters and onlookers from the scene of an explosion next door to the offices of the *Daily News* in downtown Harare last Saturday." There is no convincing evidence in the photograph suggesting the police were actually removing reporters. They could merely be maintaining law and order in the wake of the explosions. Nevertheless, there is enough scholarly evidence that suggests the lack of press freedom in Zimbabwe (Kupe in Barrat and Berger, 2007; Moyo, 2005).

According to the Public Broadcasting in Africa Series on Zimbabwe "ON AIR" published by the Open Society Institute, the media in Zimbabwe recently re-introduced legislation that has impacted on media and freedom of expression. Examples are: Public Order and security Act, (POSA), Criminal Act Law 2004, Official Secrets Act (OSA), defamation legislation, Interception of Communications Act 2007, Privileges and Immunities and Powers of Parliament Act (1991), and Access to Information (Chiumbu, Minnie and Bussiek, 2009; Committee for the Protection of Journalists, 2011). The hikes under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy (AIPPA) Act amendment further complicated press coverage in Zimbabwe. Peter Fabricious, editor of the Independent Media Group foreign desk, Nick Dawes, chief editor *The Mail & Guardian* and Mondli Makhanya, chief editor of *The Sunday Times* explained these press restrictions in Zimbabwe respectively:

> Just generally covering Zimbabwe is difficult because of very restrictive media regulations which Jonathan Moyo, the information minister, particularly brought in. Soon after the crisis erupted we used to smuggle reporters in when we could, but very few reluctantly, because we had quite a few episodes where people had to sort of flee the country in a hurry, they felt that the security police were moving in on them. (Peter

Fabricious)[59]

> There are challenges in travelling there ourselves and we have recently, for example, requested to go back, to bring a team of journalists and writers from here which have gone persistently unanswered…those requests for accreditation. So clearly, you know freedom of movement or freedom of activity for journalists in Zimbabwe is an issue. Also our correspondents feel they have to write under assumed names because it will create certain sorts of risks for them too. (Nick Dawes)[60]

> We cannot get into the country. I mean that has been a reality in the past ten years. That we are just, particularly this newspaper… [*Sunday Times*] because it was assumed that we are not friendly to…[the ruling party]. (Mondli Makhanya)[61]

This chapter recognizes the structural constraints such as those raised above by these editors. However, it is such structural factors that require scrutiny and attention because they have greatly impacted on the work of journalists to such an extent that they have been divinely accepted beyond contention. Further, even though flesh and blood journalists are involved in reporting events that are sudden and 'unusual,' they should not use structural variables as a pretext for misrepresentative, superficial and prescriptive reporting that does not capture the practicalities that would help address the Zimbabwean problem. *The Sunday Independent* February 20 2005, story "Too late for free and fair elections in Zimbabwe – The SADC could still salvage something by looking through the smoke and mirrors and having it postponed," (Kapemba, 2005), for example, describes the need to postpone the elections in Zimbabwe if they do not conform to the SADC electoral guidelines using analogies:

[59] Fabricious. P. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.
[60] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

[61] Makanya, M. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. Avusa media, Rosebank, Johannesburg 12st May 12: 00.

> The high court in Malawi requested the Malawi Electoral Commission to postpone last year's presidential election to allow for the verification of the voter's roll. It did so, and there is no reason why the same cannot be done in Zimbabwe. There are inconsistencies, gaps and potential conflict within the current legislative framework that needs to be clarified before Zimbabwe can hold credible elections. Problems with elections in Zimbabwe are the same sort of structural weaknesses that the Democratic Republic of Congo or Angola faces. But, in fact, in Zimbabwe the problem is very different.

These forms of representation frame the elections as flawed. Framing is done through the choice of sources whereby only those critical of the system are utilized. Their criticisms are combined with negative analogies of electoral processes in other countries and how remedies were realized. In *The Sunday Independent* March 20 2005 story *"*Bogey of imperialism masks Zimbabwe human tragedy," the situation in Zimbabwe is likened to failed states like Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan. In the comparisons, the story singles out Zimbabwe as a special case that should be rescued confirming the Weeklies' vested interests in that country. The story argued that the country is "rushing to the cliff edge," but it is not yet there and that there is still much to be salvaged. The article "Zim's mob get license to intimidate," qualifies the possibility of "Kenyan style riots" in the clash between the ruling party and the opposition. It also represents the ruling party as a power hungry and corrupt regime that will never concede defeat.

The Sunday Times March 30 2008 article titled, 'Heady rush as tyrannized people sense tipping point' written by an anonymous person, echoes the common phrase "Mugabe must go." The phrase characterizes opposition dissatisfaction with the ruling party's long and corrupt leadership in Zimbabwe. The election is represented in a manner biased againist the ruling party. The opposition is presumed to be the only force capable of bringing about economic and social change in the context of a 'starving' population. It is important to state that the Zimbabwean opposition is not as 'clean' as it is represented by the Weeklies since it is equally plagued with its own versions of exclusion politics and power struggle which the Weeklies failed to highlight as discussed in the literature review. In other stories like the one appearing in *The Mail & Guardian* February 29 to March 6 2008, "Mugabe tightens his grips," elections are represented as an

opportunity for ZANU-PF to use food handouts in exchange for votes. Food shortages have been perceived as a sign of 'economic collapse.' See the following excerpts:

> But poor harvest ahead of elections is always godsend for ZANU-PF. Now Mugabe can distribute food aid and the grain his government has imported, mostly from South Africa and Malawi, in exchange for votes. A new ward based voting system – where voters can only vote within only a small radius of his/her home – will also make it easier for Mugabe to pick up which hungry villages voted for him.

Journalists reporting for the Weeklies framed stories using selected sources, in cases where they sourced from the ruling party, the stories were framed negatively. In the story above, the opportunity to hear Mugabe comment on allegations made against his government was missed since his views were excluded. Similarly, in *The Sunday Independent* April 13 2008 story "Mugabe is losing the chance to save his skin" appearing on the leader page, analogy and intertexts are used to emphasize the need for change in Zimbabwe and to represent upcoming June run-off elections as flawed as early as April that year (2008). A discourse of violent uprisings in Zimbabwe is qualified and the need for prosecuting Mugabe for crimes against humanity at The Hague. The story is accompanied by a close-up Reuters photograph of Mugabe looking distressed but appearing adamant to cling to his principles. The analogical caption reads, "Robert Mugabe after voting on March 29. He would do well to heed his own words after the April 1980 election." Mugabe is warned of what befell other dictators in the world. The story argues that Mugabe should "contemplate the increasing inclination of the world to hold tyrants accountable for their actions…Closer to home [Zimbabwe] are the fates that befell Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the dictatorial ruler of Malawi, and Charles Taylor, the generalissimo of Liberia." Comparing Mugabe's fate to Banda and Taylor[62] is interesting since both have been considered tyrants and the latter has been tried for crimes againist humanities at The Hague.

[62] Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has been tried and sentenced for 50 years by a Special Court of Sierra Leone judges in The Hague for aiding and abetting the commission of serious crimes against humanity. Retrieved 14 September 2012 from http://www.charlestaylortrial.org/

The story "Mugabe is losing the chance to save his skin," is written by an independent political analyst Patrick Laurence, who is *The Star's* contributing editor, confirming how journalists rely on 'expert sources' (political analysts) whose views become dominant in the discourse around the socio-economic and political events in Zimbabwe. Other than politicians, academics were also heavily relied upon. One thing that is worth mentioning is the power of sources in deciding the kind of information they withhold or give out to journalists depending on the interest they have in particular issues. There is no guarantee that whatever the Weeklies reported about Zimbabwe was a true reflection of the situation in that country **(**Shoemaker & Reece, 1991). However, journalists would argue that they strive to be objective when choosing their sources. Peter Fabricious pointed the conventional normative demands of 'objectivity' in their choice of sources:

> The issue here was always to try and get neutral and independent objective sources. We were forced in the circumstances to rely too heavily on MDC sources because they are the ones who want to talk to us, ZANU-PF doesn't. But we have tapped as much as possible into academic and scientific sources where we are quoting international agencies and so on but, as I said, it is always difficult to find a completely objective view of things or reasonably objective view on things and be objective. To get a source like that, that is most informed considering the difficulties of covering [Zimbabwe]… of getting into the country…yah of getting the facts[63].

Going by Fabricious' arguments above, it seems as if, for journalists, objectivity means balancing both sides of the story by giving an 'equal' amount of information from both the ruling party and the opposition but not necessarily 'balanced' information. In other words, balance does not mean what is said or reported about one side is identical or similar to the other side and impacts on the audience in the same fashion. Journalistic balance is more about whether or not something is said about both conflicting parties with little emphasis on the content. *The Sunday Independent* editor for instance, when asked whether they sourced from MDC political figures

[63] Fabricious. P. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

because they were readily available, responded that it was not the idea of availability but the fact that the opposition was a relevant player in the situation. See the excerpt below:

> Question: You have sources that you repeatedly use. Why do you do that?
>
> Answer: Such as?
>
> Question: Such as maybe political figures?
>
> Answer: Like what?
>
> Question: Like MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai. Is it because he was readily available?
>
> Answer: We were quoting Morgan Tsvangirai because obviously he was a relevant player, so his opinion on these stories were necessary but, as I said, we did feel we had a problem in getting other opinions on that. So, there is no problem at all if the MDC tells you such and such a thing happened because you have to be informed in the first place before you can get around the question of balance. But it's a question then of saying well, how much do we believe? What's the other view, what's the other perspective? That was where the difficulty rose.[64]

The Mail & Guardian maintained that they equally utilized the opposition and ruling party sources but indicated that the sources from the latter were always anonymous. However, in the quantitative analysis of personalities utilized as sources in this study it was clear that the frequency of occurrence of utilized opposition sources was more than that of the ruling party. The latter were often sourced anonymously which actually compromised credibility. See the following excerpt from interviews with the chief editor, Nick Dawes[65]:

> Question: Can you say that there is some form of bias where you utilize more MDC sources than ZANU-PF sources?

[64] Fabricious. P. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

[65] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

Answer: Am not sure we do…you have to show me in your study what you mean by sources.

Question: Just to highlight more, there is this perception that ZANU-PF is not approachable, on what cases do you get them to comment?

Answer: Well, they tell us what's going on many times usually anonymously. So when they comment officially its usually not interesting but certainly senior ZANU officials speak to us and you see their words reflected in our newspapers on a regular basis telling us what happened in a meeting …certainly. I think we have a view that ZANU-PF as led by President Robert Mugabe has damaged Zimbabwe very seriously, I don't think balance in reporting means that you think that everybody is equally right, it means that you make a fair assessment based on the facts. At the same time I don't think we have any view that Morgan Tsvangirai is the arch angel who has come to rescue the place at all. So we speak to them, they speak to us ... The trouble is the restrictions in reporting and the limitation that our reporters face makes it very difficult.

Question: When you do your gatekeeping as an editor and you are observing everything else including the story that has to run, do you let those views affect the type of stories that are published?

Answer: I have never spiked a story about Zimbabwe and certainly my analysis of the situation probably affects the questions that are asked in conferences about what we are doing about Zimbabwe this week [for instance], and my reaction to things. But I have never avoided publishing anything just because it does not conform to my questions on reality.

Question: And when you mentioned the idea that some ZANU-PF sources would call you anonymously and tell you stories and what is happening as far as ZANU-PF is concerned…?

Answer: I didn't say they call us but I mean you might call them.

Question: You might call them? So that idea of anonymity, do you think it compromises on credibility?

Answer: Of course it does

Question: In what ways?

Answer: Because people don't know who is to be held responsible for the statements and they can't verify for themselves what they are speaking of, that is why ideally you should have more than one of them [sources] to confirm the information. I would rather people go on the record but if they are not prepared then that is the only way you can get the information and you will have to do that until they [sources] grow some balls.

The idea of 'fairness' is introduced to that of 'balance' in the excerpt above to account for objectivity regarding the 'reality' of events happening in Zimbabwe. However, questions of how South African journalists can be 'fair' when their reasoning about the 'objects of analysis' (democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe) is subjective are still problematic. Mondli Makhanya[66] (like Nick Dawes and Peter Fabricious), editor in chief of *The Sunday Times*, equally confirmed that they rely on official sources (leaders) which included leaders of political parties as well as the civil society and the NGOs in order to be 'fair.' He also pointed out the problems associated with anonymous sources. According to him, editors were gatekeepers who chose various sources based on audience interests. ZANU-PF sources were not considered interesting especially when they commented officially. That is, journalists would not hear anything unusual from their comments due to the predictability of their responses. Journalists utilize sources based on their journalistic assumptions informed by ideologies of the practice and the fact that those sources are 'reliable officials.' Among these assumptions is that the sources will provide the much needed information that captures audience interest and sell the newspaper. However, in their view, such assumptions ought to be 'balanced' by other sources in an attempt to be 'objective' and 'reliable.' It is the delicate balancing act that gives prominence to some sources as opposed to others. Mondli Makhanya mentioned other sources in the explanation below:

[66] Makanya, M. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. Avusa media, Rosebank, Johannesburg 12st May 12: 00.

> Leaders of opposition parties both in government…both ZANU-PF and MDC and…the civil society, trade unions, and the NGO's yah. Then also in government…I mean you apply the same principles that you would apply when you went to Thokoza to report on service delivery protest or if you went to Pretoria to report the ANC conference or if you are reporting on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, you have to use them. Often…yah…I mean, it's not a bad thing to use anonymous sources, we strive all of us to get people to speak to us on the record because we want to be able to say Tshepo Mokoena said one, two, three yah. It's your ideal that you don't have 'a senior official said' but it is inevitable in the compiling of a story because there are people who seat in the politburo who do not want to be named. There are people who, maybe, are activists and civil society members …who are afraid. So you will use…like… anonymous sources and that's whether you are in Denmark or Peru or Zimbabwe. I mean the thing is that you must apply your journalistic test, can I trust this person? And counter balance that with three other sources[67].

Mondli Makhanya disagreed that their coverage was biased in favour of the MDC since they tried their best to even things out. He explained that when Jonathan Moyo became the information minister, Zimbabwe became very hostile to the local media and the international media except for official state media. There was the problem of accessibility and obviously the MDC had a cause they were pushing and a lot of other parties in Zimbabwe tended to be on the side of the opposition which was more accessible than the ruling party. Makhanya further argued that they were guided by the "values and principles related to the universal declaration of human rights and the constitution of the republic of South Africa that Zimbabweans and all human beings should be entitled to." He further argued that the rights that South Africans enjoy emanate from "the declaration of human rights and the principle that they apply do not mean the paper is in favor of the MDC or any political formation."

The idea that sources frame reality is of much importance in this discussion. Sources are the gatekeepers and often the information they provide is the raw material through which journalists

[67] Makanya, M. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. Avusa media, Rosebank, Johannesburg 12st May 12: 00.

construct 'reality' about events unfolding in Zimbabwe. The worrying thing is that they can control the information they choose to give out or withhold, therefore, shaping news stories especially considering that they are used repeatedly. McGregor (1997) points out how the repeated use of certain sources means some forms of representation become dominant. The worst scenario is when journalists use anonymous sources that compromise the credibility of news. Even though editors in this study pointed out the dangers of relying on anonymous sources, it appears as if it is a well-established practice that is difficult to reverse judging from the numerous occasions where such sources are utilized – these are epistemological concerns.

The story "Heady rush as tyrannized people sense tipping point (Raath, 2008)," for example, uses a variety of anonymous sources. In Zambia, sources are referred to as "wrinkled little men and women." In Malawi, they are simply referred to as "people" while in Zimbabwe the source is referred to as "everyone." One mentioned source is only identified as a "mild-mannered pastor." Mugabe is referred as "Half-man, half-beast" and likened to an "old crocodile." News coverage in the Government owned newspaper *The Herald* is likened to Nazi Propaganda. *The Mail & Guardian* February 29 to March 6 2008 article, "Mad Bob: Man or monster?," a jump story appearing on the front page and referred to page four of the Friday Magazine section, both echo the bias discussed earlier. The story is written by Percy Zvomuya, a Zimbabwean journalist now working and living in South Africa. His perspective is not a firsthand account of Mugabe's personality. It is based on the experiences of Heidi Holland who had a personal interview with Mugabe while researching on the new book *Dinner with Mugabe.* It cannot be taken as a true representation of Mugabe and therefore it misrepresents the man. Further, Zvomuya frames the story in a manner that suits the market needs of both *The Mail & Guardian* and the book which is likely to perform well in the South African market (Williams, 2003; Moscow, 1996; Hesmondhalgh, 2007).

In *The Mail & Guardian* edition February 11 to 17 2005, the story "An election to quicken Zim's sunset" (Win, 2005), similes are used to associate the situation in Zimbabwe, particularly the elections, to a sick lover in bed. An African myth is used to argue that just like a woman needs a husband "for her to be called a Mrs," so does MDC need an election "for the sun to set quicker." See the excerpts below:

> Great aunty Munyai looked at me and said: 'No child of my child, you don't understand. All you need is just a man, it doesn't matter whether he is a *Chirema* [not a very politically correct term for cripple], or if he is a drunkard, or even if he doesn't have a dog or a chicken... The important thing is that you need a husband. Just get one…Anyone. All you need is something so the sun sets quicker, [in Shona, *Chaunogonda Kuvidza Zuva* – to help get you through the day] …I never quite go around finding the things that would help my sun set quicker. Dozens of my friends, however, did. Their sun has set hastily – many with drunks by their side. And the nights are terribly long. But on the bright side, at least they have dignity of being called Mrs so-and-so.'

MDC's electoral opposition is spoken in terms of yet another African (Angolan) myth of bravery in the face of a battle. In the mythology, it is argued that when you are faced with an enemy bigger than you, you must not show them any fear. The MDC is likened to a mother hen that can never win a fight against the mighty eagle (ZANU-PF). The MDC participation or opposition, after all, does not mean anything in a flawed election. It is likened to the woman who married a drunken, dog-less village idiot. Communication by association is used to make connections of things we know (myths) about and other things to give them a particular kind of meaning. Tomaselli, (1996:69) argues that "myths respond to basic human questions about meaning and suffering, life and death. It offers an apparent common sense resolution…it often has a kind of sacred, ritual significance inspiring a certain reverence and belief in the cosmic order." The story narrated that:

> The party (MDC) knows the eagle (ZANU-PF) will take her chicks away, but it will scratch and flap its wings just to show the eagle that it can fight back. Going with this argument for a moment, we see the poor MDC flapping about, yet we all know that in the end the chicks will definitely go…for the next few months our attention will be focused on the pointless elections…the frenzied media attention on Zimbabwe will ensure that the sun sets faster and faster each day… And as for MDC, it shall have the "dignity" of being called a political party. Much like the woman who married the drunken, dog-less village idiot [elections]. Just so she could be counted as a Mrs.

Tomaselli (1996: 66) argues that "a myth is an anonymously composed narrative that offers explanations of why the world is as it appears to be. Myths provide a model of thought capable of overcoming contradictions, modifying and masking them so as to minimize their cultural impact. The story "An election to quicken Zim's sunset" that seeks to explain the situation in Zimbabwe is written by Everjoyce Win from a feminist angle. The meanings emerging from her comments are, therefore, informed from the cultural position of a "married woman" in Zimbabwe (a feminist perspective). In some occasion, journalists used metaphors to explain the Zimbabwean situation. The story titled "Bogey of imperialism masks Zimbabwe human tragedy," for example, compares Zimbabwe with a house on fire:

> If your house is being burnt on several occasions, it is not necessary for it to be burnt again. All that is necessary is the presence of those who have the capacity to do so. Where the government has used the past four years to create a climate of political intimidation, killing and trauma, free and fair elections are simply not possible…Add to this the Zimbabwean government invitation to only chosen few election observers, the closing down of newspapers, the arrest of journalists, the delimitation of constituencies, the manipulation of voter register, the failure of the opposition parties to get free access to voter's roll and more, and it appears to be an attempt to sanitize a crooked election before it happens.

It is worth noting that, following elections that were perceived as fundamentally flawed, some of the newspapers like *The Sunday Independent* began constructing a discourse of the formation of a Government of National Unity under the Global Political Agreement as a solution to the Zimbabwean impasse. It is also important to note that this was a South African government position, pushed through then President Thabo Mbeki's 'quiet diplomacy.' *The Sunday Independent* seemed to share the same hegemonic class position regarding the solution to the problems in Zimbabwe. The position underscores McNair's (1998) argument on the symbiotic relationship that the media/journalists form with political/official sources when constructing news.

Manning's (2001) arguments emphasises the important role played by the South African Weeklies within the broader political system (democracy) and the free market economy

(capitalism). Journalism under the system of liberal democracy is characterized by the principle of intellectual freedom and pluralism which is associated with democracy as Nick Dawes, editor in-chief of *The Mail & Guardian*, explained. He pointed out that "they are a social-democratic newspaper in terms of their views on economics. Of course social democracy is a broad concept comprising of varied degrees of democratic liberalism. Meaning you may be a relatively liberal social-democrat or a more social-democrat which is then contestable." Dawes indicated that their fundamental stand point as a newspaper and as an institution is that social-justice is very important to them. He states:

> We view economics through that prism…I think more efficient functioning of economies delivers more social goods. That is, the fundamental guiding thread and our interest in the economics of the Zimbabwean situation is around what kinds of economic approaches would more likely restore to the people the certainty around where their next meal is coming from[68].

In the excerpt above, Dawes talks of the kind of economic approaches that will deliver "social goods" but does not point out these specific approaches. The commonly known Washington centric approaches, ESAP, adopted in Zimbabwe has been criticized for failing to deliver the "social goods" that he is alluding to – this is a classic example of how certain views are expressed superficially by journalists without further details of alternative measures, if they exist at all, to be adopted that would replace those criticized (Bracking, 2005; Bond, 1997; Bond, 2007; Bond & Manyanya, 2002; Brett, 2005). *The Sunday Independent* headline story appearing in the April 13 2008 issue "Summit on Zim 'coup' crisis stalls: With Mugabe fuming in Harare and Mbeki trying to play down the election fiasco, regional leaders were still trying to break the impasse last night," is accompanied by a Reuters photograph of Mbeki and Mugabe walking hand in hand. The article and the photograph seem to criticize the South African soft diplomatic approach on mediation in Zimbabwe. The story favors the formation of a Government of National Unity but does not cover the reasons why South Africa used the soft diplomatic approach even though several historical, economic and other reasons justified Mbeki's

[68] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Cisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

diplomatic position (Gevisser, 2007; Bond & Manyanya, 2002; Prys, 2008; Prys, 2009; Obe, 2006; Sharpell, 2006; Graham, 2006; Southall, 2006).

7.3. Simplifying events through personas

Fog (2004:2) argues that "political news is more about personalities than about ideologies. In the absence of serious debate…the media hunts for scandals in private lives of politicians and their families, but ignore much serious consequences of their policies." The South African weekly newspapers reduced the problematic situation in Zimbabwe to the issue of personalities. Events related to the situation were often reported in a simplified and superficial manner. A good example is *The Sunday Times* March 20 2005 story titled "Will SA's poll observers in Zimbabwe be free and fair?" This story constantly repeated the phrase "Mugabe must go" which suggests that Mugabe is the obstacle to free and fair elections. The story argues:

> […] for a start, it would be the height of folly to think that the elections in Zimbabwe will be free and fair. The point is simple: by hook or crook, Mugabe must go. If nothing can't be done now the only option is to wait for him to depart from the political stage. If awards were given for successfully rigged elections, Zimbabwe would rank among the leading nations in the world.

The article dwelt on personality issues even though several other variables can be said to have contributed to violent elections in Zimbabwe and consequent economic downturn (See Mlambo, 2005; Moore, 2001a; ICG, 2002 and Bond 2007; Sachikonye et al, 2007; Bond, 1997; Moore, 2001a; Moore, 2001c respectively). Both the ruling party and the opposition are guilty of some level of violence during the elections. However, the opposition was only represented as the victim of the ruling party's aggression well captured by *The Sunday Times* March 30 2008 story "Mugabe must go and he must go now." The MDC is presented as a victim of tyranny showing it crying foul in relation to irregularities in the voter register and the idea that in some polling stations, people were denied the chance to vote. Trevor Ncube, by virtue of his position in society (the owner of *The Mail & Guardian* newspaper) is utilized as a source for credibility and

to reinforce the perception that elections were not free and fair (see McGregor, 1997). In the story, Ncube confesses that his brother, despite being a Zimbabwean national and having voted before in the past six elections, was denied to vote.

Incidents where "the MDC called for and indeed staged violent uprisings" or "mass action" are well known. "Morgan Tsvangirai said openly that Mugabe must go peacefully or else he will be removed violently" (Mlambo, 2005:21). The article, for instance, argued that "all these polls [in Zimbabwe] have been characterized by intimidation of voters through a ruthless propaganda campaign that legitimizes violence against members of the opposition on the grounds that they are nothing more than puppets of the West." Fog (2004: 2) posits that "voters are left with paid political propaganda containing only meaningless slogans making them disinterested and cynical about politics." Part of the reason why voters do not participate in elections in Zimbabwe is because of their perceptions and attitudes regarding the process. Their attitudes and perceptions have greatly been influenced by the way the commercial media covers the process. The elections in Zimbabwe have, more often than not, been represented as chaotic. Fog (2004: 2) further states that:

> All too often, the media makes us afraid of the wrong things. Minor dangers are hysterically blown out of proportions, but much more serious dangers in our society go largely unnoticed. The exaggerated fears often lead to unnecessary measures and legislations and 'gonzo justice' (Fog, 2004: 2).

The kind of representation witnessed in how South African Weeklies covered the situation in Zimbabwe is well captured in *The Sunday Times* June 11 2000 story "UN election team to abandon Zimbabwe" where electoral observers were excluded from the process. The exclusion of observers signified the fact that the process was fraudulent. The article states that "President Robert Mugabe's exclusion of Britons and the sudden resignation of most senior commonwealth elections observer – against the background of a violent campaign aimed at suppressing the opposition – have led most commentators to conclude that a fair contest is impossible." In the spirit of upholding the discourse of personalization as an explanation of the electoral crisis, *The Sunday Times* 20 February 2000 story "SA should help save Zimbabwe, not Mugabe" argued

that "electoral malpractices and economic hardship are a result of President Robert Mugabe's failure to live up to the promises he once showed." The story, which questioned what went wrong in Zimbabwe, was a foregone conclusion regarding the reasons behind the crisis. It argued that "the seeds of Zimbabwe's future economic hardship were planted just after independence in 1980, when Mugabe boldly announced his desire to turn Zimbabwe into a one party state guided by Marxist principles." Such narratives were meant to indicate that something went wrong between 1980 and now, leading to the difficult socio-economic and political situation in that country. Among the many issues that feature prominently as the possible reasons for the economic crisis, one of the main ones is the policy shift from corporatism to neo-liberalism which was done hurriedly without the institutional capacity and expertise to accommodate such a radical micro-economic change. Such views on the reasons behind the economic crisis are emphasized by scholars such as Bond and Manyanya (2002) whose perspectives make it easy for one to understand how government's economic policy shift affected the country. Prior to the policy shift, the economy was basically regulated through measures such as price control and protectionism.

The rationale was that the government was forced to 'open up' its market sometimes to unfair competition and structurally adjust itself through ESAP. The new policy adjustment received mixed reactions from different stakeholders, especially, given that the Zimbabwean economy was controlled by private corporate companies. The result was a flight of capital to Europe and South Africa followed by low investor confidence due to suspicion of the new black majority rule (Bond & Manyanya, 2002). Proponents from the left-wing camp, as far as economic policies are concerned, and right-wing camp clashed in trying to understand the situation as seen in the introduction to this thesis as well as several other sections. The ideological polarization involved interest groups in politics, business, academia and the media conceiving the neo-imperialism discourse from the left-wing camp (Phimister & Raftopolous, 2004). Hence, *The Sunday Times,* for example, which is largely inclined to the right, argued in a manner critical of the left-wingers.

The story "SA should help save Zimbabwe, not Mugabe" confirmed *The Sunday Times'* ideological position. The representation of Mugabe left little doubt that he was the only person

responsible for the 'crises' in Zimbabwe. The argument frames the understanding that leaves little room for doubting the ruling party's hegemonic crisis and the fact that it has lost its legitimacy to rule Zimbabwe (Bracking, 2005; See also Hammer, McGregor & Landau, 2010). The South African Weeklies expressed fears of the latter due to the fear that it might affect South Africa which is equally governed by a liberation party (ANC). Nick Dawes, editor in chief of *The Mail & Guardian*, for instance, argued that their paper expressed the anxiety within the ANC that if the hegemony of a liberation party can be challenged in Zimbabwe, then that of the ANC can be challenged. However, he argued that their broadly progressive readership, even those who are broadly supportive of the ANC, would probably be critical of the fashion in which ZANU has tried to cling to its hegemony.

The fears expressed above were well captured by *The Sunday Times* May 7 2002 story "Its democracy, not land that is at stake in Zimbabwe." The story argued that "if the Zimbabwean situation is left unaddressed and unresolved, it will become a catastrophe for South Africa and the region." For South African Weeklies, the catastrophe was unwelcome since "it would shatter South Africa's best hopes for the revival of Africa." There was need for South Africa to acknowledge the existence of the crisis and to act on it. *The Sunday Times* March 17 2002 story "Now Mbeki must show leadership" (Makhanya, 2002) prescribed the kind of leadership expected of the South African president by reinforcing the fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa. It argued that "the ruling party brought Zimbabwe to the precipice which Zimbabweans alone could not pull themselves out of. The Zimbabwean crisis provided South Africa with an ideal opportunity to show leadership." Since Mbeki was the man (person) in charge, the story detailed what he must do to solve the 'crises.' It pointed out that:

> Mbeki's administration needed to be firm to ensure that Zimbabwe's ruling party committed itself to reforming the rule of law and political stability – the conditions necessary for the return of foreign investment and the opening of credit lines. The first step in this direction was to compel Mugabe to step aside. With Mugabe out of the way, the ruling party and the opposition should be persuaded to form a government of national unity in which they will act as equal partners.

There are numerous episodes where the South African Weeklies pushed for change by expressing the desire to unseat Mugabe. The newspapers prescribed ways of achieving political stability and law and order. The latter would be achieved through a government of national unity. While words such as hunger are used repeatedly in stories, suggesting that Zimbabwe has indeed moved from a "bread basket" to "basket case" (Willems, 2005), Mugabe is represented as the reason behind the crisis and the only obstacle to 'free and fair' elections (personalization). For example, the story "Its democracy, not land that is at stake in Zimbabwe" compares Mugabe to Kibaki who, presumably, is the obstacle in Kenya. It argued that "the people of Kenya were regarded as placid until President Mwai Kibaki stole the elections last year [2007]. Unlike Kenya, Zimbabwe has no serious tribal animosity. The only enemy is Mugabe." The story uses ethnicity where the Kenyan conflict is identified as a tribal affair. The latter is reminiscent of the stereotypes used by the media to represent events unfolding in Africa as it has been established throughout this thesis (See Allimadi, 2002). The article further assumes that the electoral malpractices are simply a result of personalities. Mlambo, (2005: 21) indicates that "it is unrealistic to argue that the socio-economic and political situation, crisis in Zimbabwe, particularly the economic crisis, is the sole architectural project of ZANU-PF and Mugabe which has been a common discourse in the media and the society at large."

In an article published by *The Sunday Times* March 30 2008, "Zimbabweans trek home to vote," the desire to change Zimbabwe is expressed by quoting Ann Katsande, an informal trader using phrases such as "tyranny and oppression," "final push" and words such as "weapon" and "ousting" which denote some element of forceful removal. The fact that Katsande was carrying rice, cooking oil and soap bought from Marabastad, Pretoria, reinforces the narrative of poverty and despair in Zimbabwe where basic commodities are lacking and must be imported from South Africa. See the excerpt below:

> If you are Zimbabwean, you should be home voting for change. It is our only weapon against tyranny and oppression… She [Katsande] said securing her luggage of bags of rice, cooking oil and soap bought in Marabastad, Pretoria. All Zimbabweans should join

> the final push to end President Robert Mugabe's 28-year rule…Katsande's determination to vote was mirrored in hundreds of Zimbabweans making their way home. They are hoping that this time Mugabe will be ousted.

In *The Mail & Guardian* edition February 11 to 17 2005 article, "Why poll got our X: The MDC speaks out on its reasons for deciding to take part in Zimbabwe's general elections," elections are represented as neither free nor fair characterized by a lot of violence and intimidation. A discourse of change is constructed through a pro-MDC source Welshman Ncube. The MDC argued that "The ruling party's compliance with the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) protocol on guidelines and principles governing democratic reforms were cosmetic and self-serving, and failed to address the democratic deficits that precluded free and fair elections." In many instances, the newspaper denied the reader any opportunity to think that the ruling party was serious about electoral reforms. Ncube, sourced in the story, stated that "despite the fact that the forthcoming elections offered a glimmer of hope for change, they remained vigilant of the ruling party's capacity for electoral malpractice. If conditions on the ground deteriorated, they reserved the right to take corrective measures."

In *The Mail & Guardian* edition February 11 to 17 2005 titled "Mugabe hits the husting: We are losing all 22 seats in Matabeland provinces to the opposition because the top leadership was careless," Pro-MDC sources Lovemore Madhuku and Welshman Ncube, referred to earlier, are further used to represent the idea that elections in Zimbabwe can never be credible limiting competing discourse regarding free and fair elections (Willems, 2005). Ironically, in *The Mail & Guardian* April 8 to 14 2005 article, "Flawed system must go," Lovemore Madhuku underscores the possibility of a clean ruling party victory in the event that the elections in Zimbabwe were free and fair. However, he is skeptical about the possibility of the latter. The two sources were repeatedly used to frame the idea that elections in Zimbabwe cannot be free and fair. Manning (2000) has pointed out how the repeated use of certain 'official' sources can lead to some dominant forms of representations.

The idea that elections in Zimbabwe can never be free and fair, captured through quoting 'official' sources, were clearly represented in *The Sunday Independent* February 20 2005 story,

"Too late for a free and fair election in Zimbabwe: But SADC could still salvage something by looking through the smoke and mirrors and having it postponed." The story ruled out the possibility of free and fair elections arguing that the current constitutional and legal framework needed reforms. The story argued that SADC should pressure the Zimbabwean government to postpone the elections due to inconsistencies, gaps and potential conflicts within the current legislative framework. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) explain the relationship between journalists and sources and the manner in which sources act as gatekeepers who have the power to decide which information they withhold or give out to journalists (Van Ginneken 1998; Manning 2001).

On some occasions, rhetorical questions are used in a number of stories to ridicule Zimbabwe's electoral reforms and to show the lack of commitment by the ZANU-PF government to act on the SADC principles and guidelines on the electoral process. Some of the questions used in the story "Too late for a free and fair election in Zimbabwe" were related to whether the Zimbabwean government takes SADC guidelines seriously and what SADC could then do if Zimbabwe did not comply with the guidelines and principles. The Weekly accused the ruling party of not complying with SADC guidelines on elections and engaging in electoral malpractices including changing the law to maintain power. It argued that:

> ZANU-PF knew it had no option but to introduce changes in the administration of elections and there was no need to wait until just two months before the elections to do so. The Zimbabwean government deliberately delayed electoral reforms in a calculated move to ensure there would be not enough time for the opposition to scrutinize the electoral process.

The story is further accompanied by a photograph of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai addressing a rally in Mbare. The caption reads: "Morgan Tsvangirai Zimbabwe's main opposition leader addresses supporters at a rally in Mbare. He said he was confident he would win a majority." The photograph seems to contradict the content of the story. The latter points out SADC and MDC dissatisfaction with the electoral reforms and argues for the need to postpone the elections. However, at some point, it states that Tsvangirai is actually ready to face Mugabe in the upcoming elections, anyway, and he is optimistic of winning a majority. The

photograph is taken by an international news agency, Associated Press (AP), reflecting a Eurocentric position that seems to favor an opposition victory. *The Sunday Independent* shared the same position (see Ndlela, 2005). It is a well-known fact in media studies that the overreliance on news agencies for stories is problematic. Mondli Makhanya, editor in chief of *The Sunday Times* explained why they used news agencies. He argued that they could not get into Zimbabwe so they had to use news agencies and their own stringers based on the ground in that country from time to time. He talked of them having a relationship with *The Times* in London and have their copy as well but "this did not mean that the stories were coming from London." They use agencies because they trust that those agencies are reliable. See his explanations below:

> We subscribe to Reuters, South African Press Agency, AP [Associated Press] and AFP [Agency France Presse]. I mean…like we change agencies from time to time but I mean…like we trust that those agencies are going to be reliable. Yah, so if there is inaccuracy, then that will be a problem and it reflects on them and if we are inaccurate in our reports, it reflects on our reputation and if they are reporting live on the ground there, then their reputation is destroyed and we will stop using them at that point. And the government in Zimbabwe or the opposition in Zimbabwe will be in a position to correct that[69].

There is no doubt that journalists rely on news agencies from time to time. However, agencies have their own points of view which could be a very Western perspective regarding events unfolding on the ground in Africa, and in this case, Zimbabwe (Ndlela, 2005). For example, the idea that Zimbabwe can never have free and fair elections was an ideological position that was privileged in most election stories. The idea was further pushed through *The Sunday Independent* and the other newspapers studied even though some institutions, like the South African Government Observer Mission, then under Thabo Mbeki, regarded some elections, like the 2002 one, free and fair. The latter is revealed at the point where the story indicated the absence of overt violence that formed part of earlier elections.

[69] Makanya, M. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. Avusa media, Rosebank, Johannesburg 12st May 12: 00.

Most of the stories discussed above were accompanied by photographs. There are various reasons accounting for why photographs used to represent the Zimbabwean situation appeared problematic. The reasons can be linked to the pressures faced by journalists when covering Zimbabwe from South Africa and strict media regulation, especially on foreign and unsympathetic media, by the Zimbabwean government. This led to some form of distorted representation and misrepresentations through photography resulting from the difficulty in getting facts and photographs related to a story. *The Sunday Independent* editor explains:

> Well, there was an issue with photography particularly. I mean just generally covering Zimbabwe is difficult because of restrictive media regulations … Of course to have photographers [in Zimbabwe] is more difficult because they are very conspicuous and conspicuously, you can pretend to be a tourist and when you come into the country as a reporter, but it is difficult as a photographer. So that was an issue so we ended up using the agency. There were a lot of pictures taken secretly by the agencies …some were taken by local photographers and we tended to use those[70].

Mondli Makhanya, editor in chief of *The Sunday Times* talked of parachute journalism. He explained how they had to parachute people in and out of the country. He was among those who reported elections from there in the year 2000 noting how he had to travel in and out of Zimbabwe. On some occasions, the newspaper had to send people in illegally as well after they could not send people in legally. Due to many restrictions, the three Weekly newspapers thus relied on wire services for photographs. The argument here is that the credibility of such photographs can be questioned because, very often, they were forensic (used as evidence) in terms of establishing the truth regarding what did and what did not happen leading to misrepresentation. Nick Dawes, however, explains why *The Mail & Guardian's* reliance on wire services did not compromise their credibility:

> Our journalism isn't so much driven by pictures…not a lot of it has to do with green bombers went to a particular place at a particular time and they met such and such a person and this was the results. It's much more around politics and economics. That said,

[70] Fabricious. P. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

> we do have a correspondent there if the picture didn't seem to coincide with what we are hearing from him it will be some cause for concern. But again, I suppose we also try to work with wire agencies that are well regarded … wire agencies that are restricted to vetting criteria[71].

The fact that agencies are vetted does not make them ideologically independent. In fact, the very vetting institutions, procedures and what they are vetting is a thesis to be explored. It does not help for journalists to argue that they rely on vetted agencies. What these agencies are vetted on and the criteria used is the problem. The fact that vetting is done within the frameworks that define news and newsgathering from Western fashioned lenses is well established and there is no need to rehearse it here. Further, newsmen from these agencies only move into and out of Zimbabwe when big events are unfolding and therefore lack the contextual and anthropological knowledge of the nuances surrounding what they are reporting (Hawk, 1992).

In *The Sunday Independent* story March 20 2005 edition appearing on the leader page titled "SADC must flex its muscles over Zim poll sham," we continue to note how elections are represented as neither free nor fair characterized by human rights abuses and violence. The article argues that "a plethora of reports and human rights bodies and the few journalists brave enough to visit Zimbabwe, despite its draconian media laws, shows quite clearly that no conditions exist for a free and fair election." The story uses intertext, quoting from another story in the same newspaper edition by Charles Villa titled "Bogey imperialism masks Zim's human tragedy" where Brian Kogoro, the Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Crisis Coalition is metaphorically quoted to reinforce the discourse of flawed elections. Recurrence of phenomena in texts is part of how particular representations emerge and meaning about a situation is created (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock, 1999). The utilization of one source, where texts borrow from each other, reinforces the idea that elections in Zimbabwe are a sham. *The Sunday Independent* March 20 2005 edition story is accompanied by a cartoon titled "Robert's believe it or else" mocking democracy in Zimbabwe characterized by a sham election, food shortages, absence of freedom of expression, press freedom and the neo-imperialism discourse.

[71] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

Clearly, there is a continuous narrative thread in the three Weekly newspapers that suggests that elections in Zimbabwe were neither free nor fair. In the story "Zim's mobs get license to intimidate," for example, official sources biased to the opposition (Trudy Stevenson, an MDC Candidate and David Coltart, lawyer and human rights activist and MDC director of elections) are utilized to frame elections as neither free nor fair. The dangers of over relying on official sources, evidenced in the story above, have already been pointed out. Furthermore some of the sources extensively quoted are 'victims' of the ruling party sponsored violence and intimidation. The Weekly therefore used their accounts of events in Zimbabwe (a first person narrative) to win sympathy from the readers in order to buy their consent[72].

The Sunday Times story "Mugabe must go and he must go now," has anti-Mugabe sentiments and uses simplification and personalization strategies in reinforcing anti-Mugabe discourses. "It argued that following the largely peaceful day during which millions turned out to vote in the presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections, the question on many Zimbabweans' lips was whether they had done enough to remove Mugabe from office." The story uses a banker and a self-employed person, identified by name, as sources to create a discourse of change in Zimbabwe. The banker argues that they are determined "to show Mugabe the red card." The self-employed person, the story argues, "in defiance of plain-clothes state security agents and uniformed police watching, said Mugabe must go and he must go now." The sources utilized, it seems, were readily available regarding what the newspaper wanted to dredge up for the reader.

Ironically, even though the article expresses optimism through the official sources utilized that the opposition will win, it constructs a discourse that suggests elections will be flawed. Such discourses could have set precedence for contestable results. In the story "Mugabe must go and he must go now," the possibility of a free and fair ZANU-PF victory is denied. The story argues that the ruling party can only win by stealing elections. The frequency of the claims about the impossibility of holding free and fair elections in Zimbabwe is remarkably high. The epistemic framing that emphasizes that the elections in Zimbabwe can never be free and fair shapes the

[72]Stories can be constructed from a first person account or narrative to bring to the fore their ordinariness to win the sympathy and emotions of the readers. This is meant to appeal to those reading and make them think that well, this could happen to anyone including them. It's a pure emotional strategy to buy consent. See Herman, E.S. & Chomsky, N.(1988). *Manufacturing Consent. The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. London: Vintage

perception of voters regarding the process. It is not clear whether this is a course for celebration because it instills panic and fear on the citizens who ought to participate in the process and therefore goes against their right to choose leaders of their choice. This in turn impacts on voter turnout and goes against the grain of the very ideology that the Weeklies seek to defend and advance (human rights and democracy) (see fog, 2004).

It is a big blow to democracy in Zimbabwe when *The Sunday Independent* April 3 2005 story "Zimbabwe needs us" qualifies violence as it did. The story criticized Mbeki's quiet diplomacy and represented the opposition electoral complaints of vote rigging in such a way that qualified the possibility of a popular uprising as an alternative to parliamentary politics. The fact that the story meant good and wanted to see Zimbabwe democratize is betrayed when the same story expresses fears that the Zimbabwe uprising might lead to instability arround the South African borders. The latter is contrary to what 'quiet diplomacy' was striving to maintain in the first place. South Africa's fear of a spill-over effect of the instability in Zimbabwe was not taken lightly. Discourses of such fears thematically recurred in a number of stories appearing in the three selected Weeklies. See the excerpt from the story "Zimbabwe needs us" below:

> […] The Zimbabwean opposition, after losing another poll, which it considers stolen, is now considering alternatives to parliamentary politics, including popular uprising. Mbeki has always said his controversial 'quiet diplomacy' was necessary to maintain stability on our borders. That won't be the case if South Africa apparent condoning of a flawed election aggravates the frustrations of the opposition and starts a slide to dangerous street politics and possibly civil war.

The idea of violent uprising was further emphasized in *The Sunday Times* April 13 2008 story, "Hopes for returning home dashed: A week ago, Zimbabweans in South Africa were getting ready to go back to their country. Now all that's left is talk of war." The story pushes for change through advocating the violent removal of Mugabe – an obstacle to democracy. The story uses Herman and Chomsky's in Willems' (2005) concept of humanistic rhetoric, highlighting the plight of Zimbabwean refugees and their willingness to go back to their country and fight for the violent removal of Robert Mugabe. See the excerpt below:

> Aaron Makuza, who fled Zimbabwe … and Sam Mavungu, 33, one of Makuza's comrades… explained that they are just waiting for the Presidential results, they were organizing themselves to return but now it's all over. Mugabe's stolen the elections and no one's going to do anything about it. They need to go to war.

The story is accompanied by a close up photograph of two Zimbabwean refugees. The caption reads: "Refugees Sam Mavhunga, left, and Aron Makuza were getting ready to go home to Zimbabwe. But now it's all over, isn't it? Mugabe's stolen it [the election] and no one's going to do anything about it. We need to go to war." The story alleges that Makuza received crushed fingernails and a bruised shin, however, the photograph does not show evidence of the injuries making one doubt the authenticity or credibility of the allegations. In addition, a copy of the report from Harare clinic is not shown for verification.

7.4. Marginalizing the 'other'

Marginalization refers to a situation in which the selected South African Weeklies excluded certain aspects of the situation in Zimbabwe by limiting the range of possible alternative ways of looking at it. This entailed focusing on discourses that agree with what the journalists were trying to dredge up to the public. The technique involved the utilization of sources that are used to frame issues in order to marginalize and suppress opposing views. The feature story "Zimbabweans trek home to vote," for example, continues with the idea of blaming personalities. It does not only blame Mugabe for the socio-economic and political problems in Zimbabwe, but also shows open support for the opposition through the readily available sources utilized (McGregor, 1997). The ruling party and their supporters are thus marginalized. There is no doubt that the ruling party has significant support from sections of Zimbabweans, especially in rural areas, which journalists care less to admit. Bracking (2005: 349) supports such a view by noting the fact that "there is a large number, probably a majority in the rural areas, who remain committed ZANU-PF supporters." The article used Herbat Makonya, a 25 year old driver, who argues that "his biggest wish is to see Mugabe lose elections because if he wins, there'll no

longer be a country. People will starve, shops will continue to be empty and many will run into neighboring countries like South Africa."

In the same story, it is reported that scores of Zimbabweans are going home to vote but others are making their way into South Africa illegally fleeing chronic food and fuel shortages. The article further quotes an official source, Beitbrigde port co-coordinator Michael Malindi, saying that "the government had sent extra staff to the border ahead of the polls until April 2nd to deal with the increasing number of Zimbabweans going home to vote." Arguing that "scores" of desperate countrymen are making their way into South Africa but the government is only concerned about the 'increasing' number of those going home to vote is a contradiction. The article seems to suggest that those making their way into South Africa are ZANU-PF supporters and are not ready to vote for change. The story does not source any of the Zimbabweans coming into South Africa. The ones going home like Katsande and Makonya (who were reportedly carrying food and cooking oil from Pretoria earlier) sourced in the story, are ready to vote for change. The two are sourced because they seem to fit into the news agenda of the newspaper. This kind of framing amounts to silencing alternative voices. Norris et al (2003) argues that framing occurs when the media makes some aspects appear more important than others by promoting a certain problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation. Why did the South African Weeklies frame events in Zimbabwe and for whose interests?

Hall (1978) talks of the politics of signification where the media manufactures popular consent through how it represents a crisis. The media are not the primary definers of news however they shape how news should be understood. The media does this by virtue of the fact that it has a close and mutual relationship with those in power positions over whom it has little control and influence. Such individuals have the cultural and material resources to buy their way into the media's public sphere and are often known as accredited sources. In cases where the latter are not available to provide the information needed by the media to construct a story, the media go for readily available sources who are usually eye witnesses. Makhonya and Katsande, quoted in the story, were easily available sources given the pressures of time and deadlines (Manning, 2001). Angles on stories are secured through human interest themes well captured by the

headline "If you are Zimbabwean, you should be home voting for change. It's our only hope against tyranny and repression." This headline is accompanied by a black and white photograph showing Zimbabweans queuing to vote before dawn. The caption reads "LONG WAIT: Hundreds of Zimbabweans queue in Harare yesterday. In many areas they began lining up before dawn." The photograph captures the idea of change in Zimbabwe classically showing how the media constructs popular consent through human interest themes in representation (Hall (1997).

7.5. Ethnicity and news about Zimbabwe

Ethnicisation as a representation technique refers to cases where South African Weeklies used race in a simplistic manner to explain events. The election was represented as a power struggle and conflict between whites and blacks (white farmers backing the opposition and black liberation heroes backing the ruling party). The MDC was represented as pro-west, especially UK and US, and therefore pro-change and reforms. It was also represented as a party fighting tyranny but constantly at the mercy of the government. ZANU-PF was represented as an oppressive and corrupt regime which has a natural hatred for whites, a tradition of rigging elections and is the cause of the socio-economic and political retrogression in Zimbabwe. The ruling party was also represented as a party that perceived the opposition as a Western puppet and white farmers as representatives of colonial imperialism. A number of stories appeared with ethnic undertones. A feature article in *The Sunday Times* 30 March 2008 "A refugee too scared to go back and cast her ballot" (Bunyekezwa, 2008), for example, talks of Althea Roberts, a white Movement for Democratic Change Activist who fled to South Africa four months ago since the electoral chaos started that year (2008) and is too afraid to go back to Zimbabwe. She is quoted saying "none of us refugees would want to go back to Zimbabwe, it's too dangerous… we can't leave a setting [South Africa] where we have a chance of getting our families out of that situation to just put an 'X' that won't even count."

The article concludes that despite optimism that President Robert Mugabe's time is up, Roberts is convinced that he will never be defeated at the ballot box. "He's rigged already, he is not going to go and we are never going to see our children this year. He's won already and we know that." The story is accompanied by a close-up photograph with a caption that reads

"DESTITUTE: MDC activist Althea Roberts" to reinforce the idea that white Zimbabweans are suffering for supporting the MDC. Roberts is a representative of the plight of many white Zimbabaweans who have since fled the country. In the story "Zim's mobs get license to intimidate," ethnicity is used to show the plight of white farmers and to make the election violence look like a black versus white conflict. The article uses a rhetorical question pointing out that South Africans must realize that blacks in Zimbabwe are suffering. The violence is said to have the potential to undermine the region, especially, considering the fact that no peaceful elections can be held under Mugabe. The story argued from a familiar premise regarding Zimbabwe's elections and went ahead rationalizing and hypothesizing around it in order for action to be taken. The story argued that "how many people have to lose their lives and livelihoods before the international community – The Organization of African Unity, the Commonwealth, the European Union, and the United Nations – realize the real issue is not land reforms or black-on-white violence but state terrorism against the people of Zimbabwe?" Such a statement omits the discourse around the land question, its salience in Zimbabwe and its relationship to the socio-economic and political crises. This thesis has proved beyond reasonable doubt that issues of redistributive justice are very important and emotive in both Zimbabwe and South Africa to an extent that they cannot be overlooked.

Like many other stories mentioned earlier, The *Mail & Guardian* March 24 to 31 2005 article "We are Zimbabweans: The country's few remaining whites hang on to their residency with steely determination, but many have given up fighting and live like expats," uses humanistic rhetoric to give a first person narrative or account of the experiences of white farmers in the face of compulsory acquisition of property or 'land invasions.' Emotions are drawn through ethnicity which highlights the plight of the few remaining white farmers in Zimbabwe as they "hang on to their residency with steely determination." There is a common stereotypical representation of "the African story," captured well by Ndlela (2005), Allimadi (2002) and Nyamnjoh (2005). In the story "We are Zimbabweans," stereotypes are used to describe hunger and poverty experienced by black people in Africa in general and, specifically, in Zimbabwe even amongst the police. The latter is said to have refused to help a white woman whose farm was invaded "because he did not have a car" to drive to the woman's farm. However, it is claimed that when the woman reported a stray-fat goat roaming in her garden, the same policeman drove around in

minutes suggesting that the car issue was not the problem but hunger was emphasizing that "he obviously wanted to eat the goat." The stereotypical portrayal of Africa is also evident in the narrative at the point where a house keeper is said to have died of AIDS. Medhurst in Willems (2005: 315) argues that "stereotyping functions as a short hand through which the media simplifies issues since there is never enough time and space to describe people in all the rich complexity."

But why does the press represent events in Zimbabwe superficialy? The selected Weekly newspapers, like other newspapers and the press in general, are always criticized for ahistoricism. The press is often viewed by media scholars as superficial, simplifying things and sensationalizing events unfolding in Africa. Good examples of this view can be seen in the Weeklies' representation of events such as Operation *Murambatsvina*, cholera, exodus of refugees and economic collapse in Zimbabwe. The criticism is that the media, especially those that follow the Western tradition of journalism, mainstream journalism or war journalism, generally lack a more nuanced coverage of events unfolding in Africa (Nyamnjoh, 2010; Allimadi, 2002; Hawk, 1992). Nick Dawes justifies the need for such a journalistic tradition as stated below:

> I think we are quite nuanced but sometimes we are not and obviously journalists should tend to focus on the present…there is a certain fundamental historical stupidity about what we do but I think we do better when we are aware of this context and… able to do the kind of reporting that is rich enough and is detailed enough to take account of those contexts. But you tell me what kind of a context was going to change the fundamental anxiety that the campaign of that nature [Operation *Murambatsvina*] would raise for many of us. Sure, it's interesting and important but not to the extent that it violates our worry about hundreds of people being violently dragged out of their homes. If that's an ahistorical worry then slap me on the head or call me Francis Fukuyama, the man who wrote the book *The End of History*[73].

[73] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

Nick Dawes meant that in some occasions the press is obliged to be more nuanced but only when there is "time, resources, space and so forth." The media tends to follow the background of an event depending on the size of the event – the "bigger the event, the more ideally the press tries and follows into the background." The simplicity inherent in stories and accusations of ahistoricism is evidenced in the article "We are Zimbabweans," which argued that "despite threats and intimidation, people lined up in their millions to vote, and for the first time in 22 years, whites moved from behind their high walls and sports clubs and got involved in the campaign… they became Zimbabweans." This story fails to address the historical minority privileges that white Zimbabwean farmers enjoyed behind their 'high walls and sports clubs' at the expense of poor people confirming the scholarly argument that after the collapse of the Rhodesian Front, the whites isolated themselves. They did not see themselves as Zimbabwean leading to some form of resentment from the blacks[74]. They did not participate in Zimbabwean politics until the emergence of the opposition that they perceived had the capacity to drive forth change in Zimbabwe.

Galtung and Ruge in Bignell (1997) argue that news is constructed through the criteria of selection. This selection process depends on the criteria that give greater news value to some facts and events than others. The criteria are used informally and unconsciously by journalists and editors to decide which events are newsworthy, and which are more newsworthy than others. In other words, these criteria form a code shared consensually by news workers which enables them to determine the degree of value between competing events. Besides the element of negativity, the crisis has a high threshold. The extent to which ethnicity is used to explain farm invasions as conflict between black and whites is further captured in *The Sunday Independent* July 5 2000 article, "More farm invasions by war veterans continue to unsettle Zimbabwe." The article argues that "Tension has mounted in farming areas as war veterans of Zimbabwe's independence struggle intensified farm invasions and demanded food and shelter from white farmers…. The veterans have been allegedly attacking farm workers whom they accused of

[74] Selby in Raftopolous and Manyanya (2009:192) argues that "the white community visible affluence and continued social isolation, which amplified during structural adjustment provides a target and a catalyst for anti-white sentiment."

voting for the MDC."

Peter Fabricious used race in one of his stories to legitimize opposition victory in the June 2000 parliamentary elections. He wrote in a *Sunday Independent* article 30 of June 2000 titled "The MDC offers a lesson to white South Africans," that "the impressive performance of Zimbabwe's Movement for Democratic Change in that weekend's parliamentary elections was not only a wake-up call for President Robert Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF. It was equally a wake-up call for South Africans black and white." He noted how blacks have tended to laugh the MDC off as a local branch of the South African Democratic Party ruled from Sandton because of some financial and other support given by a few white South Africans. Fabricious commented that:

> They [black South Africans] should come to Zimbabwe to realize how misguided, insulting and hurtful that attitude is to the multitude of supporters of this party black and white – who braved massive intimidation to come out and vote and very nearly prevailed. Does the fact that the MDC has some support from white Zimbabwean liberals and farmers, the 'reactionary' DP and a few-ex Rhodies, blind the ANC completely to what Mugabe is doing to his people? Is anything touched by white liberals automatically unclean?[75]"

In the story "More farm invasions by war veterans continue to unsettle Zimbabwe," ethnicity is said to be the motivation behind land invasions seen as a ploy by President Robert Mugabe to win the support of the landless black majority ahead of the polls (Bond & Manyanya, 2002; Phimister & Raftopoulus, 2004). While the idea of land invasions flared in the Weeklies as an event that happened, the Weeklies failed to give a nuanced coverage of what the future held for the land through following up on how the story developed. The Weeklies did not bother to inform the public about what was happening to the so called 'invaded farms' in the recent past, despite the fact that the invasions can be traced from the year 2000. The story "More farm invasions by war veterans continue to unsettle Zimbabwe," is sourced from news agencies, the South African Press Agency (Sapa) and Agence France Presse (AFP) indicating that *The Sunday*

[75] Fabricious. P. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwe Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

Independent did little regarding desk research on the problematic situation – the nature of electoral violence and land invasions in Zimbabwe. The story is thus represented superficially. The Weeklies could have taken measures that would ensure they give a contextual understanding of the serious events unfolding in Zimbabwe to the audiences even if social structures may have acted as impediments to such efforts.

Limitations related to desk research underscore the reality that Weekly South African newspapers do not have correspondents in Zimbabwe, given the repressive media laws in that country, and thus rely on wire services. This makes their reports lack depth in terms of facts. More often, stories quote sources anonymously like the case where "MDC supporters" are quoted indirectly. The most interesting issue is how the reporting of Zimbabwe invites questions of the use of race in stories and whether or not newspapers use race as a marketing strategy to appeal to their predominantly white target audience and emerging black middle class interested in racial stories. The findings clearly revealed that such strategies are meant to sell the paper. Peter Fabricious confirmed this as indicated below:

> *The Sunday Independent* is one of the so called AB income groups publications in this country [South Africa] of which they are a few, but have fairly limited but high quality readership if you want to put it that way, since they have quite a lot of income so advertisers like them for selling high quality products but from our perspective as journalists the interesting thing about them is that they are generally well informed people so that… we were trying to provide analysis, good information about difficult topics often more difficult topics than you would be dealing with in a paper that's targeted lower down the market. There has been an issue in Zimbabwe that we are playing to the fears and prejudices in the interest of white readers because it was white farmers who were initially the victims of ZANU-PF policies. There might be some element of truth in that but I think… we were really targeting the informed readership which includes a growing number of black middle class[76].

[76] Fabricious. P. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwe Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

Nick Dawes, editor in chief of *The Mail & Guardian*, also indicated a similar approach for their target audience. He stated that in South Africa their target audience is the elite. For example, black, highly educated, relatively well-off financially, engaged with policy or politics. It also includes, in a large number of cases, those in the government, academia, business and cultural spheres. In Zimbabwe, their audience tends to be critical of Mugabe in particular and the ruling party in general although more specifically of those people in the ruling party who are anxious to maintain control.

7.6. Reappropriating mainstream discourses

The discourse advanced by the mainstream media in South Africa was that human rights and democracy are under threat in Zimbabwe due to the iron fisted rule of Robert Mugabe. The conclusion that such liberal values were under threat in Zimbabwe was reached due to the state sponsored electoral malpractices witnessed in that country. The ruling party in Zimbabwe reclaimed or re-appropriated this 'negative' portrayal and constructed counter-discourses. In the story 'Mugabe Must go and he must go now,' for example, Mugabe railed against the UK, the US and the opposition, claiming he would deliver a heavy blow against them at the polls. He argued that "ZANU-PF's vote is against the British indicating that the fight is not against MDC which is just a puppet and a mouthpiece of the British." This kind of argument was furthered in *The Sunday Times* April 14 2002 story "Servant of Libya," where Mugabe emphasized that "if elected again in the 2002 election, Zimbabwe would never be a colony again." Elsewhere, *The Mail & Guardian* of February 29 to March 6 2008 published a banner advertisement featured in *The Herald* titled "Zimbabwe is not for sale," and a copy of a letter from British Prime Minister Gordon Brown purportedly confirming that his government is financing the opposition. These discourses were used repeatedly by the ruling party to counter accusations of human rights abuses and anti-democratic tendencies.

The ruling party argued that Zimbabwe is fighting neo-imperialism as pushed by the British government through the opposition. The argument got credence from SADC region leaders,

among them Benjamin Mkapa, former President of Tanzania, the Prime Minister of Lesotho Pakalitha Mosisili and the then South African President Thabo Mbeki, triggering support from sections of the South African society. Phimister and Raftopolous (2004) show how Mbeki and Mugabe made public speeches in the media expressing the 'fears' of neo-imperialism. Questions can be raised as to whether British concerns were real concerns about democracy and the genuine belief that they had the ability to instill democratic practices in countries like Zimbabwe. Britain is known for double standards and occasions where they have abused human rights and democratic values elsewhere are facts that are written on the wall. Iraq and Afghanistan present perfect opportunities for one to see the atrocities committed by British soldiers in their quest to export 'liberty and stability.' Further, the West has turned a blind eye to human rights abuses in several other countries in Africa. So why is Zimbabwe singled out? Mbeki in Freeman, (2005: 154) argued:

> Attention that the West and white South Africans pay to Zimbabwe is obsessive, contrasting in telling fashion with their lack of interest in larger and more destructive conflicts in Rwanda and Sudan, Angola and the DRC. In these cases, millions have died compared to hundreds in Zimbabwe. The reason why Zimbabwe has become such an issue is because white people died. Not only is the West's extraordinary preoccupation with Zimbabwe racist, but it serves as a cover for underlying fears that what is happening in Zimbabwe would happen in South Africa as well. (Freeman, 2005: 154)

Mbeki's remarks, expressed the fears of the prospects of a Zimbabwe in South Africa rather than genuine fears about the new invasion of Zimbabwe by neo-imperialists. The latter became a major concern in the discourse around democracy and governance in South Africa. This was confirmed by the story "Bogey of imperialism masks Zimbabwe human tragedy" which argued that intimidation, which was and still is, part of the election process in Zimbabwe would not be tolerated in South Africa. In a different twist, *The Sunday Times* February 24, 2002 story, "Step by step into chaos" (Meredith, 2002) revealed the extent to which the opposition threatened the leadership of the ruling party in Zimbabwe. Mugabe argued in the story that:

> The movement for democratic change should never be judged or characterized by its black trade union face; by its youthful student face; by its black suburban junior

> professionals; never by its rough and violent high-density [urban] elements. It is much deeper, whiter and wider than these human superficies; for it is immovably and implacably moored in the colonial yesterday and embraces wittingly or unwittingly the repulsive ideology of return to white settler rule.

Mugabe accused the US and the old Rhodesian network around the world for supporting the MDC and, according to him, the MDC betrayed the liberation struggle. Mugabe argued that even the churches were involved and that "the most insidious side of the resurgence of white power came by way of the pulpit and in the human form of church figures who do not hesitate to "render unto God things that belonged to Caesar." Arguably therefore, Mugabe had a moral right to defeat these forces accused of mobilizing for the 2002 elections in the final push to break ZANU-PF's hold on power. Such counter discourses championed neo-imperialism.

Some newspapers like *The Sunday Independent* further re-appropriated the neo-imperialism discourse due to the fact that they were ideologically inclined to the West and shared a similar position. The story "Bogey of imperialism masks Zimbabwe human tragedy," questioned the South African government's thoughtless support for a corrupt government because of old liberation movement ties. It further questioned whether the support is driven by an underlying brand of pan-Africanist fundamentalism designed to sustain a sometimes shaky African Union and New Partnership for African Development. Mondli Makhanya, editor in chief of *The Sunday Times* argued that the government of Zimbabwe often disagreed with what the newspapers reported by simply accusing them of being agents of imperialism but those who accused the papers did not refute the facts. See the excerpts from the interview below:

> I think they [government] wanted to perpetrate the myth that everything that was happening in Zimbabwe was as a result of Britain and the U.S and whatever…but again they wanted to say that the image of Zimbabwe as being a creeping …dictatorship and a collapsing country and so on and Mugabe as being a dictator was an image that was being projected by the West because he [Mugabe] was taking an anti-West stand and …I mean, that was the government line and, obviously, that the MDC was necessarily a puppet of the international media, us [*Sunday Times*] included, were actually part of this global conspiracy. So look, obviously I think there are, you know, in the initial stages, I think a

> lot of the British press in particular concentrated a lot on the farmers. I think the big mistake that they made, was this image of these whites at the receiving end of a black government …beating them, driving them off the farms and there is a story that obviously resonated. The story, look, it was dramatic stuff, it was obviously chasing people off their farms…it was a big project of the Zimbwean government so it made a big story with great pictures, great television images. But actually the story as it unfolded, it became a little bit more than that. It was the erosion of human rights, it was the destruction of the economy, and it was basically the betrayal of April 18, 1980 [freedom]. So I don't, and I very strongly disagree. I don't buy the story about media coverage of Zimbabwe being driven by some Western conspiracy. There were black people, African people in Zimbabwe at the receiving end of a brutal regime and it was our responsibility [*Sunday Times*] as South Africans, as a certainly expert newspaper to be on that side and also show the image to the people of this country [South Africa] that treasure your freedom, treasure your liberation you will not be that and history has proven us right[77].

The story "Bogey of imperialism masks Zimbabwe human tragedy" personalized and simplified complex questions regarding neo-imperialism and Mbeki's African renaissance debates as envisioned by the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). In doing so, it questions Mbeki's position on Zimbabwe and his quiet diplomacy approach in dealing with that country despite the perceived failed elections there. The story argued that:

> Mbeki needs to be sensitive to the concerns of other African leaders (who are not all democrats) to promote the ideals of the African renaissance… it is clear that without democratic elections, good governance and economic growth, any possibility of Mbeki's vision for Africa being realized is doomed, something that Mbeki obviously knows. So he has opted for quiet diplomacy…Mugabe cannot get away with the violation of human rights while the South African government offered him the kind of legitimacy that it did… The legitimacy South Africa is offering Mugabe is as a result of Mugabe's remarkable capacity to locate the debate about Zimbabwe within the context of anti-

[77] Makanya, M. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. Avusa media, Rosebank, Johannesburg 12st May 12: 00.

> imperialism solidarity and anti-colonial redress, rather than responding to the human rights debate.

The story further pointed out that Mbeki and other African leaders understand and warm to Mugabe's sentiments. They supported his broad objectives while in turn Britain and the West play into Mugabe's strategy. British Prime Minister Tony Blair quoted in the story boasted that Britain would play a leading role in reordering the globe to bring "values of democracy and freedom to people around the world." Blair is said to have committed his government to join with the United States to extend "liberal democracy" (through regime change if necessary), and the IMF and World Bank offer to help states "wishing to find their way back into the global economy." In doing so, "Britain lends itself to the beating of the new imperialism drum."

The story omits discussions about regional hegemony as as one of the reasons for Mbeki's quiet diplomacy and the challenges this presents for the South African government as argued by Prys (2009) in her thesis titled "*Regional Hegemony or Regional Bystander: South Africa's Zimbabwe Policy.*" Bond (2004: 600) has, equally, shown how Mbeki's support for Mugabe is more of a strategic move for South Africa to maintain its "sub-imperial position" in the continents capitalistic political-economy and in the broader "free market economy" – Hegemon. Phimister and Raftopoulos (2004: 390) explain how "Mbeki sought to forge a deal in the formation of a government of national unity in Zimbabwe" to maintain South Africa's position as a key regional and continental arbiter. These explanations are echoed by McKinley, (2004: 362) who argues:

> Mbeki's bottom line remains one of securing the strategic interests of South African capital whilst simultaneously consolidating his government's 'role' as the main African arbiter of both a regional and continental capitalist political economy. Further, if Mbeki can oversee the installation of a 'new look' ZANU-PF government that is more 'acceptable' to the international financial institutions (World Bank & IMF) and the core capitalist states in the North, then he will have doubly succeeded, further cementing South Africa's position as sub-imperial power number one in the neighbourhood. (McKinley, 2004: 362)

The arguments in the story "Bogey of imperialism masks Zimbabwe human tragedy," are thus very narrowly conceived and did little to inspect Mbeki's broader ideological framework. The arguments in the story seem to be restricted on past human rights violations by Britain, as Zimbabwe's historical colonial master, and Mugabe's human rights violations during elections. Paradoxically, the story uses neo-imperialism to criticize South Africa's foreign policy on Zimbabwe in a bid to push for change in that country. It uses rhetorical questions to argue that the clash between neo-imperialism and human rights is a false one. "The very point of neo-imperialism is the affirmation of a sane and humane new order." The story argued that "there simply cannot be anything that resembles an African renaissance if it neglects the most basic human rights, including the right for people to freely and fairly decide who should govern." It further argued that:

> To ignore the resonance of anti-imperialism, old or new, in the name of human rights is, on the other hand, grist for the mill for self-serving politicians and corrupt leaders. The time has come for change. The question is: How is it going to happen? Will ZANU-PF resort to the normalization of authoritarian rule after an election it is doomed to win – an election that most Zimbabweans are likely to regard as illegitimate? Where will this leave South Africa's foreign policy on Zimbabwe?

Neo-imperialism debates were sometimes reinforced through intertextuality revealing the extent to which they had penetrated broader societal consensus. The story "Summit on Zim 'coup' crisis stalls: With Mugabe fuming in Harare and Mbeki trying to play down the election fiasco, regional leaders were still trying to break the impasse last night" quotes Mugabe from *The Sunday Telegraph* playing the neo-imperialism blame-game rebuffing international attempts to end the political crisis in Zimbabwe as stated below:

> The *Sunday Telegraph* reported that Mugabe yesterday angrily rebuffed international attempts to end the political crisis and accused Britain of interference. He swatted aside calls from British Prime Minister Gordon Brown to release the results of the elections. Apparently Mugabe flew into a rage during a meeting in Harare with Mbeki, who stopped off in the city on his way to the summit and refused to join the regional leaders [at the Southern African leaders meeting] to discuss the crisis. He described the meeting

> as a show staged by Britain. Sources said that Mugabe rebuffed a final plea by Mbeki to attend the meeting and later made it clear that he had no intention of bowing to pressure and branded Mwanawasa [then Zambian President] a puppet of the British.

The story above lacks authenticity because it relies heavily on anonymous sources making it less useful. Well, the dangers of relying on anonymous sources have already been spelt out (Ndlela, 2005). One fascinating aspect of *The Sunday Times*, March 24 2002 story titled "Don't abandon Africa because of Mugabe," that criticized democracy in Zimbabwe, is that it was an edited version of a speech delivered to the German Council of Foreign Affairs in Berlin by the leader of the Democratic Alliance (Tony Leone) that blamed pan-Africanism for what Zimbabwe has become. The story argued:

> The New Partnership for Africa's Development does not ask for some inferior version of democracy or some insulting lesser standard of human rights to apply in our region or on our continent. On the contrary, NEPAD states: 'Africa undertakes to respect global standards of democracy, of which the core components include political pluralism [and] open, free and democratic elections to enable the populace to choose their leaders.' The travesty in Zimbabwe has violated NEPAD's every principle and commitment to the developed world. You cannot condone Zimbabwe and support NEPAD. The return to power of a brutal and destructive despot is a crisis for Southern Africa…There is a tendency in Southern Africa to reduce all issues to matters of black and white or to invoke misplaced solidarity to trump principles of democracy and freedom… There is a lot at stake in this moment of a crisis. Of course there are several economic implications, but something deeper is threatened: the fundamental principles of liberty, democracy and justice, and the belief in the rule of law and that the law should apply equally to all. We must condemn the violation of human rights in Zimbabwe and its fraudulent election. This will send a message of hope to the people of Zimbabwe and a message of denunciation to Mugabe...Mugabe's regime is lawless, undemocratic, corrupt and immoral. It must be condemned – and it must be seen to be condemned. We support the idea of transitional government of national unity in Zimbabwe as a means of restoring political stability, rule of law and genuine democracy.

This speech is the widest call for the need to instill the values of democracy and human rights in Zimbabwe. Generally, the representation of the Zimbabwean situation by South African Weeklies has been marred by such calls. These kinds of representations, although sometimes done superficially or sensationally, are a glimmer of hope regarding the ideal watchdog role of the press in democratic societies and the media as a custodian of human rights and liberty (Mano, 2005). In cases where the media personalizes and simplify issues, like we have largely seen in this study, where the media concentrates on scandals and the private lives of politicians, then "the media is barking at the wrong things" (Fog, 2004: 2). Instead of doing the latter, the media should have scrutinized the policy implications of personalities like Mugabe. While change in Zimbabwe cannot be solely attributed to South African Weeklies' representations or misrepresentation thereof, it has partially been realized due to the active role of the Weeklies and other newspapers in continuously highlighting the plight of Zimbabweans leading to some form of pressure both locally and internationally leading to some change. The editor in chief of *The Sunday Times*, Mondli Makhanya, argued that he would like to believe that the press partly played a role in reforming Zimbabwe by what it reported. The representation showed that the approach taken by SADC and the AU was not the correct approach. "Had the press not reflected what was happening on the ground, it would have been easy for the world to forget and turn to other issues." Makhanya argued that, for the sake of Zimbabwe, "their story was told internationally, leading to humanitarian support on the ground…the regional leadership also realized that the approach they were taking to solve the problem was not correct which led to attitude change among people in the region." It can therefore be argued that the media generally, including the independent media in Zimbabwe, played and continues to play a big pivotal role in the political transformation in Zimbabwe.

7.7. Conclusion

The South African Weeklies personalized and simplified the situation in Zimbabwe. In the process, they marginalized opposing voices and used ethnicity to sell their stories. In many instances, they downplayed the neo-imperialism discourse as championed by pan-Africanists and advocates of national historicity and liberation solidarity in Zimbabwe. However, neo-imperialism was countered or reappropriated by crusaders of human rights and democracy who were given generous coverage by the Weeklies' representations. Chief among the many issues covered, that would lead any observer to conclusions that they were biased againist leftist discourses, was the elections. Elections warranted the use of representation techniques inspired by Willems (2005) discussed in this chapter. These techniques worked to misrepresent the situation judging by the manner in which complex electoral issues were treated casually and superficially, often without proper context. One salient feature that defined the use of these techniques is how 'othering' was used in the representation of elections. Most stories were characterized by negativity and it seemed as if all stories revolved around Robert Mugabe. Such representations underscore how the Western media represents Africa well captured by Ndlela (2005); Mudimbe, (1988); Mudimbe, (1994); Allimadi, (2002) and Nyamnjoh, (2005). Mugabe is represented as the reason for the socio-economic and political problems in that country. Often, the representation of elections is centered on events as they are 'now' and their consequences without any critical look at the historical trajectories that have contributed to shaping them. On the contrary, the opposition is represented as the 'savior' to the state of disorder symbolic of Mugabe's regime. In representing the opposition, it is assumed that a change in leadership will automatically lead to socio-economic and political recovery. Little effort is made to scrutinize state colonial institutions that have conceived and nurtured a 'tyrant' and how the opposition would cope with such institutions that have monopolized power for more than three decades.

Zimbabwe's elections were represented as a sham and a fiasco with no possibility that they could be, in any way, free and fair. Further, economic collapse and social upheavals are represented as consequences of the ruling party's sponsored electoral malpractices and politics of disorder. There is a narrative thread that runs through South African Weeklies' representation of the

Zimbabwean elections that prescribes the formation of a government of national unity in that country. Initially, the prescription is rejected by both the ruling party and the opposition but later appeared to be a practical option for Zimbabwe to 'regain' socio-economic and political stability – consensual calm. The contention is that South African Weeklies had a deliberate agenda to change Zimbabwe, evidenced by the framework through which they represented the situation. The casual manner in which the Weeklies treated the complex situation in Zimbabwe led to conclusions that the situation was misrepresented. However, such misrepresentations were not deliberate since their worst cases exposed the problems in that country to the international community leading to some forms of pressure from various stakeholders and provided a platform that created discourses of change in Zimbabwe. The latter contributed to the formation of a unity government.

Chapter eight

South Africa will never go the Zimbabwe way

> We tried to treat it [land invasions] mostly from the humanitarian perspective on the impact of farm workers, the impacts of farmers, you know, farmers being driven out of the country, farmers being killed etcetera. I mean, look, there were not a lot of white farmers killed and a lot of people had drawn comparisons with this country [South Africa] where there had been something like 3 500 farmers, white farmers, killed since 1994 versus how many Zimbabwean white farmers? Like ten or twelve or something, maybe as many as that. So from the perspective of violence and murder, it wasn't such a big story but it was politically, as we believed that it was part of a strategy to remain in power and also it reflected here [South Africa] obviously because people, a lot of people, our readers included, said this is what is going to happen in South Africa. Down the line we are going to see farm invasions here sanctified by the government. We heard the minister of land just the other day, basically, as some of his predecessors have also warned, that if white farmers here do not put more effort into redistributing their land to black farmers then we are going to have a Zimbabwe here and it would be worse. (Peter Fabricious[78], foreign desk editor Independent Media Group).

[78] Fabricious. P. (2010) *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

8.0 Introduction

This chapter argues that the economic situation in Zimbabwe is more complex than the superficial manner in which it is represented by the South African Weeklies. Like the previous chapter, this chapter also continues with the exploration of how the Weeklies used representation strategies uncovered by Willems[79] (2005) to represent the economic situation in Zimbabwe. The chapter further argues that economic collapse[80] is, partly, driven by the political uncertainty in Zimbabwe characterized by the lack of strong democratic institutions of governance such as an independent electoral body, judiciary and legislature to guarantee free and fair elections. What currently constitute the institutions are colonial apparatuses inherited from Ian Smith's government that protected white minority interests. With no proper institutions of governance, then the potential for political instability, often witnessed before and after elections, creates low investor confidence echoing monumental democratic and development failures in Africa. Economic collapse in Zimbabwe captures the history of post-independence African states characterized by democratic and developmental failures.

The question that begs is whether or not such failures reflect the 'natural' inability of Africans to reason creatively and independently concerning the pressing issues they are faced with in their social environment. The answers to such a complex question are hidden in the pressure that African countries, especially, those with colonial trajectories have faced while pursuing the desire for socio-economic and political progress under the foundation of democracy and

[79] Willems, W. 2005. Remnants of an Empire: British Media Reporting on Zimbabwe. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* © 2005 (University of Westminster, London), Special Issue, November 2005: 91-108.

[80] In his introduction, Bond (2007) cites several possible occasions that can mark the beginning of the endless economic downturn in Zimbabwe. He actually mentions the common reasons that have been discussed in the contextualizing the study chapter of this thesis. For more on these themes, see Bond, *Uneven Zimbabwe*; Bond & Manyanya. (2002). *Zimbabwe's Plunge*; Bond, '*Transition Dangers and Opportunities for Zimbabwe's Economy and Society''*; Bond, *''Zimbabwe's Hide and Seek with the IMF''*; and Bond & Saunders, *''Labor, the State and the Struggle for a Democratic Zimbabwe.''* See also S. Power, *''How to Kill a Country.''* Atlantic Monthly, December 2003, http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/
200312/power (accessed 14 February 2010).

capitalism. However, the reasons why African leaders employ liberalism and democracy selectively are difficult to establish. Why do African leaders economically embrace individual consolidation of wealth and advocate for personal property rights for themselves but politically reject the redistribution of wealth and property rights for others? (Brett, 2005). Is there any African state that advocates for both economic and political 'socialism?' Even sharp critiques of neo-imperialism simply use the term 'communal,' regarding economic and political liberation, as a score-card to advance selfish capitalistic interests. Is capitalism therefore the antithesis for democratic development in Africa? Or are Marxist foundations that awakened the spirit that saved African countries from colonialism and oppression responsible for undermining remote versions of social democracy in Africa? Are African leaders too greedy in such a way that they have found an idea that moralizes their greed and 'immoral' desire for abundant individual wealth (primitive accumulation) at the expense of their communities? It has been established by scholars such as Mudimbe (1994) and Hountondji (1996) that African leaders have often invoked the idea of Africanism and African philosophy to reclaim the marginalized self in colonial history and memory through experiments such as Julius Nyerere's *ujamaa* or communal belonging, Leopold Senghor's negritude, Nkrumah's consciencism, Kenyatta's *harambee* or togetherness and Mbeki's African renaissance. However, their philosophies have, contrarily, worked to create autocratic systems that went against the letter and 'Marxist inspired' spirit of social democracy in Africa – the very issue that compelled them to struggle for liberation in the first place. Even though these philosophies transformed into something else when experimented they must be lauded for reclaiming the African space, history, memory and conscience. Hountondji (1996: 59) argues that "these authors were locating a solid bedrock which might provide a foundation of certitudes. In other words, a system of beliefs, beneath the various manifestations of African civilization, beneath the flood of history, which has swept this civilization along willy-nilly."

From the above trajectory, it is not surprising that Edigehji (2005) laments the underdevelopment that has characterized the African continent. In his view, the state of underdevelopment has been reinforced by authoritarianism, political instability, ethnic and religious conflict and civil wars. Since attaining their independence, most African countries have been plagued by some form of political conflict and Zimbabwe is no exception. Political crises have manifested in what is now

generally referred to as 'failed states' such as Liberia and Somalia. These crises have occurred in the context of malgovernance and dictatorship. Included here are countries such as Malawi (for most of its post-independence period) and Zimbabwe since the late 1990's. Malgovernance is marked by exclusion of the people from decision making process and the personalization of public resources and abuse of state institutions.

Further, economic instability in Zimbabwe is not necessarily created by the ruling party, as suggested by South African Weeklies' representations, but certainly enhanced through the chaotic nature of electoral campaigns. The chaos is a result of poor land reform policies, where land is utilized as a tool to win political support cultivating sporadic conflicts between white commercial farmers, war veterans and the ZANU-PF youth Brigade[81]. So what was contentious about the Zimbabwean land question and why is it important to establish what led to the popular discourse that land reforms in Zimbabwe were a total failure? (Scoones et al, 2010). The critical issue was that land had to be redistributed to ordinary Zimbabweans to address colonial injustices. It is this process of redistribution or land reform program that met serious challenges, including human rights abuses that were highlighted repeatedly by the media. Images of such abuses have dominated international media but for obvious reasons (Willems, 2005; Ndlela, 2005; Ogenga, 2011). The international media was sympathetic to the white farmers that faced evictions from their land and, at the same time, keen on criticizing the manner in which human rights and democracy were abused in that country. The most common images are those of chaos, destruction and violence associated with 'land invasions' which suggested a total collapse of the economy.

So what really motivated the common discourse in the media that Zimbabwe's economy had totally collapsed? In the previous chapters that contextualized this study, several factors are attributed to the economic situation in Zimbabwe (Bond & Manyanya, 2002; Meredith, 2002; Hammer et al, 2010; Brett, 2005; Bond, 2004; Muzondidya, 2009; Muzondidya, 2010; Ogenga, 2011; Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009; Willems, 2005; Raftopoulos & Jensen, 2003;

[81] See *Mail & Guardian* March 8 to14 2002. "Why have elections? They are colonial: Zimbabweans go to the polls this weekend to cast their votes on their future in conditions that do not favor a peaceful aftermath. P. 14. The story argues that the militia was created in 2001 by ZANU-PF.

Richardson, 2004). Apart from the legacy of colonially inherited debts[82], the nature of elections in Zimbabwe is, by far, largely responsible for the economic 'free fall.' The representation of the economic situation in Zimbabwe by South African Weeklies suggests that Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and Mugabe are the key architects of economic problems. Election politics are said to have led to severe food shortages and high inflation where, in some instances, food has been used as a political weapon to garner votes while operations such as *Murambatsvina*, discussed in the next chapter, have been unleashed destroying the economic livelihood of many urban settlers. These events coupled with the cholera epidemic are perceived to have negatively impacted on the economy.

The representation of the economic situation, therefore, suggests that for Zimbabwe to recover economically, then 'Mugabe must go,' echoing the main findings of the previous chapter on representation of elections (Ogenga, 2011). The representation also echoes the economic and political class fears of the prospects of a Zimbabwe in South Africa that would threaten the prevailing societal hegemony. The opposition is, on the other hand, represented as the new 'Moses' who will take Zimbabwe to the 'Promised Land' economically. The assumption is that opposition victory will resurrect investor confidence given its backing by the donor community. However, economic recovery and development is not simply achieved by creating debt dependent nations (Brett, 2005). In fact, the land question, which is at the core of electoral violence and economic turmoil, should be central in finding a lasting solution to the economic problems experienced in that country (Scoones et al, 2010).

[82] See Bond and Manyanya. (2002). *Zimbabwe Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice* P. 9.

8.1. Mugabe ruined the economy

The economic problems faced in Zimbabwe, just like the elections in the previous chapter, were personalized. The media framed the discourse of how Mugabe ruined the economy (Fog, 2004; Willems, 2005, Ogenga, 2011). In a similar trend, the South African Weeklies simplified and reduced the complex economic situation in Zimbabwe to personality issues. On some occasions, ethnicity was used to explain events as has already been revealed (Willems, 2005). Ethnicity was visible in the two oppositional discourses that struggled for dominance when explaining Zimbabwe's political economy. That is, discourses of pan-Africanism and neo-imperialism from the left and those of human rights and democracy from the right. The core members of the opposite side of the general consensus (the left) were marginalized, in one way or another, in the representations. The marginalized group constructed opposing discourses or counter-discourses, notably, neo-imperialism (Reappropriation) pointing out the serious flaws in the classic conceptualization of democracy. Is there anything wrong with democracy in general or the problem is with democracy in Africa? The concept posits that a democratic system is one in which collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections. It is one in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all adult population is eligible to vote (Huntington, 1991). What is the meaning of this dominant way in which democracy has been conceived? Well, it means that electoral democracy advances social and political rights. However, this conceptualization tends to give greater premium to the 'professionalization of public policy' (a technicist approach to public policy with strong emphasis on political parties and civil society) which has replaced citizen democracy with consumer democracy where politicians battle for a share of their votes making politics a career. Such an approach loses sight of the fact that citizens make a democracy (Thandika, 2001).

It is not surprising that citizens are losing interest in a process that is characterized by increasing citizen disengagement from public affairs and distrust of governments. The divisions brought about by the process foster conflict among citizens, communities and organized interests. Democracy conceived only in terms of a struggle over the distribution of wealth and private

accumulation of wealth is not progressive (Edigheji, 2005; Thandika, 2001). As has already been observed, the distribution of land in post-independent Zimbabwe like many other African countries remains a thorny issue. Land has always been used as a dangling carrot during general elections in Zimbabwe and as a tool for political manipulation. The manner in which land has been utilized has been blamed for the economic problems with cases of squatting and invasions disrupting the general pattern of food production in that country leading to economic retrogression (Zunga, 2003; Richardson, 2004; Raftopoulos & Jensen, 2003; Moyo, 2004). However, to argue that Robert Mugabe is the sole architect of the economic turmoil in Zimbabwe is to take the economic situation in that country for granted and to limit more nuanced discourses that can lead to some level of economic recovery.

The Sunday Times February 24 2002 story "Step by step into chaos" (Meredith, 2002) is a perfect example of personalization. The story blamed Mugabe "for the assault on the rule of law" and for the chaotic economic conditions in Zimbabwe, an argument that Willems (2005: 100) claims does not contextualize the situation. Mugabe is represented as "the bad guy solely responsible for the economic crisis in Zimbabwe[83]." Although Willems' study focused on the British media, it was a very important contribution considering this study since the South African Weeklies followed a similar trend as shown by yet another incident of personalization appearing in *The Sunday Times* article published on 9 March 2008 titled "The life in denial of Robert Mugabe." The story attributed the invasions and consequent economic problem in Zimbabwe to Mugabe. It argued: "it was in fact, the unforgiving part of Mugabe that allowed the land grab and spoilt things not only for the whites, but for all those affected by the damaging policy."

Such accusations lack context and merely convinced the reader that the Weeklies were only interested in personality scandals (Fog, 2004). The truth about the constitutionality of the 'land invasions' is difficult to establish. Willems (2005), for example, questions the constitutionality of

[83] Bond (2007: 1500) argues that "… poor fiscal policies and rampant government spending—including the cost of Zimbabwe's military involvement in the Congo—set the stage for the present economic meltdown. Due in large part to an illegal and chaotic Fast-Track land reform program pursued by the government, the agricultural sector has been badly disrupted." Others—like local economist Rob Davies blame wealth accumulation—''a peculiarly rampant form of absolute extraction''—by the ruling ZANU-PF, in contrast to some like Sam Moyo who posits that the post-2000 land invasions take forward the ''national democratic revolution'.' For David Moore, the Marxist notion of ''primitive accumulation'' better captures that particular process, although Davies is correct to point out that a bourgeoisie is not being created; rather, accumulated wealth is being destroyed.

the invasions due to the fact that it was in a clause that was rejected by Zimbabweans in the referendum. If the land invasions took place within the constitutional framework of the government's Fast-Track program then the main concern should be the manner in which the government implemented it and not its constitutionality as posited by Willems. Furthermore, various stakeholders were involved in the land restitution process in Zimbabwe and all of these stakeholders must be held accountable for the much proclaimed 'failure' of the program. The 'land invasions' were thus not simply a result of the fact that Mugabe is unforgiving and in denial, as simplistically represented in the story "Step by step into chaos." Another incident that reveals the common discourse that Mugabe ruined the economy was seen in *The Sunday Independent* April 9 2000 article titled "Crisis deepens as Mugabe digs his heels – Southern Africa region as a whole stands to lose from deteriorating political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe." The story blames Mugabe for the economic conditions in that country. It argued that:

> The actions of President Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe are increasingly those of a desperate man. Recent violence on the streets of the Capital Harare provides an additional indicator of the likely outcome as the crisis in Zimbabwe gains momentum... Mugabe's failure to develop his economy (or even maintain inheritance) has gone hand-in-hand with intolerance towards political opposition and a resort to radical strategies to garner political support. This explains on one hand, the continued focus on the role played by dwindling numbers of white Zimbabweans in the country, and the recent and continuing farm invasions with government connivance; and, on the other hand, the spurious attack by Mugabe and his cronies on the former colonial power, Britain, and on the role being played by the International Financial Institutions.

The story points out how Mugabe did not maintain the inheritance of a 'good economy' but fails to highlight the economic loot that went with the previous colonial regimes as they relocated to other countries (Bond & Manyanya, 2002). It does not inform the reader of the reasons behind the intolerance against the opposition – some of the reasons have been discussed in the previous chapter. However, the main reason is that the opposition is largely accused of betraying the liberation struggle (Mlambo, 2005). Further, the nuances surrounding land invasions are not

captured even though many scholars have argued that the willing-buyer willing-seller principle was the main obstacle to the land resettlement program (Bond & Manyanya, 2002; Phimister & Raftopoulus, 2004; Mlambo, 2005; Willem, 2005). Equally, the reasons why the IMF was attacked by Mugabe and others like Mbeki are also swept under the carpet (Bond & Manyanya, 2002).

In *The Mail & Guardian* edition February 8 to 14 2002 article "A tale of two rallies" under the international section on page 16, Mugabe is blamed for severe food shortages as a result of the land seizures. The article noted that "thousands of other Zimbabweans have been trying to survive severe food shortages… a symbol of his arid reign." The latter is a symbolic metaphor used in the story to simplify the complexities of food shortages in Zimbabwe where Mugabe's reign is equated to an arid condition. Food shortages are further linked to 'illegal land seizures' sanctified by Mugabe despite the fact that there are numerous other reasons that led to land invasions and food shortages in Zimbabwe such as drought (Waal & Whiteside, 2003; Scoones et al, 2010; Richardson, 2004; Peron, 2000; Ndlela, 2005; Muzondidya, 2009; Mereidith, 2002; Brett, 2005). Other reasons include mounting pressure on the ruling party to 'Fast-Track' the resettlement program, the Lancaster House agreement dilemma and lack of political will from both the British and the Zimbabwean Government that would ensure they allocate the necessary financial support for the reform program (Bond & Manyanya, 2002; Phimister & Raftopoulus, 2004; Mlambo, 2005; Willem, 2005).

Mbeki in Freeman (2005: 151) notes that "Britain did not live up to its postcolonial responsibilities, especially in funding the land reforms in Zimbabwe" (See Moore, 2001a). In his view, "the main burden of the crisis and its resolution belong to Britain, not South Africa." Mbeki stated that South Africa never colonized Zimbabwe and that the crises in Zimbabwe have unfairly fallen on South Africa's lap (Mbeki in Freeman, 2005). A reflection of these broad perspectives gives greater premium to the idea that the negative economic situation in Zimbabwe was not as a result of the actions of one person. However, the highlights of the story about the consequences of not utilizing land effectively and how that can result in food shortages are also credible and on that note, some stories echoed the idea of the negative portrayal of Africa by the media through the discourse of food shortages and hunger. This was evidenced in *The Sunday*

Independent story of 7 December 2008, "Zimbabwe crashes." The story quoted from another story by Reuters (intertexts) to explain the extent to which Mugabe has messed up the country's economy and the necessity to unseat him. The story argued that his "departure from office was long overdue and the food crisis and the cholera epidemic meant it was now vital for the international community to act."

The report quoted the then US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice in a speech in Copenhagen stating how it was past time for Robert Mugabe to leave. The story argued that "the stalled power sharing talks, a sham election… economic meltdown and the humanitarian toll from the cholera epidemic required swift action." It also quoted former British Prime minister Gordon Brown condemning Mugabe and urging co-ordinated international action to help Zimbabwe overcome food shortages and the cholera epidemic. Brown is quoted stating how "in the midst of the political, economic and social crisis, Zimbabweans were still being terrorized by Mugabe's regime." Nick Dawes, editor in chief of *The Mail & Guardian* shared the same views. He argued that Mugabe is personally responsible for the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe: "Certainly I think, we [*Mail & Guardian*] have a view that ZANU-PF as led by President Mugabe has damaged Zimbabwe very seriously." Such personal views reflect the inherent spychological bias in journalism that acts as a big challenge to the journalistic notion of objectivity lending more weight to the contention in critical media studies that objectivity is a myth (Bignell, 1997; Tomaselli, 1996).

Most stories were accompanied by photographs that helped audiences picture the situation in Zimbabwe. *The Sunday Independent* story of 7 December 2008, "Zimbabwe crashes," is a good example. It was accompanied by a photograph of a woman and a teenage boy fetching water from a burst pipe in Harare. The photograph was taken by Associated Press suggesting that it was only sourced to suit the market needs of the story since it was not taken by a *Sunday Times* reporter (see Ndela, 2005). The caption reads: "Grim Situation – A woman collects water from a burst pipe in Harare yesterday, as the crisis in Zimbabwe reached epic proportions, the South African military is dispatching medical personnel to northern Limpopo to help treat the cholera victims streaming over the border." According to the caption one would expect a photograph of

the "South African military dispatching medical personnel to northern Limpopo" instead of the picture of a woman and a teenage boy shown.

The fact that the article "Zimbabwe crashes," claims at one point that "*The Sunday Independent* toured the "townships of Harare and the city" makes it difficult to understand why they did not take their own photographs but instead relied on a news agency's one. The fact that they did not source their own photograph makes the story appear fabricated. The story further represents food shortages as an opportunity for both the ruling party and the opposition to use food aid as a political weapon for political mileage. The story is an example of the many stories that appeared in the selected newspapers expressing the fear of prospects of a Zimbabwe in South Africa and the desire to change the situation in that country as discussed in the previous chapter. Even though several reasons were suggested or prescribed by the Weeklies that could help rescue the economy in Zimbabwe such as the restoration of law and order and respect for property rights, the prevailing view was that Mugabe has to leave office (personalisation). This was well captured in *The Mail & Guardian* March 8 to 14 2002 story "Boom or bust for Zimbabwe: Only political change will put the economy back on its feet" (Robertson, 2008). Several examples of how the story personalizes the economic situation in Zimbabwe are presented below:

> Mugabe targeted for destruction some of the country's most important institutions because they were in his way. He is hardly likely to rebuild them, whereas opposition Movement for Democratic Change leader Morgan Tsvangirai has already given their reconstruction the highest priority.
>
> Only one thing can change this uncompromising view, which is that the man [Mugabe] who engineered one of the most spectacular economic collapses in history should not be re-elected. If the electorate displays the backbone needed to rid itself of the man [Mugabe] widely regarded as a tyrant, it is likely that generous support for the needed reconstruction will be readily – but unconditionally – offered.
>
> Farm occupations and the disruption to production that link into every other commercial and industrial sector will be particularly hard to reverse – so hard that, if he wins, Mugabe won't even try… Tsvangirai on the other hand, will be offered help if he wins,

particularly as his first objective is to restore law and order. He then plans to restore property rights and re-establish market for land.

In some sections of the quoted stories above, the Zimbabwean situation is described as a "political derby" with a crippled economy, left behind by Mugabe (a tyrant), that should be brought back on its feet by Morgan Tsvangirai (the savior). Elections, which are directly linked to land invasions and severe food shortages, are perceived to have destroyed production and ultimately collapsed the economy. Mugabe is solely blamed for electoral violence witnessed in land invasions. Interestingly, Tsvangirai is represented as the only person capable of rescuing Zimbabwe from tyranny because of the envisaged international support he would recieve. The story makes no attempt to expose the weaknesses and divisions that also characterize the opposition (Mlambo, 2005). The story introduces the idea of debt which is ranked highly among the leading causes of the 'collapse' of the Zimbabwean economy. However, Bond and Manyanya (2002) argue that to present the debt problem as merely that of malgovernance and Mugabe's disregard for property rights is misleading. People are led to believe that the debt can be sorted out simply through a bit of rescheduling from foreign friends, including externalizing the domestic debt, once the MDC and Morgan Tsvangirai take power. Bond and Manyanya (2002) concede that malgovernance is a core shortcoming of the ruling state elite, however, they are categorical about giving a more nuanced reading of what kinds of economic policies can qualify as 'sound' and those that don't.

Bond and Manyanya (2002) desist from collaborating in the extraordinary discourse of economists, for whom the violation of property rights spells certain disaster when it means black peasants gain access to agricultural opportunities. An early version of land theft was celebrated by the same family of economists as modernization, as 'Native Land Husbandry,' and was strongly correlated with positive economic growth when white Rhodesians forcibly displaced millions of black people over most of the twentieth century. In essence, the restoration of property rights can be problematic. This is because the land invasions were, in fact, a reaction out of the frustrations of landlessness (Bond & Manyanya, 2002). In *The Mail & Guardian* March 15 to 21 2002 article appearing in the international section on page 14 titled, "More grief for hungry nation: As the economy crumbles, isolated president Robert Mugabe may have

nowhere to turn," agrees that, in fact, land in Zimbabwe has its former owners. It argued that Mugabe could give the soil back to its former owners, but it is hard to imagine such a climb-down. In any case, his land policies are genuinely popular among the rural people and they undoubtedly went some way – along with the intimidation – towards bolstering Mugabe's vote in rural areas. The article represents government policy (Fast-Track program) on land negatively and refuses to accept the fact that the people, who seem to have been convinced or rather benefited from the land policy in rural areas (See Scoones et al, 2010), voted for Mugabe willingly and were not forced. Economic collapse and land invasions are very complex but they have been represented by the South African Weeklies in a very superficial manner.

Additional superficial reporting of the economic situation was found in *The Mail & Guardian* March 8 to 14 2002 article, "Boom or bust for Zimbabwe" where the phrase 'Food shortage' is used to capture the idea that there is a serious economic problem in Zimbabwe as a result of land invasions. However, the article agrees that, part of the problem was drought and not just land invasions as it has been continuously represented. It reported that "Food crisis today is as a result of farm disruptions... The small crops now on the land, worsened by drought, will result in even more serious scarcities..." So why was Mugabe the only one to blame for the crisis in Zimbabwe? It is important to be more nuanced when scrutinizing what really is responsible for the economic crisis as measured, for example, through food crisis in that country as opposed to what the Weeklies reported. Waal and Whiteside (2003) provide an argument that demonstrates the care that should be taken when attempting to reach rational conclusions on the relationship between food shortages in Zimbabwe and economic crisis in that country in general. They argue that the Southern African region as a whole is undergoing a food crisis of epic proportions and it is not just Zimbabwe. They propose that the new aspect on food crisis can be largely attributed to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the region. They conclude, through presenting evidence, that the region as a whole is facing a new variant of famine and Zimbabwe should not be singled out. To makes such conclusions, they use frameworks drawn from famine theory to examine the implications of their claims.

Waal and Whiteside (2003) posit that HIV/AIDS created a new category of vulnerable households and the burden of the disease has reduced the viability of farming livelihoods. They

further argue that the sensitivity of the rural communities to external shocks such as drought and famine has increased and their ability to withstand drought and be resilient has dramatically declined. The Weeklies should have, therefore, considered the relationship between HIV/AIDS, food security, famine and nutrition to establish the real causes of food shortages beyond the violent elections and land invasions rhetoric. For example, *The Sunday Independent* May 1 2005 article titled "Zim Crisis as food, fuel, forex run out," blamed fraudulent elections for economic downturn and food shortages arguing that "just weeks after the disputed national poll returned President Robert Mugabe into power, Zimbabwe was falling further into economic meltdown amid a crippling shortage of foreign currency." However, despite the fact that the Weeklies were superficial in covering the causes of food crisis and economic problems in Zimbabwe, they can be credited for prescribing 'good' measures to restore stability even though some of the measures also privileged right wing discourses of modernity and civilization. Such prescriptions were given by *The Sunday Times* December 7 2008 article titled "There's a simple, African plan that will get Zimbabwe back on its feet." It is worth re-examining how a series of narratives in the Weeklies analyzed in this study linked the economic problems in Zimbabwe to democratic failures evidenced by flawed and violent elections. Like many other articles that appeared in the Weeklies, the one concerning "the plan" to restore Zimbabwe eventually proposed a simple plan – a Government of National Unity, a position that was finally adopted in Zimbabwe. See the excerpts from the story:

> […] Mugabe enthusiastically decimated his country democracy and destroyed the economy…A post-Mugabe Zimbabwe would then need to be supervised by an international authority comprising SADC, the United Nations, and the African Union. The role of this authority would be to stabilize the country, feed the people and restore some sense of order in the society. It would then immediately put in place a mechanism – as soon as the nation is back on its feet – for an internationally supervised and policed election. There is no doubt that no matter the victor in that election, there have to be some form of government of national healing [government of national unity] that will work on rebuilding and re-uniting the country.

The contention here is that, in an ideal situation, democratic developmental states require a political system that is able to accommodate diverse political interests and not one that presumes one party. In cases of conflicting political interests, due to ethnic diversity, then the solution is a unity government. The key point being that the rights of citizens to form and join political parties of their choice should not be curtailed by the state. Of importance is a climate that allows other political parties to thrive and regularity of elections so that citizens can voice their concerns about the social, economic and political directions of the country. Thus the proposal in *The Sunday Times* story above, that an interim government needs to be formed in Zimbabwe to allow for such reforms to take place, marks one of the areas where the *Sunday Times* explicitly uncovered its right leaning veil to reveal its real ideological position regarding the Zimbabwean crisis. However, the question is whether or not the newspaper's call for the formation of a unity government is worth celebrating. It has been argued that the biggest challenge to democracy in Africa is as a result of the fact that it is founded out of hurriedly formed political settlements that leave the leaders with little room to maneuver and transforms them into dictators (Bratton and Masunungure, 2011). The unity government in Zimbabwe, like few others in the African continent, is yet to demonstrate the relevance of such political settlements which are bocoming increasingly popular in Africa.

Like many others analyzed, *The Sunday Independent* story of 7 December 2008 titled "Africa would support tough stance on Zim" (Monare, 2008) represents fears of the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe spilling into South Africa. In addition, the economic meltdown is personalized. The story argues that "South Africa can only ignore the disturbing socio-economic situation at its own peril," using a metaphor of a geographic seismic wave. "Just like a seismic wave vibration, there is a great possibility that it can transcend borders and affect South Africa" and therefore the then acting President of South Africa, Kgalema Montlanthe, is called upon to take action out of the perception that he is continuing with Mbeki's policy of 'quiet diplomacy.'See the excerpt below:

> President Kgalema Montlanthe is ignoring the disturbing seismic vibrations from Harare at his peril. His presidency – the shortest in South Africa's democratic history – could be remembered for its diplomatic indecisiveness... He cannot rely on South Africa's 'soft

> power' to send a message to President Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai the MDC leader. South Africa is burdened with Zimbabwean problems and cannot sing the same old diplomatic tune [quiet diplomacy] of local solutions to local problems. Mbeki waited and waited for a diplomatic solution until the situation brought the Zimbabwean economy to its knees. Montlanthe will definitely get support from the region, and the continent, if he decides to be tough.

Such arguments reflect the general anxiety of South Africans about the prospects of a Zimbabwe in their country. The main anxiety concerned the erosion of democracy and human rights as expressed by *The Sunday Independent* April 9 2000 article, "Crisis deepens as Mugabe digs his heels – Southern Africa region as a whole stands to lose from deteriorating political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe." In this story, economic collapse is linked to failed democracy and the rule of law through quoting the German chancellor and foreign minister in a speech at the South African Institute of Foreign Affairs. It also echoes the fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa and a desire to change Zimbabwe through stabilizing democracy and promoting the rule of law as shown below:

> Our most important task is to support the African countries' own effort to stabilize democracy and to promote the rule of law and human rights. That is the indispensible prerequisite for sustainable economic development, for private investment, for jobs and thus also for greater social equality and overcoming poverty. Good governance is the best guarantee for peaceful development. Moreover, decades of experience have shown that in no other political system can people's creative potential develop so freely.

While the statement above is spot on, as far as economic advancements in African countries are concerned, it echoes democratic fundamentalism by the simplistic manner in which it represents the concept given Africa's historicity (See Mudimbe, 1994). By seemingly suggesting that democracy, as exported to Africa, is the only possible way of freely exploiting the creative potential of people/humanity, it fails to address fundamental problems facing many African countries such as corruption, ethnicity and land reforms. It assumes that economic progress supersedes all these aforementioned challenges and others such as those related to the rule of law and human rights. On many occasions, Anglo-Western countries have supported corrupt and

dictatorial regimes in Africa (double standards) to advance their own interests and have immensely contributed to the institutionalization of corruption in those countries. However, the chief editor of *The Mail & Guardian*, Nick Dawes[84] argues that there is nothing Western about values of democracy and that democratic values and human rights issues are equally deeply rooted in traditional African societies. See the following excerpt from the interview:

> Question: Would you say therefore that your view, whether it's strongly from a South-African perspective of looking at the Zimbabwean situation or the Zimbabwean perspective, are slightly Western ways of looking at the dilemmas in Africa as far as democracy is concerned?
>
> Answer: No, I don't think so. Certainly in South Africa we have, you know, we have … and our newspaper was a participant in bringing about …and is a great admirer of the kind of South African constitutional dispensation. And I don't think that is an exclusively Western dispensation at all. It makes quite complex accommodations with traditional laws and practices and structures for example. So when you say the Western view, is it the views of the Western allies, is it the views of the U.S or is it a kind of a John Stuart Mill approach?
>
> Question: Let me break it down for you. The journalistic traditions that you are following are informed from an Anglo-Western perspective of looking at news and values of news. Maybe, probably, because of commercial imperatives. Is that the case with the *Mail & Guardian*?
>
> Answer: I think it's like a real mixture and that's the richness in a way of post-colonial societies. There is a kind of hybrid quality to what we do and I think that, certainly, there are very powerful Western strands in what we do from a kind of news and news value point of view and in a way that we speak about things like human rights and I think that's fine…but at the same time, we try and make sure that there are African voices and

[84] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

> African views of the world that resonate through everything that we do and that complicates what is sometimes the excessive clarity of the West.
>
> Question: Can you argue that your journalism sort of tries to be developmental?
>
> Answer: I hate that term, you know, it is usually used to apply to people who say nice things about the government so that they could be supported or friendly but I think it's developmental in the sense that it helps us to develop a richer sort of discourse and stronger societies and I hope that it is developmental absolutely.

If Nick Dawes agrees that developmental news is indeed progressive then one would wonder what happened to that epistemological foundation that was fashionable amongst African news outlets. Has it succumbed to Western accusations that such a journalistic tradition is 'ministerial journalism' or 'sunshine journalism' or was it simple crushed under the weight of commercial news content? Or washed away by the flood of history? How is the press in Africa supposed to expose political corruption amongst leaders in Africa without being personal?

A typical instance of personalization was in *The Sunday Independent* November 23 2008 story titled "Mugabe is the tyrant, not the MDC." The story uses high profile personalities (Kofi Annan, Jimmy Carter and Graca Machel) who are denied visas to enter Zimbabwe because they were, ostensibly, on a humanitarian mission but the government was convinced that the real motives of their visit was to support the formation of a government of national unity. As we have now established, the discourse of the formation of a unity government frequently recurred in stories in the selected newspapers. But what about Mugabe's government's traditional suspicion of international intervention or meddlers which often results in them being denied visas? The story represented the suspicion as Mugabe's "indifference and insensitivity to the suffering of Zimbabweans." Further, it reveals one of the few occasions when South Africa utilized its strategic position as a regional hegemon and a sub-imperial power. The story shows how the South African cabinet used agricultural aid to further its desire to see Zimbabwe form a unity government. The *Sunday Independent* reported that "it has been a tough week for Zimbabwe. Earlier the South African Cabinet confirmed that it would only release a promised R300 million

in agricultural aid once Mugabe's ZANU-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) had agreed on a power sharing government."

One interesting feature about stories that personalized the crisis in Zimbabwe is the use of cartoons. For example, *The Sunday Independent* story of 23 November 2008 titled "Mugabe is the tyrant, not the MDC," is accompanied by an editorial cartoon by Grogan showing Mugabe dinning with plenty of food and a glass of wine on the table while one of his advisors reads him a report on the country's food and health situation (see appendix 1.6). The cartoon showcases the ruling party's tradition of playing down death statistics related to hunger and disease such as cholera while it lives lavishly at the expense of its citizens. It also reinforces the fact that government leaders are "insensitive and indifferent." Bulawayo Mayor, Japhet Ndabeni Ncube accused the government of "falsifying death records to hide malnutrition related death. He claims that the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) is working with the registry department to supply false figures to Bulawayo City Council, since recorded burials at the cemeteries do not tally with figures coming from the Registry Offices" (Zimonline in Bracking, 2005: 343).

In *The Sunday Times* July 6 2008 article titled "Animals pay the price of life in Zim," flawed elections in Zimbabwe that brought Mugabe back into power have been related to economic 'free-fall.' The economic situation is represented through the narrative of the plight of wild animals that invokes the discourse of hunger and poverty in Africa. The situation was captured in the following manner: "Chipangali wildlife orphanage… this week barely, had enough meat for its 32 lions, seven leopards, a pack of wild dogs and hyenas. The grain, fruit and other feed for the centre's two black Rhinos, duikers, baboons, Vervet monkeys and kudus have also been depleted." Although the article mentions a whole range of animals and the fact that they are starving, the article is accompanied by a photograph of a man, presumably, an orphanage worker feeding Vervet monkies. The caption reads: "IT WON'T [food] LAST LONG – Food is running out at the once famous Chipangai Wildlife Orphanage." The photograph could have done more in capturing the rest of the animals that were also said to be starving. The use of photographs is usually recommended when journalists want to emphasise the reality of events that happened, however, the choice of photographs to be used is the main concern and the reason why particular photographs are taken and not others (Hall in Gurevitch et al, 1982).

8.2 Market driven journalism

One thing that is common in journalism today is the manner in which the practice is intertwined with the global flow of information that functions as a huge market for profiteering conglomerates. The demands of this market sometimes put pressure on journalism due to its volatility and competitive nature. Journalists are, in many occasions, forced to push the envelope a little bit for their stories to survive this harshness through various strategies such as sensationalism, personalization and celebrity gossip. Apart from these strategies, another notable one used in many media outlets is ethnicity. This section does not dwell much on how the latter was used because its implications have already been discussed. The section however points out how ethnicity is used as a technique for selling the newspapers. The South African Weeklies used race to represent the economic situation in Zimbabwe as a result of conflict between blacks and white farmers. For instance, ethnicity is used in *The Sunday Times* July 2006 story, "Animals pay the price of life in Zim," to account for how the problematic economic situation in Zimbabwe linked to electoral violence and land invasions led to the migration of white farmers to other countries. The article quotes a white owner of a local animal orphanage, Kevin Wilson, to emphasize the fact that white Zimbabwean farmers have fled the country hence the food shortages and economic 'free-fall.' Equally, *The Sunday Times* feature story titled "The life in denial of Robert Mugabe," published on 9 March 2008 supported the idea of racial conflict by likening the perceived full resentment of Robert Mugabe to what Idi Amin did to Asians in Uganda. The story argued:

> His unresolved rage towards white Rhodesians as representatives of British colonizers was endorsed when Britain and the farmers supported the MDC, which is why Mugabe condoned the resultant violence. If he had given his full expression to the resentment of whites, he could have done what the African dictator, Idi Amin, did to the Asians in Uganda.

In the statement above, Mugabe is metaphorically compared to yet another African dictator, Idi Amin through intertexts. The comparison creates a narrative that pities the white farmers against the perceived racist blacks (to explain events in terms of conflict between blacks and whites) simply because the "white Rhodesians are the faces or representatives of British colonizers." The article, however, fails to denotatively compare the atrocities committed by Amin against Asians to the ones Mugabe has committed against white settlers and, seemingly, agrees that what Mugabe has done to white settlers in Zimbabwe, could only be compared to Amin's action in his (Mugabe's) "full resentment." The association of Mugabe with Idi Amin, in itself, has negative connotations. Paradoxically, the story agrees that Mugabe's actions are nowhere close to what Amin did to Asians in Uganda. The article is accompanied by a big picture of three members of the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association, one nailing a sign board with an axe at the entrance of a farm invaded in March 2000, showing how photographs continued to be used to reinforce the discourse of violence.

Although most stories focused on black against white conflict, they marginalized other voices in Zimbabwe since other races were also involved such as the Indians and Coloureds as revealed by Raftopoulos and Savage (2004). The deployment of race and ethnicity has been used to exclude coloureds and Zimbabweans of Indian descent from certain spaces in the nation state and ownership processes. Raftopoulos and Savage (2004) maintain that the important message emerging from these developments is the way in which subject minorities have continued to be constructed as aliens (marginalized) in Zimbabwe's post-colonial discourse about rights and entitlements. In the post-2000 Fast-Track land resettlement program, such constructions saw the largely 'foreign' farm workers and their families not only subjected to intimidation and violence but also further marginalized as a group in land resettlement. Raftopoulos and Savage (2004: 227) state that "the government, indeed, has not adopted an overt policy excluding subject races from its Fast-Track program. However, very few Coloureds and Zimbabweans of Indian descent have been allocated land." Such debates clearly demonstrate that the land question was beyond the black versus white discourse as represented by the South African Weeklies and the international media.

Raftopoulos and Savage (2004) seem to agree that there is, indeed, a post-colonial discourse that constructs subject minorities as aliens. However, the reasons why the South African Weeklies' representation of farm invasions are ethnicized and presented as a black and white or racial conflict deserve careful inspection because such discourses are also responsible for escalating racial tension and violence limiting chances of a peaceful resettlement (see Brett 2005; Mlambo 2005; Bond & Manayanya, 2002). *The Sunday Times* feature story titled "The life in denial of Robert Mugabe," published on 9 March 2008, argues that President Mugabe has an unresolved rage towards white Zimbabweans and hence tolerates the violence against them because they and Britain support the MDC. The story is accompanied by two photographs. The main photograph seems to reinforce the discourse of violence through farm invasions. The other one is a tiny photograph of Robert Mugabe inspecting a military parade at the opening of Zimbabwe's parliament in Harare in 2003. It has a derogative caption titled 'Peasant Son' sourced from a news agency (Associated Press) indicating that it was borrowed by *The Sunday Times* to construct the story since it was not taken by a *Sunday Times* reporter/photographer. The meaning of 'Peasant Son' can be found in discourses of Zimbabwe's colonial history and the dark memory that associated black people with peasantry and savagery (Mudimbe, 1988; Mudimbe, 1994, Allimadi, 2002; Hountondji, 1996). It also seems to echo Mugabe's long natural hatred for white people and thus serves as a mockery of post-colonial liberation solidarity, national history, African reinnaisance and neo-imperialism discourses. However, Mugabe's genuine hatred for the whites is due to the "privileges they have in Zimbabwe as a result of past imperialism" at the expense of poor (peasants) black Zimbabweans, a reality that awakens painful colonial memories (Raftopoulos & Savage, 2004: 228). The narrative seems to suggest that the time was ripe for Mugabe to lead black peasants into claiming what rightfully belongs to them by force now that he has power (indicated through security forces in the photograph). Such kinds of representations were meant to warn the reader of the 'evil' intentions of Mugabe's regime and its militaristic ambitions. The constant negative portrayal of Mugabe by the Weeklies made his call for an African reinnaissance risk the danger of falling short of convincing the public of its genuine intentions.

As already discussed in the previous chapters and in the limitations to this study, representation involves a routinized practice of news production resulting in the news having some common features that are repetitive. Therefore, explanations about the factors that influence the production of news about politics, economic and social upheavals are also bound to be repetitive. It is for this reason that a similar explanation of the factors that influence news construction as representations recur in some chapters. For example, Manning (2001), one of the scholars discussed in the theories of news production, is utilized as one of the sources that explain the factors that influence the construction of news about the political situation in Zimbabwe. He is further utilized to explain the factors that influence the production of news about other themes analyzed like 'economic collapse' and social upheavals. Manning (2001) argues that news is constructed through a routine process of selection, presentation and emphasis which influences the way in which popular issues, events, individuals and groups are represented. News construction involves the routine gathering and assembling of certain constituent elements which are then fashioned to construct a story – Manning's arguments on representation are well captured in this thesis (Manning, 2001; Murdock, 2000). There are certain ideas about Africa that are often used as short-hand for explanations of events unfolding in the continent such as ethnicity or tribalism.

Willems (2005) for example argues that "tribalism, a common feature in news about Africa, has been used to explain events happening in countries such as Rwanda, Somalia and Kenya, without paying attention to the West's own role in the roots of the problem." Hawk (1992) highlights the reasons why African is given negative coverage by the Western media and concludes that it is because it lacks deeper understanding of Africa's historicity. The Western media emanates from a background that has oriented its conscience to a Western history of African history. This selective history, which can be traced back to ideas of *"The Dark Continent,"* is relied upon when reasoning and rationalizing events about current objects of analysis in Africa – the latter being itself an object that has been given little chance to emancipate itself from what it has been constructed to be. Such an entrapment has equally disregarded the fact that exogenous and endogenous variables, that have impacted on what is being rationalized (Africa), are dynamic

and interact with the object in a non-unanimous fashion to warrant a unanimously tight and closed reduction, reading or conclusion (See Midimbe, 1994). Conclusions based on reductionism are responsible for the Western identity of Africa or how the rest of the world has identified the continent. Willems (2005) argues that identity issues are social constructs that are meant to manipulate individuals or objects of analysis. Hountondji (1996: xi), however, points out the necessity to reduce the concept of Africa. She argues that "the concept of Africa is overdetermined, it needs to be reduced – relieved from all those adventitious connotations that confuse it – and restored to its primal simplicity in order to reveal, by contrast, the extreme complexity of the intellectual, cultural, political, economic and social life of the continent." She further argues that for a true appreciation of the internal dynamism, imbalances and tensions and assesses the issues at stake:

> there was need to start by *demystifying* Africanity by reducing it to a fact – simply the fact and, in itself, perfectly neutral of belonging to Africa – by removing the mystic halo of values arbitrarily grafted upon this fact by ideologists of African identity. There was need, in order to deal with the complexity of our history, to bring back the scene of that history to its original simplicity; in order to deal with the richness of African traditions, there was need to *impoverish* absolutely the concept of Africa, to free it from all connotations, ethical, religious, philosophical, political, etc., loaded on it by a long anthropological tradition, the most evident effect of which was to close the horizon, to close history prematurely (Hountondji in Hountondji, 1994: xii).

Representations of Africa, including media representations, are highly blamed for the negative perception of the history of the idea of Africa (See Mudimbe, 1988; Mudimbe, 1994; Allimadi, 2002). How has journalism worked to reinforce such representation rather than challenge them? The practice of journalism involves certain routine practices that work to reinforce stereotypes about the continent. Manning (2001) points out factors such as heightened interaction and faster news cycles that ensure news angles on stories are secured through human interest themes that influence representation. This makes journalists rely on common discourses about ideas and places due to time pressure and the desire to sell newspapers quickly. Human interest headlines

such as "The life in denial of Robert Mugabe," which talks about 'illegal' farm invasions, conflict involving blacks and whites, and exclusive interviews with elite members were a common feature in the South African Weeklies' representation of the crisis in Zimbabwe. Mondli Makhanya, editor in chief of *The Sunday Times* explained the factors that influenced how they covered stories about Zimbabwe:

> The belief that Zimbabweans are entitled to exactly the same rights as South-Africans and every other citizen of a democratic country…that has been a very fundamental thing. In our opinions and topics, but also the story has been a very dramatic story…Okay there are two things. One, it is a very dramatic story. It has been a dramatic story, you know…the meltdown of that country has been the most amazing episode in the history of modern history. We have witnessed the collapse of a functional republic. So our primary influence is just pure journalistic drive that we want to do. No, no, first and foremost, that's all we want to do before we have an opinion on something. You know, I remember some writer, a war correspondent, used to write about us [Africans] as a tribe, that 'we are the last people on the last plane into the place where people are catching the last plane out.' So initially, I mean, first and foremost, we just want to tell the story of what's happening there [Zimbabwe]. I mean, look, it's a great political story, it's a great economic story, it is a great social story. So that's that[85].

Even though the *Sunday Times* editor did not mention race as a big determinant of their stories, it was a very strong theme especially in stories related to farm invasions like *The Sunday Times* March 9 2008 feature "The life in denial of Robert Mugabe." This story is generalized in a manner suggesting that only whites were suffering as a result of farm invasions. Although newspapers have particular policies on race like *The Sunday Independent*, the issue of race appeared problematic as Peter Fabricious noted:

[85] Makanya, M. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. Avusa media, Rosebank, Johannesburg 12st May 12: 00.

> Yah, look, the issue of race is a difficult one, you know. Our paper [*The Sunday Independent*] has a policy of not mentioning race in stories where it is not deemed to be relevant like crime stories. Like, if you look at average crime stories in South Africa, it's not going to tell you that a black criminal killed a white suburban…even if they have it as, let's say a pattern, not the pattern, I mean one of the patterns and you could if you wanted to really be absolutely consistent with that policy. I have tried to report what's happening in Zimbabwe without mentioning race but it's hard to imagine how you can do that without losing the meaning of the story, you know what I mean."[86]

The issue of race was not limited in the *Sunday Independent* alone as explained above. It was a strategy that was popular in the three newspapers. In *The Mail & Guardian* edition February 8 to 14 2002 article titled, "A tale of two rallies" under the international section on page 16, ethnicity is used to give the story meaning. The term "whites" is mentioned several times, (repeatedly) in an attempt to argue that the problems in Zimbabwe are not as a result of colonialism. However, it appears as if the story is at pains to sanitize the colonial responsibilities of the whites regarding the current socio-economic and political situation in that country and the fact that the white Zimbabweans support change through the opposition. Recurrence of phenomena has been established as the way in which meaning about a situation is created (Deackon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock, 1999). Ethnicity is used in the story to discredit ZANU-PF's land resettlement program which is named "chaotic land grab" using quotes from an interview with the leader of the opposition (*The Sunday Independent* May 01 2005:2).

Ethnicity appears again in *The Mail & Guardian* edition's story of 8 to 14 February 2002 "Why have elections? They are colonial," appearing on page 14 of the international section. The ruling party used sponsored advertisements to blame white farmers for the severe food shortages in Zimbabwe. The story argues that a ZANU-PF advert made it clear whom it blamed for the fact that millions went hungry in Zimbabwe. It further indicated that white farmers were "hoarding

[86] Fabricious. P. (2010) *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwe Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

grain" and burning their crops to starve black people. However, the story neither specifies when the paid advertisement blaming the farmers appeared nor in which media to verify its authenticity. The source of the information remains anonymous and yet the story is written by Chris McGreal who, apparently, was in Chinhoyi about 120km north of Harare. It is difficult to understand why he does not quote any sources concerning the ruling party's advertisement. It therefore seems as if it was his personal view. Ethnicity is used in the story to discredit the new settlers (blacks) on the farms as unskilled and in need of rescue by white farmers. It argues: "The new settlers on the farm frequently do want to make the farms work for them, but they often need white farmers' help in ploughing and irrigating the soil." The 'rescue'statement is reminiscent of the old colonial discourse of purifying the natives through Western civilization in the name of education and religion that was, unfortunately, followed by military conquest. It also underscores the prevailing 'settler culture,' a colonial discourse of white superiority[87] that Muzondidya in Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009: 193) refers to. He argues that:

> Behavior of many white Zimbabweans continued to be influenced by settler culture. Settler culture is the great power exerted by settlers, their virtual monopoly over political and legal institutions, their coercive control over the labour and livelihood of Africans, their manipulative efforts of advancing the economic interests of themselves (Muzondidya in Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009: 193).

Chaumba, Scoones and Wolmer (2003: 544) indicate how the black majority regime inherited the settler culture or the colonial discourse of superiority where everything African is considered uncivilized. In land restitution, for example, they argue that the new resettlements were not considered proper or official unless they conformed to a "certain prescribed and modern criteria – in this case, the land-use planning criteria inherited by the agricultural extension bureaucracy from the colonial era." They further argue that the mere fact that the land invaders or the new settlers embraced colonial language, practices, procedures of land use, planning and accompanying regulations, in order for them to formalize their land occupation, they have failed

[87] Muzondidya in Muzondidya & Raftopolous (2009: 193) argues that "notwithstanding the significant role played by many whites who remained in Zimbabwe after independence, many others had withdrawn into their racial enclaves." See Godwin, '*Whose Kith and Kin Now?*. See also C. Pickard-Cambridge, *Sharing the Cities: Residential Desegregation in Harare, Windhoek and Mafikeng* (Johannesburg: Institute of Race Relations, 1988), pp. 1-13.

to escape from the structures and parameters that seek to 'discipline development' and, therefore, many of the myths surrounding African farming have escaped unchallenged (Chaumba, Scoones & Wolmer, 2003).

In *The Mail & Guardian* March 15 to 21 2002 article appearing in the international section on page 14 titled "More grief for hungry nation: As the economy crumbles, isolated president Robert Mugabe may have nowhere to turn", ethnicity is further used to describe the government land redistribution program which is code named the "Third" *Chimurenga*. The story argued that Mugabe "has promised to use it [land resettlement] to complete the third *Chimurenga* – the war of final liberation – from the legacy of colonialism – by giving all white owned land back to the people." Like many other articles discussed in this thesis, the article relies on expert sources, limiting the possibility of alternative voices (McGregor, 1997). The article, for example, quotes Masipula Sithole, a political scientist at the University of Zimbabwe and Brian Raftopolous, head of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Committee (now director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation) both of whom are deeply concerned about the crisis in Zimbabwe.

8.3 Fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa

It is worth noting how myths about the situation in Zimbabwe formed the basis of policy narratives and media debates complicating efforts to find lasting solutions to the problems faced in that country. In addition, the common assumption about the cause of the problems in Zimbabwe prevalent in media discourses and scholarly literature that regime change is the only solution to the crisis worked to exclude competing discourses. The determination by the South African Weeklies to push for regime change in Zimbabwe implicit in the manner in which they represented the situation, suggested the lingering fears that what is happening in Zimbabwe might spill over to South Africa. The Weeklies' representation sensationalized the situation due to such fears and the repercussions were that a very complex economic situation was simplified and misrepresented. In addition, such superficial representations undermined competing discourses around economic collapse and promoted a specific way of defining the problem and treatment recommendation. This was done through careful gatekeeping and sourcing. The latter

ensured that some sources were repeatedly utilized to frame issues. In general, the South African Weeklies seemed to emphasize the plight of the white farmers and their black workers who lost their homes and sources of livelihood. In the process, certain elements were emphasized while others downplayed. For example, while the conflict in Zimbabwe claimed more black lives than white farmers, the Weeklies gave considerable coverage to the plight of white farmers, often identified by name. This empathic framing of the land crisis is probably because white South Africans, as well as other whites in the SADC region and Europe, were also caught up in the crisis.

The fear of a Zimbabwe style land invasion in South Africa was well captured in *The Mail & Guardian* May 5 to 11 2000 story titled "Zim crisis: Our wake-up call." The article argued that the possibility of Zimbabwean-style land invasions in South Africa is inevitable if the emotive land redistribution issue was not dealt with decisively. However, the article was quick to dismiss such possibilities in South Africa, possibly, as a word of caution to the South African audience by comparing the two incomparable economies (Zimbabwe and South Africa). Such expressions indicated that South African Weeklies had a desire to change Zimbabwe. The article argued that:

> Zimbabwean-style land invasions are likely in South Africa in the future unless politicians begin to deal decisively with the highly emotive issue of unequal and racially skewed land redistribution. This is a real prospect, despite the great differences between political-economies of the two countries…The higher levels of urbanization and industrialization in South Africa, the relatively small direct contribution agriculture makes to the economy, and the lower political profile on land reform means local land invasions appear unlikely. Moreover, the prospect of politically inspired land invasions organized by the African National Congress by the head of state is surely even less probable.

The story further compares and contrasts policy frameworks on land redistribution in both Zimbabwe and South Africa. In the comparison, South Africa is singled out as having a clear constitutionally mandated policy framework on land redistribution while Zimbabwe is said to have none. The story argues that the policy frameworks in the two countries display some important differences. "South Africa has a constitutionally mandated land restitution program –

Zimbabwe does not – and the market is supposed to play the key role in demand led program of land acquisition, in contrast to state driven resettlement in Zimbabwe." Freeman (2005: 161) confirmed the fears expressed in the story. He argued:

> Given South Africa's own history of dispossession, and the slowness in redressing extreme racial disparities in land ownership in the post-apartheid period, the echoes of Mugabe's land reforms were bound to reverberate south of the Limpopo[88]. The concern was that land invasions in Zimbabwe might not only touch off similar actions in South Africa but also resonate with the broader mass of black South Africans who have suffered from unemployment, poverty, backlog in social service provision and delay in addressing HIV/AIDS crisis (Freeman, 2005: 161).

While the article touched on constraints faced in implementing the land resettlement program, it excluded other issues in the land redistribution debate in the two countries. These constraints include "inadequate funding burdened by time-consuming bureaucratic procedures." Although the article does not mention that the willing-buyer and willing-seller principle actually failed in Zimbabwe, and hence the state driven resettlement approach, it cites implementation constraints as the reason behind the negative judgment on land reforms in general. The article argues that the selection criteria for land resettlement gave preference to experienced farmers, politicians and wealthy businessmen in Zimbabwe, trends that, it argues, are visible in South Africa. Such superficial reports often repeated in the media are what Scoones et al (2010) dispels as myths about land resettlement as discussed under "contextualizing the study chapter."

[88] Lahiff, E. & Cousins, B. 2001. The Land Crisis in Zimbabwe Viewed from South of the Limpopo. *Journal of Agrarian Change.* Vol. 1 Issue 4. 652-666.

8.4 Pressing for change

The South African Weeklies' representation of the situation in Zimbabwe emphasized the need for change in that country through discourses of human rights and democracy. The emphasis materialized in the form of extensive criticism of the human rights record of the ruling party and sham elections. The latter was countered by discourses from pro-government sources. A good example of government discursive response was identified in *The Sunday Independent* May 01 2005 article titled "Zim Crisis as food, fuel, forex run out." The story argues that "in the midst of a starving population and epidemics, the Zimbabwean government has been accused of spending US $ 120 million (about R 7.2 billion) on military jets." However in retaliation, Mugabe was quoted arguing that Zimbabwe needed to prepare to defend itself against neo-imperialists pushing for change using the opposition. Mugabe had been convinced that liberal imperialism, as advanced by British and American interests, had won public opinion amongst Africans. As it had been expected in the interview with the chief editor of the *The Sunday Independent*, Peter Fabricious, such arguments were rejected. He argued that "the Mbeki administration at Union Building continuous thought that the MDC was, in some way, another Trojan horse for British imperialism… was nonsensical.[89]"

Mugabe condemned the war-like disposition of the new imperialism. He argued that "the United States awakened to the implications of being a sole superpower, joined by Britain as a born again colonialist have turned themselves into fierce hunting bulldogs raring to go, as they sniff for more blood, third World Blood" (*Sunday Independent*, 2005). Mugabe claimed that Britain was attempting to undermine the sovereignty of Zimbabwe by introducing neo-colonialist rule. The conviction of the British and the US that they were indeed capable of changing the world, through targeting 'undemocratic' third world countries like Zimbabwe, made Mugabe believe that he had to prepare to fight back. Such ideological confrontations were heightened by the

[89] Fabricious. P. (2010) *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

assumptions held by advocates of liberal imperialism who assumed that they were, indeed, efficient and well governed and had a divine right to export stability and liberty to chaotic states.

Phimister and Raftopolous (2004) further argue that the exportation of stability and liberty was a measure seen by the US and UK as a counter attack to the neo-imperialism discourse. The two countries play a controversial role in reordering the globe in order to bring the values of democracy and freedom to people around the world. Several factors that contributed to the ideological position of South African Weeklies regarding the economic problems in Zimbabwe have already been highlighted in the previous chapters but, of course, they are all related to competing ideological discourses. The following excerpt from the interview with Peter Fabricious, editor in chief Independent Media Group, indicates the kind of ideologies that influenced *The Sunday Independent* news about the Zimbabwean economic situation:

> There are probably two theories of Zimbabwe economy. There are people who believe that the economic collapse in Zimbabwe was caused by the IMF. Basically, that they said in the late 80's …there are blames on Mugabe, they said that he was spending too much money, he was too nice, he was like too much of a father Christmas, he was giving out too much social benefits to people etcetera to spending too much on education …and so on and run into debt, ran to the IMF for loans, which forced them to impose Structural Adjustment Program as condition to those debts … and that, that caused the crisis of the economy. There are others who take the view that, first of all, Mugabe did not apply the principles that the IMF asked him to apply but if he had done so, he would not have gone into trouble. But in any case, the crisis really was precipitated by the farm invasions in 2000 when: a) because he [Mugabe] essentially destroyed the source of Zimbabwe's export and therefore foreign currency reserves and: b) because it destroyed confidence in the economy by investors and so on. He created a cash crisis with inflation soaring into the unbelievable trillions of percentages and exchange rates the same… and basically collapsed the economy. So it's like a left or right wing perspective. The left wingers blame the IMF which is regarded as the big bogie-man of capitalism and others, most people and me included, would say it was caused by politics or ZANU-PF politics. And I would say *The Sunday Independent* would tend to lean to the latter view... If you look

> around this country now I think most people and I think, you and even me and the ANC government, acknowledges that Mugabe killed the economy… That would obviously colour the way we cover things. We haven't gone around trying to interrogate the IMF because we don't really give credit to that view [left-wing]… that cause of the crisis.[90]

Peter Fabricious confirms how the Weeklies gave credence to the views from the right and simply ignored discourses from the left. When discourses of the latter were covered they often centered on personalities where several people in Mugabe's government were generally blamed for the economic and other crises. *The Sunday Independent* June 26 2000 article titled "Economic crisis overshadows Zimbabwe's poll," featured discourses of the left from Mugabe's comrade and Minister of Commerce Obert Mpofu who blamed white Zimbabweans and the outside world in general for the economic crisis. However, such discourses were overshadowed by the fact that most commentaries and various articles represented Mugabe as the main architect of the economic problems. *The Sunday Times* February 24 2002 story "Step by step into chaos" (Meredith, 2002) argued that "Mugabe and ZANU-PF embarked on a mission to defeat the 'enemy' … on the pretext that his 'revolution' was under threat from an array of forces both inside and outside the country." Peter Fabricious argued that the ruling party employed violent tactics in order to retain power after the formation of MDC in late 1999 and it was no coincidence that the land invasion began in February 2000 just after the ruling party lost the referendum on the new constitution where it was opposed by the MDC. See the excerpt from the interview:

> The MDC became a political force in the referendum about specific articles in the proposed new constitution which Mugabe lost and I think people to this day don't fully appreciate what that did to his own ego and to his own sense of well-being and security. He certainly realized that the people were against him and I think the farm invasions were his response to that strategy, basically: a) trying to win support by giving people farms: b) to change the terms of the debate from being a political debate about competence of

[90] Ibid

> ZANU-PF to rule, to debate about colonialism and the fight against Britain and all that. It was a classic fascist strategy and it worked very well[91].

The Sunday Times April 3 2005 story titled "Zimbabwe: The next step," pushed for the idea of creating a Government of National Unity which was repeatedly rejected by Mugabe who suggested his party's interaction with the opposition would be at the level of parliament only. Mugabe argued that once they had fought in an election and a party had lost and they had won, they expected that party to accept the loss. He questioned the international community's idea of a unity government. The discourse of the need for the creation of such government was constantly being reinforced thematically in many other stories appearing on the three selected Weekly newspapers indicating that the newspapers were in favor of the formation of such a government.

Is the ruling party the only reason behind the crises in Zimbabwe? No, a close inspection of the economic and other problems facing that country show how the opposition was also involved. *The Sunday Times* April 3 2005 story titled "Zimbabwe: The next step" (Msomi & Boyle, 2005: 19), for example, reported that "Tsvangirai was equally combative, telling his supporters that if the MDC won by a two-thirds majority he would change the constitution and force Mugabe out of power." Such remarks show that the opposition equally contributed to the chaotic nature of politics regarding elections. The story justified the need for change in Zimbabwe by quoting expert sources that helped frame the discourse of change. One of the sources utilized was Andy Moyse of the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) who argued that "whatever the outcome of the Media Monitoring Project in Zimbabwe, there was a need for the international community, especially South Africa and the Southern African Development Community, to push for reforms in Zimbabwe." The contention in this thesis is that there is a problematic situation in Zimbabwe irrespective of the manner in which it was represented by the Weeklies. The situation faced by Zimbabwe is similar to what other countries in Africa are faced with regarding politics and elections as it has been argued in the previous chapters. Elections in Africa are always a recipe for conflicts and chaos due to many reasons that have also been pointed out. Njogu (2009: 9) for instance, argues:

[91] Fabricious. P. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwe Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interview by Fredrick Ogenga. Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, 07 April at 8 am.

> Conflicts in Africa cannot be explained only in terms of ethnic mistrust or deep-rooted hostilities. To understand them one would need to pay attention to the colonial legacy and state formation process within ethno-regional diversity. It would also be critically important to pay attention to poverty and income distribution, access to natural resources including land, population density, institutions of governance and accountability among leaders. Of equal importance is the ability to adopt constitutions that cater for the diversity of interests within the nation-state and to reconsider the winner-takes-all electoral process. Insider representation seems to be extremely important in Africa because the state has not been able to rise above ethnic interests (Njogu, 2009: 9).

Njogu (2009) show how quick settlements, power sharing arrangements or governments of national unity are temporary measures that cannot be relied on for posterity. He insists on the need to form long term strategies for the prospects of democracy in ethnically diverse states. The latter has been a thorny issue in the African democratic experiment and should not be taken for granted. "Democracy in Africa would have to incorporate the best in African culture such as consensus building in situations of conflict and review of the constitution to recognize diversity and to reduce ethnic fixation, address issues of representation…and human rights" (Njogu, 2009: 9). The best way for African countries to succeed democratically is to direct their energy into creative and progressive discourses of civilization that takes into account the contextual factors in Africa rather than those that seek to outshine or dismiss Western ideas but still go ahead to mimic them. When such discourses are well established, they can help Africans rejuvenate the spirit of nationalism (nation-state formation), own and transform democracy to their own benefit. The media in Africa can spearhead such discourses if scholars, politicians, policy makers and media practitioners were to empirically test the arguments presented in this thesis.

8.5. Conclusion

The South African Weeklies cited political uncertainty in Zimbabwe as a major cause of the economic turmoil. It is presumed that the latter is exacerbated by undemocratic institutions that make it difficult to conduct free and fair elections. The Weeklies' representation of the situation in Zimbabwe was more prescriptive evidenced by the manner in which they called for institutional, electoral and judicial reforms to restore democracy in that country. The Weeklies' prevailing view is that free and fair elections are prerequisites for political stability, which is in turn seen as a necessary precondition for growth and economic stability. The fact that elections in Zimbabwe are chaotic needs no emphasis. Elections in that country have been characterized by violence, intimidation and rigging. Central to the Weeklies' representation of elections is the idea that land has been used as a political weapon in campaigns in order to maintain the status quo. This is not entirely true since land issues have been central in discourses of the national question which goes beyond mere elections. Scoones et a1 (2010: 5) rightly notes how "some elites – notably politicians and those in the security services – have taken advantage of the situation to grab large tracts of land (and the associated infrastructure) often holding multiple farms under different names." These forms of primitive accumulation show how land redistribution will continue to define the direction of Zimbabwe's politics, especially during elections, but this does not mean that land reforms have totally collapsed.

Although Scoones contends that there is a level of land grabbing in Zimbabwe by elites and politicians, he notes that the level is insignificant compared to the land that benefited poor Zimbabweans, a reality that was downplayed in the Weeklies' representations (See Hammer, McGregor & Landau, 2010). Scoones et al (20101: 3) further notes that "most land today is under small scale farming, either as communal area or resettlement…around 7m ha have been taken over through the Fast-Track Land Reform Program since 2000." Although such aspects of

the land reforms program are positive, the South African Weeklies failed to highlight them[92] but instead focused on sensationalizing land grabs. If it is true that small scale production has presented new opportunities for the land-poor Zimbabweans in a number of ways and benefited them in varied proportions, why did the Weeklies represent land reforms as a total failure? This is because even though the land reform program is slowly but surely being addressed by different stakeholders in Zimbabwe (See Scoones et al, 2010) committed to ensure Zimbabwe regains its socio-economic and political stability, media representation about the program has been guided by negative myths. The latter are constructed by broader discourses of cultural identity that are sympathetic to selective Western historicity of the African continent – ethnocentrism. For example the preference of commercial large scale farming over subsistence small scale farming. The latter has done well according to Scoones et al (2010) in such a way that the Weelklies could have done well to highlight. The press should pay attention to the smallest recorded success in the land resettlement program in Zimbabwe for useful lessons rather than operating as cultural ideological missionaries considering that South Africa is implementing similar land reforms. Although the economic situation in Zimbabwe is more complex than the superficial manner in which it is represented by the South African Weeklies, it points out the political challenges of primitive accumulation, nation state formation and democratization in post-colonial African states.

[92] See a study by Scoones et al (2010), *"Zimbabwe Land Reforms- Myths and Realities."* Although, the study has been accused of generalizing the complexity of land reforms in Zimbabwe, it does provide a useful starting point for understanding the post-2000 land reform program in that country.

Chapter nine

Social upheavals – State failure in Zimbabwe?

9.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the representation of Operation *Murambatsvina*, cholera and influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa by South African Weeklies. The chapter argues that the representation of the social upheavals in Zimbabwe indicate that they were consequences of leadership and state failure in that country. Like the previous chapter, this chapter also discusses how the Weeklies utilized the representation strategies inspired by Willems's[93] (2005) study. The study is re-introduced in this chapter due to its relevance considering how it uncovers how the linguistic structures, as opposed to structural ones, are utilized by journalists to address the pressures related to broader constraints in news production and how this influences representation. Broader political and economic structures present journalists with a variety of constraints that impact news production in a number of ways.

Willems' (2005) concepts such as personalization, simplification, ethnicisation, reappropriation and humanistic rhetoric present a perfect opportunity for scrutinizing two sets of journalistic ideological assumptions that makes news production superficial and sensational – those of time and objectivity. The pressure related to the former ideological assumption (time) is offloaded by using certain linguistic devices consequently helping journalists deal with the demand of the latter (objectivity). This is how it happens; since journalists don't have time, they tend to report 'both sides' of the story caring less about the content of what they say. For the journalists, reporting on both sides means being objective to 'balance' the story. Objectivity is a myth that is meant to address the journalistic concepts of neutrality and fairness when journalists are working under pressure (Bignell, 1997; Tomaselli, 1996). Therefore, any approach that seeks to understand how news on social upheavals in Zimbabwe is represented should inspect the

[93] Willems, W. 2005. Remnants of an Empire: British Media Reporting on Zimbabwe. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* © 2005 (University of Westminster, London), Special Issue, November 2005: 91-108.

linguistic structures and devices used to construct versions of 'reality' such as those uncovered by Willems (2005). The selected South African Weeklies used these devices to represent social upheavals in Zimbabwe in a manner that closed their discursive framework. This brings to the fore critical questions about journalistic ideologies and how such ideologies influence news production within the context of Zimbabwe's cultural historicity and political-economy. The most interesting issue about the Weeklies' coverage of Zimbabwe is that their journalists are not based in Zimbabwe which makes reporting problematic. Owen and Purdey's (2009) work titled *"International News Reporting: Frontlines and Deadlines"* gives a clearer understanding of the ethical dilemma and challenges faced by South African journalists when reporting on Zimbabwe. It also brings forth questions related to local and international consensus regarding democracy in Zimbabwe and the underlying competing discourses about Zimbabwe's future.

This chapter discusses the representation of the upheavals using three approaches. The first approach looks at how the representation of Operation *Murambatsvina* focused on narrating news from the perspective of the experiences of victims[94]or humanistic rhetoric (Willems, 2005). The second approach discusses the representation of cholera and how the Weeklies also focused on the victims of cholera. The representation of the cholera outbreak coincided with political disorder and electoral malpractices sponsored by the ruling party. A closer inspection of the narratives about the outbreak would lead to the conviction that ZANU-PF was responsible. In most narratives, the collapse of the health system was attributed to the disorder, an idea that was refuted by the government. Some stories, like many others, had neo-imperialism discourses that blamed external actors for the cholera which was termed a "biological warfare" waged by the United Kingdom. The representation of cholera linked the outbreak to the "influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa" and expressed the fear that cholera might spill into South Africa through illegal immigration. The latter was framed by the Weeklies as the "influx" to create an impression that the number of illegal Zimbabweans entering South Africa was unbearable and required swift action by the South African government. It was also used as evidence to accuse Mbeki of quiet diplomacy. The influx is perceived to have climaxed at the height of a slowly progressing socio-economic and political crisis from 2000-2008.

[94] The South African press represented humanitarian responses in a manner critical of the operation. Chari in Vambe, (2008). *The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe*. Harare:Weaver: 114-115

There were very few stories appearing on the 'influx,' basically, because the Weekly newspapers are not Zimbabwean but South African and in some editions, nothing on the 'influx' appeared. Nevertheless, among the stories that were selected, it was clear that the migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa was sensationalized. Social upheavals were constructed as the consequences of a failed political and economic system and therefore a failed state.

9.1 Simplification of Operation *Murambatsvina* through narratives of the victims

One fascinating issue about Operation *Murambatsvina* is how it was represented by the three South African Weeklies. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the latter simplified the operation through the utilization of humanistic rhetoric and the notion of the worthy victim (Chari in Vambe, 2008). This kind of representation was meant to secure consent by winning the hearts and minds of the audience in order to divert their attention from the complexities of the operation. In such a strategy, overt bias is hidden behind the mask of sympathy using modes of addressing the reader where victims of Operation *Murambatsina* form the major feature in the news. A good example of how victims of the operation featured in most stories appeared in *The Mail & Guardian* June 10 to 16 2005 story "Out in the cold" (Mutasa, 2005). The story reports how the Zimbabwean government launched a crackdown on 'illegal' houses and businesses displacing thousands. It highlights the plight of the victims, women and children by blowing Chengatayi's (a mother) plight out of proportion. This is done by devoting a significant amount of space to the impact of the clean-up operation on her family and on diverse sections of the society. Ndlela (2005: 73) argues that "the press chooses one aspect (selection), inflate it into the defining characteristics (magnification), and then establish it as the most easily recognizable image (reduction)." See the following excerpt from the story:

> At first she did not believe it. Reality hit when she heard the howls of her women neighbors, as their dwellings were ripped apart by the metal-mouthed machines. She managed to haul most of her belongings outside before the bulldozer arrived at her door… Until they can find somewhere else to go, Chengetayi's family sleeps out in the

> open. Her eyes are bloodshot from lack of sleep. She stays awake at night, keeping an eye on her children and their belongings.

The story is further accompanied by a photograph of a weeping elderly woman and a little boy next to a demolished home with a caption that reads: "A woman weeps in Kambuzuma, Eastern Mashonaland, amid demolished homes and businesses." One would expect the photograph to be of Chengetayi and her family owing to the fact that the entire narrative talks about her plight. Instead, a photograph of another subject is used. In addition, the photograph is taken by a local Bishop meaning it was neither taken by the *Mail & Guardian* photographer nor Haru Mutasa of *Aljazeera* news. Like several other photographs used by the Weeklies, it was just borrowed for humanistic rhetoric to reinforce the argument that the operation affected the poor and the most vulnerable. Chari in Vambe (2008:112) argues that worthy victims, such as Chengatayi and her family, "are given generous coverage characterized by gory details and quoted expressions of outrage and demand for justice." He further argues that the reports:

> Deploy the eye witness-account narrative technique to say what the newspaper reporters or editors want to dredge-up thus enabling the news report to bring out a lot of details about the horrifying experience of the victim. Most of the time, the narrator is probably the 'victim' of the clean-up operation who has first-hand experience (Chari in Vambe 2008:112).

Haru Mutasa, the narrator, combines her report with first-hand experiences of Chengetayi to form a narrative sequence with dramatic and emotional representation of the operation in order to draw the sympathy of the readers. In so doing, the narrative "glosses over the pertinent dimensions of the event or issue" (Chari in Vambe 2008:112). In addition, the fact that Haru Mutasa works for *Aljazeera* and not *The Mail & Guardian* is problematic. It reinforces the argument that *The Mail & Guardian* does not have their own journalists on the ground in Zimbabwe therefore the kind of stories written about that country lack proper context since the paper depends on foreign wire service or correspondents [95](Owen and Purdey, 2009). However,

[95] The lack of reliable correspondent in Zimbabwe makes it difficult for the international media to relate well to the events unfolding in that country. See Ndlela, Nkosi (2005). *The African Paradigm: The Coverage of the Zimbabwean Crisis in the Norwegian Media. London:* University of Westminster. See also Willems, W. (2005).

the *Sunday Times* has a correspondent in Zimbabwe but not a photographer which is even more problematic when journalists want to represent the situation in that country using photographs. Nick Dawes, editor in chief of *The Mail & Guardian* explains the charges they face regarding photographs: "We face a charge that we don't have a dedicated photographer in Zimbabwe. We do have a dedicated correspondent in Zimbabwe but not a photographer so we have to make do with what we can get from the wire and from agencies and so on." The reliance on wire services for photography is equally problematic since photographs play a very important purpose in news construction since for journalists to take a reliable and convincing photograph, they must be present at the scene of the event. Owen and Purdey (2009: 2) argue that:

> few working mainstream media today are proud of the international news output of their own newspapers or networks…but no network, however worthy or informative, no packaged report, slickly produced in London or New York, will ever be able to surpass the impact of original journalism, the discoveries of a single reporter or photojournalist on assignment somewhere in the world…there remains a reverence for those who take the risk to cover the world…their contribution, their rough drafts of history – are valuable to leading historians, are digested by our most insightful policy makers, and do provide a reality check for politicians and office holders who understand that men and women with cameras and notebooks are an indispensable part of democratic societies (Owen & Purdey, 2009: 2).

The arguments above expose the limitation and challenges faced by South African Weeklies when constructing news that was not informed by actually having correspondents or photographers in Zimbabwe. News usually makes claims to reality and therefore, it has to be neutral, objective and reflective of what really happened in the 'real world.' However, news is accounts of what happened and in order for them to claim legitimacy for their reality, they rely on photographs. Hall in Gurevitch et al (1982: 99) argues that:

> News photos operate under a hidden sign marked 'this really happened, see it for yourself.' Of course the choice of this moment of an event against that, of this person rather than any other, indeed the selection of this photographed incident to represent a whole complex chain of events and meanings is a highly ideological procedure. But by appearing literally to produce the event as it really happened news photos repress their selective/interpretative/ideological function. They seek a warrant in that ever-pre-given neutral structure, which is beyond question: The 'real' world. At this level, news photos do not only support the credibility of the newspaper as an accurate medium. They also guarantee and underwrite its objectivity, that is, they neutralize its ideological function (Hall in Gurevitch et al, 1982: 99).

Various kinds of photographs were used to capture the clean-up operation by providing blow-by-blow accounts of the circumstances in which the victims of the operation met their fates such as the one used by *The Sunday Times* June 26 2005 story "Destitution and despair in the new Zimbabwe ruins," (Ntuli, 2005). The story used a readily available source identified by name and age to dredge up the discourse of suffering. The story quoted Kaunye complaining about his destroyed flower stall. Here is an excerpt of the narrative: "My flower stall at Africa Unity [in central Harare] was destroyed and now my house has been demolished. I have lived here for 21 years and I don't know what to do." The story later uses repetition and rhetorical questions to emphasize the effects of the operation and to question its motives. The narrator states that when she went to the market that week, "all that was visible was rubble and scrap metal, with some people rummaging through the debris to salvage anything they could lay their hands on." The narrator explains how she "meandered through rubble and household property, strewn about chaotically, as if a malevolent god had unleashed his wrath upon those people." The story uses repetition to reinforce the discourse of pain, suffering and hopelessness and blames the operation for "homelessness and joblessness."

Similarly, *The Mail & Guardian* May 27 to June 2 2005 story, "Bob plans R3m bash," reported how "residents watched in anguish as police swooped on and arrested more than 9 500 people as part of Operation *Murambatsvina* in Glen Norah Township." It narrates how the police razed tuck-shops to the ground and burned carpenter's stalls "alongside roads leading into opposition

strongholds." Female victims of the operation are identified by name and a description of the nature of the destruction is given using metonyms such as 'metal mouthed machines' that conjure ideas related to body politics and pain inflicted on the victims by state terror. A good example of state terror was reported in *The Sunday Independent* July 3 2005 story, "The horror of Bob Mugabe's final solution." The story is an example of the use of humanistic rhetoric where the government is quoted arguing that it "must clean the country of the crawling mass of maggots" (Mutasa, 2005). This ambitious agenda turned out to victimize the citizens by putting hundreds of thousands of them in the cold. See excerpts from the story:

> The house I spent all my fortune on is gone. My family is homeless. It all happened so quickly. One minute we heard rumors about our house being demolished, the next we were hurriedly packing our family's belongings since the riot police were moving in fast. We watched helplessly in the winter cold as bulldozers razed our houses. The house I had spent four years building was destroyed in the blink of an eye.

Similarly, the story "The horror of Bob Mugabe's final solution" (Jambaya, 2005) quoted from *The Daily Mirror* (intertexts) to highlight the plight of women and children. It quotes Shamiso Makamba, 23, who is living on the banks of the Mukuvisi River with her three children, all under five years old to emphasize the impact of *Murambatsvina*. See the excerpts below:

> Our lives have been destroyed I was living in Joburg Lines [in Mbare] with my younger brother and sister while I made a living selling vegetables at the bus terminus. Now that they have destroyed our houses and prohibited us from selling our wares from Mbare Musika, we don't know what to do next… I have nowhere to go with my children I have spent four days sleeping in the cold. Even if I get a place to live, I do not have the money to pay rent and transport to go to work. My husband is unemployed and I have three children who are all in school…I have been made homeless in my country of origin. Where can I go for refuge? We hope they [the government] are going to do something because this is a disaster.

The story is accompanied with a photograph that reinforces the discourse of human rights, again, from the perspective of the most vulnerable. It compares the operation with the assault during

apartheid in South Africa. The caption reads "A boy goes through the rubble of a demolished business center last week in Chitungwiza, 10 km south of Harare…The assault which is reminiscent of apartheid's forced removals has left hundreds of thousands of people jobless and homeless." Chari (2008:114) argues that the "newspapers deployed the first person narrative technique to provoke the anger of the reader" in order to bring to their attention the kind of government they are dealing with. The government is described as a monster capable of trampling on its victim, while the victims are projected as "good natured" and "helpless." Weeklies' main argument was that state violence against innocent citizens in Zimbabwe must stop but since it was difficult to win local support for a popular uprising certain strategies had to be used. Therefore, the Weeklies created a picture in the mind of the reader of the battle between two binary opposites, that is, "good versus evil" to buy their support. But what were the consequences of such strategies? Did they help generate the necessary public closure regarding the motives of the operation? Chari, (2008: 114) states that:

> The objective of the strategy is firstly, to secure consent by winning the hearts and minds of the audience. Secondly, it diverts the audience's attention from other important aspects of the issue at hand by appealing to their sympathy. Thirdly, it masks overt bias by pretending that what the reader or viewer is getting is 'objective.' Such representations mask the complexity of Operation *Murambatsvina* and create an impression that it was mounted solely to punish the most vulnerable segment of the populace (Chari, 2008: 114).

The simplicity of South African Weeklies' representation was well captured by the general impression that the operation targeted opposition supporters. While the discourse in the stories centered on the fact that it was a strategy to crush the opposition, the reality is that supporters of the ruling party were equally affected in the operation. The story "Out in the cold" (Mutasa, 2005) argued that "the Movement for Democratic change believed the operation was a ploy by the ruling ZANU-PF to punish urban residents for voting for the opposition party in recent parliamentary elections." Such representations are misleading because they lead to assumptions that the motive of the operation was to simply crush the opposition and yet even supporters of

the ruling party were affected. This kind of superficial coverage denied the opportunity to holistically unmask the motives of the operation (Vambe, 2008).

Most stories regarding the operation blamed the government for persecuting opposition supporters for example, the *Mai & Guardian* story "Bob plans R3m bash" reported that "Police on Wednesday razed tuck shops to the ground and burned carpenters' stalls alongside roads leading into the opposition ground." The report suggests that the police had seemingly razed all tuck shops before finally reaching "stalls alongside roads leading into the opposition ground." Alleging that the police only selected property belonging to the opposition is short sighted since it assumes that everyone in certain sections of the city belongs to the opposition. It also defies the logic regarding demographic patterns and human settlements. It assumes the existence of a random and exclusive opposition designated or restricted zone. Human beings interact, socialize and settle in patterns that, more often, defy abstract political or municipal segmentation. Nevertheless, the fact that South African Weeklies simplified and personalized Operation *Murambastvina*, should not obscure the popular conviction that they were obviously conducted violently. The question is whether or not the operation was a deliberate ZANU-PF political strategy to cling to power following real threats from the opposition. Bracking, (2005) argues that:

> The violence is… symbolic and punitive, signifying ZANUPF's determination to maintain power and social control in the face of a population who (probably) didn't provide a majority vote for it, with areas who voted for the opposition MDC the worst affected. The security personnel [sic] moved from destroying small businesses to peoples' homes, making at least 200,000 people homeless… and costing the lives of the weak and vulnerable including two babies who had been reported as frozen to death in the winter (Bracking, 2005: 342).

The arguments above, where people freeze to death, are well captured by the *The Mail & Guardian* June 10 to 16 2005 story "out in the cold" described earlier (Mutasa, 2005) which captures how violent the operation was. Arguably, the state used the operation to terrorize its citizens (including babies) in a dialectic approach meant to instill fear, under the guise of

maintaining law and order, but thereafter subordination (disempowerment). Bracking (2005:350) continues that:

> threat and consequence – either reward or punishment – within the populist nationalist discourse were not hidden, such that symbolic violence was used even while actual violence was in abeyance, in the threat contained in the (mostly undoubted) return of a ZANU-PF government and how it would behave in the post-election period (Bracking, 2005:350).

This strategy ensured that those affected did not risk voting for the opposition well described by Sokwanele in Bracking (2005: 342) below:

> Already, vendors' licenses are being reissued in Harare – but only to those who have a valid ZANU-PF card. Similarly, in those areas that have been razed to the ground, such as White Cliff Farm, land is already being re-pegged, and the sites are being allocated to members of the army and police. Furthermore, people from MDC supporting cities are being displaced into ZANU-PF strongholds in rural areas, where it is quite simple – those who do not support ZANU-PF will not be allowed access to food this winter (Sokwanele in Bracking, 2005: 342).

Seemingly, the government displaced the urban opposition supporters in order to deny them their sources of livelihood. In such a helpless situation and within the context of their 'new homes' (ZANU-PF strongholds in rural areas), the government used food as a weapon to buy their consent (See the cartoon in appendix 1). This dialectic approach used against those displaced was meant to create food crisis among opposition supporters, now residing in ZANU-PF strongholds, with the aim of starving these newcomers into submission by taking advantage of their plight. So what compelled Mugabe's regime to resort to such authoritarian tendencies? Bracking (2005) rightly points out that authoritarianism was most likely with the first regime of ESAP in sub-Saharan Africa. She argues that:

> The ESAP[96] of 1991-96 provided the momentum for the economy to become uncompetitive in key industrial sectors while causing increased hardship for the poor and promoting uneven development. There was a rapid generation of finance capital and an associated finance class, made up of patronees of the ruling party, working in autonomous companies, yet dependent on the party state for their sustenance in key respects (Bracking 2005: 344).

In such a volatile macro-economic environment, the state tends to resort to authoritarianism to protect the political and economic interests of the privileged and those in power position in order to maintain the status quo. ESAP accelerated what Bond (2007); Moore (2001); Moore (2003) call primitive accumulation of wealth that happened rapidly and variedly as "an expanded economic elite positioned itself to take advantage of incoming development finance and new development projects such that the program increased social and economic inequality and widened class stratification" (Bracking 2005: 343; See also Moore, 2001a; Moore, 2001c). Bracking (2005: 343) argues that "authoritarian social formations are consequences of failed markets…and the more general economic and moral bankruptcy of the post-colonial nebula of hybrid liberal democracy." Undoubtedly, no regime would willingly accept the severity of their 'moral bankruptcy' or other circumstances they are faced with regarding its political-economy as pointed out by Bracking and that is why, despite public outrage and protest about the character and conduct of most regimes in sub-Saharan Africa concerning human rights and democracy, it's business as usual for them. Zimbabwe is a good example. The government in that country, in concert with that of Mbeki, devised various discourses to cover up the inhumane actions in Zimbabwe. The popular neo-imperialism discourse and pan-Africanism is a case in point that leads this discussion to the next sub-section.

[96] Mlambo, A. S. (1997). The Economic Structural Adjustment Program: The Case of Zimbabwe: 1990-1995, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publication; Sachikonye, L. M. (2002). 'Whither Zimbabwe? Crisis and Democratization. *Review of African Political Economy.* Vol. 29. No. 91, 13-20.

9.2 Reappropriation

In a display of pan-African solidarity and the spirit of good neighborliness, Mbeki's and other African governments through the AU refused to publicly criticize Mugabe on many issues. The AU argued that national governments were at liberty to conduct affairs inside their territories without outside interference in the context of the Operation that was launched in April 2005 (Graham, 2006). While Mbeki and the South African government was torn in between a tight balancing act of attempts to "show firm disagreements with Zimbabwe policy and keeping fellow Africans happy," Mugabe's government was busy subverting the discourse around the political motives behind the operations (Graham, 2006:123). The ruling party justified reasons for the operations which it considered 'successful.' Although innocent Zimbabweans were seriously affected by the ruthlessness of the operation, such misrepresentations masked its complexities. However, as it has been pointed out already, the selected Weekly newspapers employed humanistic rhetoric, repetition and rhetorical questions to criminalize the operation. One story that demonstrated how the ruling party justified the operation appeared in *The Sunday Times.* The story "Destitution and despair in the new Zimbabwe ruins" (Ntuli, 2005), reported that "service delivery was the reason the council had mounted the operation against illegal structures." The other reasons were that "the black-market economy, which was thriving in the informal sector, was threatening the formal economy, and that the informal settlements had become hotbeds for crime" an analysis that Munhande and Matonhodze (2008) disagree with.

They underscore the contribution of the informal market in the formal economy rendering the government's argument that the black market was threatening the informal economy insignificant (Munhande and Matonhodze, 2008). However, the government could have been right about the idea of crime basically due to the difficulties faced by police when accessing the informal settlements. The issue of informal settlements is an inherited colonial nightmare in which the government's desire to be urbanized 'the Western way' plays itself out. This desire explains government's selective use of Zimbabwe historiography by using ideology only when it suits its interests (See Ranger, 2004). Bracking (2005: 345) argues "informal settlements are

themselves testament to the failure of urban planning to fully escape the path dependence of the colonial era, with housing schemes and industrial development peripheralised to peri-urban ghettos."

In the story "Destitution and despair in the new Zimbabwe ruins," the government argued, through the City Council official, that they lost accountability due to the increasing number of illegal traders who did not pay for service delivery. However, one of the traders, a victim of the operation, Roselyn Machaya rejected such arguments. She explained that the traders had been paying monthly levies for the stalls and questioned why the government took money if the structures were illegal. She further stated that they were allocated the stands by the council and were shocked that they were now said to be illegal, blaming the government for destroying livelihoods. The meta-narrative and the motive of the operation were contested through the victim's plight. Bracking (2005: 342) argued that:

> These 'operations' serve to steal from the poor to reward and resource government uniformed personnel with the spoils of the election: the 20,000 vendors arrested by the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises Development [sic] in May 2005 watched their wares destroyed or stolen by the police, to make way for other traders with party cards. The government claimed they were trading illegally, but most were licensed, including the 3,000 Bulawayo small traders whose City Council pleaded with the Government to respect the licenses it had issued (Bracking, 2005: 342).

One of the issues contested was that of accountability. While the lack of accountability on the side of the government can be qualified due to the chaotic nature of politics and elections in Zimbabwe, it is worth noting that lack of accountability is a more serious issue that needed attention in many African countries. It is a symptom of institutional malgovernance and corruption. The latter necessitated the need to ensure that the poor are out of sight lest it remind the elite of the reality of poverty and underdevelopment, "a circumstance which questions the legality of the modernity and conspicuous consumption of the elite" (Bracking, 2005: 345). Bracking (2005: 345) further argues that:

> Disdain for the poor is partly related to the conservatism that they have rediscovered from the erstwhile white elite: a desire for poverty to be out of sight. It also has a contemporary frame, where the continued poverty of the urban informal sector has become a constant reminder of industrial decline, formal sector unemployment and the contraction of the economy brought on by the retreat of the IFIs since 1998 (Bracking, 2005: 345).

Bracking's arguments show the extent to which the idea of citizenship has been narrowed by the ESAP induced liberal nationalism where the urban poor have been ignored and seen to have lesser claims on citizenship because of the relative gap between them and the 'rightful' inheritors of the nationalist revolution (the landed elite) (See Ranger, 2004). At the same time, the citizenship rights of the white minority have been increasingly denied (Bracking, 2005). The limitation of "radical social democratic and liberal discourses has denied the poor in Zimbabwe a chance to benefit" (Bracking, 2005). From this backdrop, then it is clear that the operation had deeper motives and far reaching consequences that demanded a more nuanced analysis. While the journalist in the story "Destitution and despair in the new Zimbabwe ruins" went an extra mile striving to be objective about what 'really' happened from the government's and victim's point of view regarding the operation, she needed to give the context of the situation. For example, she did not go further to confirm the claims made by her sources. Take the City Council's official arguments that "they had lost accountability due to the increasing number of illegal traders who did not pay for service delivery." The official should have statistically proved these claims and demonstrated how the council dealt with or was planning to deal with the "increasing number of illegal traders" or, at least, indicate the exact number of 'legal traders' in the area. This calls for further desk research, an approach that demands that the reporter goes against the grain of the journalistic ideology of time and its pressures– these are some of the serious challenges facing journalists when constructing news.

Even though such challenges and many others facing journalists today are difficult to address, they should not be taken for granted by critical media scholars in Africa if they would wish to transform ideologies of news construction especially regarding the representation of Africa.

Journalistic ideologies in Africa should be approached creatively in order to provide richer and diverse accounts of the reality of events unfolding in the continent. With the prevailing Western ideologies, the nature of how events are represented in African can rarely outshine their 'ideological banks.' The latter influences how meaning is constructed in news about Africa. In such a context stories such as "Destitution and despair in the new Zimbabwe ruins" (Ntuli, 2005), and many others discussed in this chapter, cannot help the reader establish the truth or the real motives of operation *Murambatsvina* because due to time constraints they are more concerned about the event as it is rather than its historical trajectory.

9.3 Cholera

> I had some very strong reactions and feelings about cholera but, in any way, it was a South-African crisis. In a sense, that South Africa's failure around Zimbabwe is kind of coming back across the border in a way that was quite deserved, if you want to be rude about it, but in a way that was metaphorically very powerful. And that we had failed to erect a diplomatic kind of sanity between ourselves and Zimbabwe, now the reality of the situation in Zimbabwe was literally shitting in the Limpopo River, if you like. So it was precisely the border itself that was contaminated and carried the contamination of South Africa's failure when it comes to Zimbabwe. Of course we tried to report the story as a humanitarian story and as a health story and on those kinds of things. But it was fundamentally a political and diplomatic story.
>
> Nick Dawes[97], editor in chief *The Mail & Guardian*

[97] Dawes, N. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008.* Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. *Mail & Guardian* head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg 1st June 13: 30.

9.3.1 Personalization and simplification

Personalization and simplification were used to reduce the cholera epidemic in Zimbabwe to actions of individuals. A good example of this is found in *The Mail & Guardian,* November 21 to 27 2008 story "Zimbabwe gets sicker: As politicians go on squabbling hundreds are dying in the streets." The outbreak of the disease is solely placed within the context of personalities in the government who are blamed for it. The story argues that "the true extent of the human cost of the stand-off is now beginning to emerge amidst rowing rumbles. The cholera outbreak has ripped through Harare's poor townships, where months of state and local government neglect have left burst sewer pipes flowing." The disease is reported to have spilt across the border "with reports of patients admitted to hospitals in Musina…" echoing the fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa. Similarly fears were expressed in *The Sunday Independent* of 14 December 2008 story titled "Water bomb about to burst: Experts warn that South Africa water crisis needs urgent attention at all levels to avoid catastrophe."

The story argued that "the link between health and the quality of water supplied to the populace [in South Africa] became clear in recent weeks with the outbreak of cholera in Zimbabwe because of the collapse of water purification systems and increased pollution in rivers and wells." While the threat of the cholera outbreak spilling into South Africa was a potential and real health risk to South Africans, they were largely viewed as consequences of ZANU-PF politics by the Weeklies. For example, *The Sunday Independent*, November 30 2008 story titled "Cholera: true death toll is being hidden," diverted attention from cholera to discussions around political decisions on naming individuals who are to occupy cabinet positions and the exclusion of the MDC in such decisions. This was meant to expose the dictatorial character of the ruling party when it comes to policy issues such as the health and the well-being of Zimbabweans and democratic rights in that country. See the excerpt below:

> Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe's president, is trying to hide the real extent of the cholera epidemic sweeping across his nation by silencing health workers and restricting access to the huge number of death certificates that give the same cause of death…The president

has threatened to name a cabinet without the approval of the Movement for Democratic Change, which could see the whole peace deal unravel.

The ruling party is perceived as an obstacle to a peaceful political resolution to the crisis in Zimbabwe amidst the epidemic (Cholera) that has hit the country. Arguably, cholera is represented within the wider framework of failed leadership and state failure. One interesting issue is how the Zimbabwean government applied neo-imperialism discourses and liberation solidarity to almost everything negative that was happening in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean government, for instance, used the ethnic card in some stories to justify the cause of the disease like in *The Sunday Independent* December 14 2008 story "SA pressure for Zim action now." It argued that "cholera was a calculated racist attack on Zimbabwe by the unrepentant former colonial power (Britain), which had enlisted support from its American and Western allies so that they can invade the country." It is difficult to establish how cholera can be rationalized as a calculated attempt of a return to imperialism but it is certainly easy to see the connection between state negligence regarding the welfare of Zimbabweans and the outbreak of diseases such as cholera. The next sub-section discusses how ZANU-PF externalized the cholera crisis.

9.3.2 Reappropriation

The contention in this sub-section is that the South African Weekly newspapers represented the cholera epidemic as a consequence of poor service delivery. The latter is a reality that this thesis would want to agree with. However, the state's counter discourses used to justify the causes of the epidemic (neo-imperialism) in some stories in the three Weeklies could make anyone abandon the previous conviction. A good example of such a story with state's counter discourses appeared in *The Sunday Independent* December 14 2008 "SA pressure for Zim action now." The ruling party is quoted in the story stating how "the cholera epidemic in Zimbabwe is a serious biological, chemical warfare; a genocidal onslaught on the people of Zimbabwe by the British." Even though such discourses were bold and visible, they did not outshine repeated occasions where discourses centred on blaming Mugabe for the suffering of his country's people featured. Such blaming almost transformed to an orchestra of political theatrics featuring two competing discourses with the favourite or dominant one (those on the right) easy to point out. In the contest, the Zimbabwean government was adamant that "it was the British Prime Minister who should be brought to justice and not Mugabe to face persecution in the United Nations International Court of Justice, in The Hague, for human rights abuses".

The Zimbabwean government was categorical that "Gordon Brown must be taken to the UN Security Council for being a threat to world peace and for planting cholera and anthrax to invade Zimbabwe." The cholera epidemic was constructed by leftist discourses as one of the many inevitable challenges of constructing a post-colonial state or nation-state formation in Zimbabwe which would naturally be overcome as long as there is an understanding that it stems from the legacy of imperialism. Cholera was reduced to a minor political problem that requires a simple political antidote. That is, Britain must leave Zimbabwe alone or should do better than conspiring to recolonize the country through creating the cholera epidemic. This position painted a picture suggesting Zimbabwe is in constant struggle to defend its liberation out of the fear of the return of imperialists. However, was the cause of the cholera epidemic worth obscuring or conflating with neo-imperialism? There were bigger issues to struggle for with 'imperialists' like land

restitution as stated by Mbeki in Freeman (2005: 151) which, according to him, was the final stage of anti-colonial struggle. Mbeki had the view that the suffering of the Zimbabweans in this final stage of anti-colonial struggle was inevitable since "the gains in land and dignity will override the short term pain." He further argued that:

> Those who fought for democratic Zimbabwe, with thousands paying the supreme price during the struggle, and forgave their oppressors and torturers in a spirit of national reconciliation, have been turned into repugnant enemies of democracy. Those who, in the interests of their 'kith and kin,' did what they did to deny the people of Zimbabwe their liberty, for as long as they could, have become the eminent defenders of democratic rights of the people of Zimbabwe (Mbeki in Freeman, 2005: 151).

Mbeki saw the human rights discourse as a cover for those seeking to unseat Mugabe or regime change and a way in which richer countries are bullying the poorer ones. However, such arguments did not discourage the Weeklies from narrating the plight of Zimbabweans as a result of the crises in that country. The story "SA pressure for Zim action now," for example, is accompanied by a photograph taken by Reuters echoing Willems's (2005) arguments on the extensive reliance on parachute journalists for stories and photographs about Zimbabwe. The photographs used to represent the cholera epidemic, like those used in Operation *Murambastsvina*, seem to sensationalize the plight of the cholera victims – the most vulnerable (Chari in Vambe, 2008). The photograph shows a middle aged man pushing a seemingly sick woman in a wheelbarrow in the company of a female relative. The caption reads: "Desperate: A woman suffering from the symptoms of cholera is taken in a wheelbarrow to a clinic in Harare on Wednesday. A spokesperson for Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe has claimed that the cholera outbreak is part of British genocidal plot to justify invading the stricken country." This story echoes Mugabe's continuous onslaught on Britain as the main cause of the problems in that country.

In another story appearing in *The Mail & Guardian* titled "Zimbabwe gets sicker," personalization and humanistic rhetoric are further used to create empathy. One of the victims was quoted lamenting the death of a friend due to cholera. Similarly, *The Sunday Independent* story "Cholera: true death toll is being hidden" also used humanistic rhetoric to magnify and

sensationalize the cholera epidemic and the plight of the victims. The victims, often identified by name and age, are quoted to capture the readers' attention and secure their sympathy. See the excerpts below:

> When Munyaradzi Mudzingwa, who lives in Chitungwiza, a town outside Harare, where the epidemic is believed to have started buried his 27-year-old brother, who succumbed to cholera last week, he said he had seen at least 40 other families lining up to bury loved ones... Willard Mangaira, also from Chitungwiza, described how his 18-year old pregnant sister died at home after being turned away at the main hospital because there were no staff and no equipment to perform the emergency caesarean operation she needed. In his village of Chivhu, 160 km away, adults and children alike were now living off wild fruit, *hacha,* and livestock owners were barred from letting their animals into the bush to graze before the people had eaten.

Although the story talks about cholera and related deaths, it magnifies the situation by introducing the idea of food shortages and paradoxically claims that "adults and children alike were now living off wild fruits" which could actually be one of the contributing factors to the increasing number of deaths due to malnutrition. *The Mail & Guardian* story "Zimbabwe gets sicker,' is accompanied by a photograph of two women sitting under a tree next to a Central Hospital. The caption reads, "People sit outside the Parirenyatwa government hospital in Harare." The photograph, like many others, is taken by Associated Press (AP), further confirming the idea of extensive reliance on parachute journalists from news agencies (See Ndlela 2005; Paterson, 1994; Willems, 2005). While the agencies operate globally, gathering news independently from most countries of the world, and selling it to clients in most countries, they have a strong European identity (Boyd-Barret, 2002). These agencies disseminate news scripts that have been subjected to rewriting by the editors who control the channels through which the news are disseminated. *The Sunday Independent* story "Cholera: True death toll is being hidden," was accompanied by a photograph of six children playing in dirty stagnant water. While the story's by-line indicates that it was written by foreign correspondent (Basildon Peta), the photograph came from Reuters. The caption read: "Health Hazard: Children playing in

stagnant sewage in Harare on Friday. Nearly 400 Zimbabweans have died from cholera, and 9, 400 people have been infected."

The caption seems to contradict the story which, at some point, claims that "it is difficult to ascertain the actual numbers of the reported death toll" but, at the same time, quotes a senior official in the health ministry who claims that "more than 3000 people have died from water borne disease in the past two weeks, almost 10 times the reported death toll of nearly 400." The story uses an anonymous source who claims that "even these figures [nearly 400] are an understatement because very few bother to register the deaths of their relatives these days." It further claims that "the health ministry, which once presided over a medical system that was the envy of Africa, has been banned from issuing accurate statistics about the deaths." Such mix-ups in statistics make it very difficult to establish the truth. The only evidence that the story uses to prove that many people have died is the burial ground. People die from many other illnesses especially given the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe and not necessarily cholera (Waal & Whiteside, 2003). Why were the stories about cholera relying on ordinary people or readily available sources? Testimonials from ordinary people are much more believable since they sound authentic and realistic. *The Sunday Times* November 30 2009 story titled "To live in Zimbabwe is to die: The cholera crisis is placing immeasurable strain on a nation already on its knees," is among the many stories that relied on ordinary Zimbabweans. The journalists presented a first person narrative of cholera victims as presented below:

> We found her living on the roadside expecting death. Looking for cholera victims in Budiriro, Zimbabwe's hardest hit township in Harare, my guide had proposed a simple solution: 'just talk to those you see lying on the ground.' Within a minute, we found Spiwe Magwende, lying in obvious pain on a thin mattress in the shade of a bare avocado tree. Last week, her 16-year-old brother Promise Mashaire, lay on the same mattress before he died of the same disease…on Thursday about 150 people loitered around the Budiriro camp entrance, hoping to learn whether their relatives had survived the night. They watched as two bodies were wheeled out of triage and into the makeshift mortuary, covered only in sheets. Like most of other centres, Budiriro had run out of body bags.

The story "To live in Zimbabwe is to die" utilized the idea of death because it fits into the news framework's mythology and the taken for granted assumptions of what news is as far as values are concerned (Bignell, 1997). The metaphors of life and death are combined at the connotative level to construct a discourse of despair that is bound to attract the attention of readers (human interest). Often, death is ranked higher than other events in the news value selection criteria. The latter is used for other stories each day explaining why some stories are given prominence as opposed to others. It is in the process of selection that certain views become accepted as natural and uncontestable – taken for granted. The meanings of the active process of combining signs in "myth making" and the use of metaphors and metonyms should thus be carefully inspected because it is in such meanings that ideologies are produced and sustained (see Berthes in Bignell, 1997; See also Scoones et al, 2010). Further, it is important to note that the Weeklies manufacture products that would sell to the audience and therefore news is seen as a commodity for sale (William, 2003; McChesney, 2000). Mondli Makhanya, editor in chief of *The Sunday Times* mentions a number of issues that influenced the ways in which the newspaper represented Zimbabwe. Among other reasons, he agrees with the fact that they sell newspapers to make profits:

> We are a newspaper, a newspaper sells. I mean…it's not a crime. We are in the business of selling newspapers because one; we tell stories and the stories must be read and the stories therefore must be interesting and must be about topics that are interesting to people. So, whether it's about Julius Malema or whether it's about the ash cloud or whether it's about whatever…yah. We want to tell those stories and we want people to read them. So people often say that… 'You people just want to sell newspapers' as if it was a conspiracy. No…we…that's why we report, we want people to read newspapers and in order for them to read the newspapers people must buy them. We are not giving away newspapers for free [laughing]. But, I mean, it's not as if we do things simply because we sensationalize something in order to sell more newspapers. The story has got to be truthful, it has got to be accurate and fair…yah. Anyway, that's one thing, but

> secondly, the other major thing that drove our coverage of Zimbabwe, was our stand point as a newspaper which were human rights and the well-being of Zimbabweans[98].

As it has already been established in this thesis, the narrative of human rights was invoked across the board by various stakeholders in the Zimbabwean situation. Such narratives appeared to be the driving factor behind the nature of representation regarding the situation in Zimbabwe for the South African Weeklies. However, discourses of human rights are sometimes used selfishly by the West to achieve their own interests. This is evidenced in the manner in which human rights are applied in the West but abused by the West in Africa. A good historical example can be found in how the West rationalized imperialism in Africa, constructed the idea of white superiority and moralized slavery. In fact, the fight for liberation was a reaction to the injustices and human rights abuses committed by the West in the name of enlightening "the dark continent" (Allimadi, 2002). Therefore, one can argue that the struggle against colonialism is actually responsible for the deconstruction of slavery and construction of liberty and democracy in Africa and elsewhere in the world. Neo-imperialism discourses in Africa play an important role of preserving the memory of the colonial past and raise a red flag regarding the possibilities of the reincarnation of this ugly past. This is why it has continuously been upheld to date and some African leaders like Mugabe are very robust about it. However, this does not mean that such leaders are immune to criticism regarding similar human rights abuses by virtue of their liberation history. The reality is that human rights records for many African leaders are also questionable and that is why the civil society is increasingly visible in many countries in Africa. Cases of human rights abuses in Africa by African leaders are well established but questions regarding the relationship between epidemics and state negligence are difficult to address and are not straight foward. Africa is home to most of the world's known epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, ebola and malaria and therefore cholera is not an exception. If this is true, did the cholera epidemic in Zimbabwe amount to the abuse of human rights by the state? Can it be sufficiently qualified as state negligence and therefore state failiure?

[98] Makanya, M. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. Avusa media, Rosebank, Johannesburg 12st May 12: 00.

Well, some stories suggested that cholera actually amounted to the abuse of the right to life as exemplified in *The Sunday Times* article "To live in Zimbabwe is to die." The story used humanistic rhetoric to link the cholera epidemic to poor service delivery by the government. The representation suggests that the ruling party negligence, malgovernance and electoral chaos are responsible for the outbreak of the disease, food shortages and a collapsing economy notwithstanding. The story explains the devastating effects of cholera using quotes from two sources, identified by name, sex and age. The story argues that in May that year Magwende was accosted by some of Mugabe's "green bomber" supporters, who scarred her face with burning plastic on suspicion that she might be an MDC voter. Months later, her diabetic father died because the city had run out of most major medicines including insulin and the previous week, she had to wait for two days to learn that her shy, cricket-mad, brother had died in the camp as chaos joined forces with cholera in Budiriro. The repeated representation of Zimbabwe as disease stricken was meant to highlight human rights abuses in that country. See the excerpt below:

> 'I am afraid but also angry…I am praying but also prayed for Promise [the 16-year-old brother that died of cholera]. I don't know what will happen to me.' Magwende is living the ultimate Zimbabwean nightmare…Gloria Chivendza and her four children scour the sides of major roads for kernels of pig-feed maize, which sometimes drops from trucks. She said she did it because 'we are very, very hungry'… she had not seen bread for more than six months.

The narrative of hunger, disease, food shortages and death fit perfectly with the way in which Africa has been represented by the Western media (Ndlela, 2005; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Willems, 2005; Allimadi, 2002). However, to argue that such kinds of representation are biased is to overlook the real challenges facing the people in that country. Instead, genuine questions should be directed to the real causes of these social upheavals in Zimbabwe and how Africa can secure a better image for herself (Mudimbe, 1988, Mudimbe, 1994; Hountondji, 1996). Even though media representations are partial reflections of reality and potential misrepresentations, they demonstrate that part of the problem lies within the moral fabric of the society itself for the media can shape society just as much as society can shape media.

9.4 The Influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa & cholera

> You know I am being jingoistic…you know in this country, [South Africa] when the government doesn't deliver be it toilets, whatever, people will be burning tires on the streets. Zimbabweans jump the border [into South Africa]… and Botswana and Malawi [laughing].
>
> Mondli Makhanya[99], Editor in chief, *The Sunday Times*.

9.4.1 Personalization and simplification

As it has been established throughout this thesis, personalization and simplification was a typical approach used by the Weeklies to represent the situation in Zimbabwe and 'the influx' was not an exception. The migration debate was reduced to narratives about key personalities both in South Africa and Zimbabwe that are blamed for the situtaion. *The Sunday Independent* April 9 2000 article titled "Crisis deepens as Mugabe digs his heels – Southern Africa region as a whole stands to lose from deteriorating political and economic conditions in Zimbabwe" captures the use of personalization. It represented the influx as a direct result of economic collapse due to Mugabe sponsored electoral violence. South Africa is urged to protect its interests by taking a decisive action regarding the situation in that country. The story also expresses fears of the Zimbabwean problems spilling into South Africa as a result of the 'influx' of illegal immigrants from that country. The story reported that:

> South Africa has both clear direct and indirect interests in making sure things do not worsen before they improve. Directly, Zimbabwe is South Africa's largest African trade partner… moreover, any further collapse of Zimbabwe's economy would inevitably lead to a further influx of migrants illegally seeking work down south. About 100 000 illegal

[99] Makanya, M. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. Avusa media, Rosebank, Johannesburg 12st May 12: 00.

> Zimbabweans were reportedly deported from South Africa in 1998… Mugabe's electoral chances can only benefit, it seems, from clampdown on opposition activity. There may not be a total collapse [of the economy] but rather steady decline. This is both the most possible and the worst case scenario, in that it does not offer immediate promise of change and reforms.

South African Weeklies were very concerned about the prospects of free and fair elections in Zimbabwe and the implications of electoral violence for the South African economy and the SADC region at large. *The Sunday Times* March 20 2005 story titled, "Will SA's poll observers be free and fair?" Questioned the freeness and fairness of elections based on the nature of poll observers. It argued that the elections in Zimbabwe were characterized by violence leading to the massive migration of Zimbabweans into other countries due to a crumbling economy, harassment, torture and intimidation of the opposition supporters. The story further argued that one of the main components of Mugabe's elaborate election manipulation processes had been the massive disenfranchisement of citizens. This was achieved by various means, such as confiscation of identity documents and the stripping of citizenship from Zimbabweans of foreign descent on the grounds that these people would most likely be supporters of the opposition. Zimbabweans were compelled by circumstances – political repression, fear of violence or the collapsing economy – to migrate to other countries. Thus, the representation indicates that Mugabe's disastrous policies had effectively disenfranchised several million Zimbabwean citizens by forcing them to leave the country.

Some stories blamed the cholera epidemic for the massive migration of Zimbabwean into South Africa. For example, *The Mail & Guardian* May 16 to 22 2008 story titled "Zim: AU must mediate" appearing in the comment and analysis section of the newspaper blamed cholera outbreaks for the influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa. However the Zimbabwean government downplayed the extent of the epidemic well captured in *The Sunday Independent* November 30 2008 story "Cholera: true death toll is being hidden," officials accuse the Zimbabwean government of suppressing information. Like the previous story, this story also links 'the influx' to the cholera epidemic arguing that those migrating into South Africa are desperate for medical care. See the excerpts below:

> As the humanitarian crisis deepens, hundreds of Zimbabweans have streamed into South Africa, desperate for medical care. Officials in Musina say their local hospital has treated more than 150 cholera cases so far. The outbreak is a clear indication that ordinary Zimbabweans are the true victims of their leaders' lack of political will…Oxfam warned that a million of Zimbabwe's 13 million population were at risk from the cholera epidemic, and predicted that the crisis would worsen significantly in December when the heavy rains start.

Although the representation of cholera is personalized and simplified in the story and represented as a consequence of the "lack of political will' among the Zimbabwean leaders to address the problems in that country, the story concedes that, after all, cholera infection is as a result of drinking bacteria (*Vibrio Cholerae*) contaminated water and can easily spread during heavy rains. It is superficial or simplistic to represent political incompetence as the only cause of cholera related deaths. Despite the failure of the municipality to supply clean drinking water, individuals should be responsible by ensuring they boiled their water to avoid the spread of the disease. When it comes to issues of illegal migration into South Africa, trends have indicated that ordinarily Zimbabweans have been migrating into South Africa legally and or illegally prior to the cholera epidemic. However, the rate of migration increased due to cholera infections as most of them crossed the border to seek treatment. The migration was based on the perception that they could find better health care in South Africa. There is enough evidence supporting the fact that Zimbabwe was faced with the worst cholera epidemic in the world and the one experienced in 2008 was the worst in that country's history and in Africa (Mason, 2009). In fact, the epidemic has been compounded by the economic turmoil that has dramatically compromised health care. Enough evidence shows that "Zimbabwe is now a source of cholera infections for other countries in the region" (Mason, 2009:149).

The Mail & Guardian story, "Zimbabwe gets sicker: As politicians go on squabbling, hundreds are dying in the streets," also represented cholera as the reason behind the massive migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa. The story echoed the discourse of the fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa. It reported that "the disease is already spilling across the borders, with reports of

patients admitted to hospitals in Musina." Nick Dawes, editor of *The Mail & Guardian* explains that, although the 'influx' was treated by the newspaper in the context of human rights, stories emphasized on the numbers which were usually used in the context that created anxiety about immigration. See the following excerpt:

> There tends to be a relentless focus really on poor people who are here in really dire circumstances, but we have also dealt with how people are making their way professionally in South Africa. Indeed, I can recall myself asking a question in a press conference and writing about how South Africa's skill shortages are being addressed by Zimbabwean migrants. So we [*Mail & Guardian*] try to cover both sides of the coin and we try not to give credence to xenophobia anxiety about the presence of foreigners in South Africa. Certainly, in my view and the view of the newspaper is that, by and large, immigration is an enriching factor in our society. Although I must say I am skeptical of the numbers that we are casually treated to, around three million or four million Zimbabweans in South Africa, which might be actually unverified and seemed to have gained ferocity merely by virtue of repetition… Well, there are sort of different effects. Broadly speaking, for example, the three million number depends on how you use it. But usually I think it's used in a context which creates anxiety about the great flood from the North, people taking our jobs and our social-services and undermining our society and our economy and, like I said, personally, I don't believe in these views but those who believe it, that's the case.

Clearly, the fact that cholera outbreaks and illegal immigration of Zimbabweans into South Africa have been sensationalized and personalized by the Weeklies does not overshadow the need for the leadership in Zimbabwe to take actions to save the situation. In fact, by blowing the cholera epidemic and 'the influx' out of proportion, the Weeklies might have attracted the necessary international attention needed to save lives going by the narrative of human rights and democracy and the discourse of the right to life. Humanitarian support can only be achieved through the knowledge and acceptance that, first and foremost, there is, indeed, a serious problem facing that country. It is very likely that, as much as the leadership in Zimbabwe

downplayed that reality, it was exposed by the critical and competitive nature of the neo-conservative South African Weekly newspapers.

9.4.2 Humanistic rhetoric

Narratives of the plight of those entering South Africa illegally (women and children) were used to sensationalize and magnify the migration problem. A good example was found in *The Sunday Times* edition of 29 June 2008 story titled: "Bloodied and bruised but glad to be in South Africa," (Mthethwa, 2008) which used Herman and Chomsky's (1988) humanistic rhetoric. See the excerpt below:

> While his compatriots were either busy voting or abstaining on Friday, Mkhumbuleni Sibanda beamed despite just having tumbled from a 2m fence. Bruised and bloodied, his wailing four-year-old son in his arms, the 30 year old was happy because he had made it to freedom. Freedom, in Sibanda's case, meant South Africa, which the father of four had reached after walking many kilometers through the night and jumping the border fence... 'We don't know where we are exactly headed to in South Africa. But at least we know we are safe here. The situation is terribly bad back at home. It's better here than in Zimbabwe. It's now worse than before,' said Sibanda. He was among a group of 40 Zimbabweans, including young women, who jumped over the border fence, nine kilometers from the Beit-Bridge border post, at around noon on Friday.

While the story seems to argue that conditions in South Africa are better, and that South Africa seemed to be "the land of freedom," it diverts to arguments about the increasing resentment of South Africans towards African foreigners evidenced by the recent xenophobic attacks. The story also represents border jumping as a risky affair through the discovery of human bones and skulls just two kilometers from where a group of Zimbabweans illegally entered South Africa. Human skulls and bones metaphorically represent death and are symbolically meant to instill fear among those planning to enter South Africa illegally. Furthermore, intertextual linkage of the 'influx' and xenophobic attacks further advances the discourse of fear. At the same time, the idea that Zimbabweans are still determined to enter South Africa illegally despite the dangers, captures the perception of how terrible the situation in Zimbabwe is as elaborated below:

> Earlier, just two kilometers from where they had illegally entered South Africa, police from Musina had discovered human bones and a skull. But Sibanda said he was not overly worried about his safety – not in the nearby forest or South Africa's towns, which have recently been engulfed by xenophobic violence. Sipho Mujuru, 40, from Tsholotsho, agreed that they would rather die in South Africa than back in Zimbabwe. The beatings and torture there were unbearable... On Thursday, the eve of presidential run-off, about 70 Zimbabweans were arrested trying to enter South Africa. They all vowed to return soon.

The story exposes the terrible situation in Zimbabwe through magnifying and sensationalizing the plight of the victim. Their suffering is given credibility through quoting an expert source, Rachel Cohen, head of Mission for Medicines Sans Frontiers, a humanitarian organization in South Africa dealing with illegal immigrants. She expressed alarm at the deportation of about 500 Zimbabweans, including women and children, from a detention center in Musina near the Zimbabwean border without any recognition of their right to seek asylum. *The Sunday Times* article "Bloodied and bruised but glad to be in South Africa" (Mthethwa, 2008) is accompanied by a photograph of Zimbabweans (women and children) crossing the border illegally. The caption reads: "QUEUEING UP – Zimbabweans crawling through the border fence," yet the SANDF maintains there was no noticeable increase in the number of illegal immigrants ahead of the run-off polls. All the editors of selected South African Weeklies indicated that they reported the influx of Zimbabweans sympathetically from a human rights perspective. However, some newspapers appeared xenophobic.

> I think we have reported it [the influx] as a newspaper sympathetically. Nobody wants to leave home and go to a country where you don't know anybody. You take that risk with lions and crocodiles and criminals…kind of like, it's not an easy trip going through the Kruger Park and people are going to rip you off. Nobody wants to leave home. So I mean…like we generally, as a newspaper, reported that very sympathetically as victims of the destruction of the country [Zimbabwe], obviously, you do know that a lot of South Africans did not look kindly on that because there is competition for social resources and that exploded into xenophobic attacks…I mean …like you will find a newspaper

like…there is a change now…a paper like the *Daily Sun* that is very xenophobic. There is an underlying thing there that 'what are these *Kwere kwere's* [not a very politically correct term for foreigners] doing in our midst. I mean we [*Sunday Times*] were very hard on them. It's a dangerous thing for a media organization to play…to become part of the problem. But I think we reported the influx into South Africa as a problem…I mean, it was a problem for South Africa and from time to time we have dealt with Zimbabweans, especially, in our humor column…what will it take Zimbabwe to rise? I can understand that you achieved liberation … I mean *Chimurenga* was a very beautiful liberation. I mean war…peasants… but there wasn't a strong internal uprising on face value like here [South Africa] and I am not being arrogant about it, it's a political reality. There was a very strong, particularly in the 70s and 80s, uprisings that happened inside the country taking on the apartheid government that actually played a major role on the ANC coming in from exile. So it enables South Africans to be able to rise against the authority…so Zimbabweans, I don't think they have a strong culture of the kind[100].

The question here was not whether or not the *Sunday Times*, or any other newspaper for that matter, was xenophobic or not regarding the representation of the 'influx' of Zimbabweans but the manner in which the influx was simplified. Mondli Makhanya cannot convince any reader that his paper was not xenophobic since his paper represented the 'influx' as a problem. There are several benefits of migration that the paper cared less to highlight. A quick common example is how migration in different parts of the world helps address skill shortages in recipient countries and reduces the cost of labour. Such kinds of misrepresentations, that emanated from the negative discourse on migration in South Africa in general, were potentially misleading.

[100] Makanya, M. (2010). *The Misrepresentation of the Zimbabwean Crisis by South African Weeklies from 2000-2008*. Interviews by Fredrick Ogenga. Avusa media, Rosebank, Johannesburg 12st May 12: 00.

9.5. Conclusion

This chapter contends that the selected South African Weeklies used techniques of personalization, simplification, ethnicisation, reappropriation and humanistic rhetoric to represent social upheavals in Zimbabwe (Willems, 2005). The chapter argues that the representation of the upheavals indicate that they are symptoms of leadership and state failure in that country. As far as Operation *Murambatsvina* is concerned, for example, simplification through narratives of the victims is used to unreservedly condemn the operation and sought to direct public opinion to the disastrous consequences by devoting significant space to the impact. This kind of representation was meant to secure consent by winning the hearts and minds of the audience and divert their attention from other important aspects of the issue at hand by appealing to their sympathy. It was also meant to mask overt bias by pretending that what the reader or viewer is getting is 'objective.' Such misrepresentations mask the complexity of the operation which complicates any attempt to understand its motives and consequences. On the other hand, the cholera epidemic is represented as a symptom of state failure in Zimbabwe and South Africa's negligence to help address the problems in that country. Reappropriation is used to trade blames and to create counter-discourses by the ruling party amidst accusation that the cholera epidemic is a result of malgovernance, corruption and anarchy characterized by lack of political will and political order. The representation links the epidemic to the 'influx,' which is also misrepresented through the use of personalization, simplification and Herman and Chomsky's (1988) humanistic rhetoric where the plight of victims, mostly women and children, are emphasized.

The representations imply that social upheavals were triggered by the invasion of white owned commercial farms during elections that were characterized by violence and intimidation. Violent land invasions are blamed for poor investor confidence and the exit of white commercial farmers from the country. In addition, they are perceived to be the reason behind severe food shortages (due to the disruption of farming activities), economic collapse and social upheavals leading to the massive exodus of Zimbabweans. The latter has been a contentious issue in discourses of migration in South Africa resulting in other forms of pressure in that country such as

xenophobia. Although some stories tended to treat the migration from a human rights perspective, they tended to express fears of foreigners in South Africa raising anxiety among the locals. This confirmed the spillover fears expressed by the Weeklies (a Zimbabwe in South Africa). The exodus thus climaxed at the height of a slowly progressing socio-economic and political crisis from 2000-2008.

The most important issue in the conclusion is whether or not discussions about social upheavals in this chapter are enough to classify Zimbabwe as a failed state. Obe (2006) argues that it is difficult to slot Zimbabwe into one or more obvious categories of states but it is certainly not an emerging power like South Africa. If Zimbabwe is described as a state in transition then questions still remain on where to? Zimbabwe can also not be compared to failed states like Somali due to the fact that the state has continuously exercised virtual monopoly of force and it is totally in control of its territorial jurisdiction as evidenced through various operations. The conclusion is that Zimbabwe has failed to deliver "social and economic goods to all its citizens in reasonable quantities, but even that is not enough to bracket Zimbabwe with more obvious examples of state failure where there is clear evidence of impending or actual breakdown in both political and economic dimensions of statecraft" (Obe, 2006: 198). Zimbabwe is perhaps an autocratic state on its way to complete collapse depending on how the state can handle the prevailing circumstances regarding issues of governance, avoid social upheavals such as the ones discussed in this chapter, and reclaim its legitimacy to rule (Obe, 2006; see also Bracking, 2005). Finally, can discourses of neo-imperialism prevalent in Zimbabwe's political-economy help ZANU-PF regain its hegemony to rule? Bracking (2005) argues that the use of pan-African solidarity in protecting African sovereignty against imperialism is a laudable foreign policy but it does not do justice for Africa if such solidarity protects authoritarian state violence. As long as the latter prevails in Zimbabwe, then ZANU-PF's last hopes of regaining its lost hegemony is going to be completely eroded and permanently elusive.

Chapter ten

Conclusion

This study analyzed *The Sunday Times, The Sunday Independent and The Mail & Guardian* representation of the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation, the factors that could account for such representations and the meanings arising. The latter led to the conclusion that the situation was misrepresented. The study looked at three main themes, particularly, elections (under politics), economic collapse (under economics) and Operation *Murambatsvina*, cholera and influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa (under social upheavals). The themes were analyzed from 2000-2008. Although elections were generally given plenty of coverage by the South African Weeklies, they were represented negatively characterized by the absence of conditions that could guarantee their freeness and fairness. A deeper analysis of the textual devices used and the structure of texts revealed that the newspapers employed some of the strategies uncovered by Willems' (2005) work on *"British Media Coverage of the Zimbabwean Crisis."* This revelation pointed out that the elections were fraudulent, full of malpractices and were in no way free and fair. However, the Weeklies represented them superficially and sensationally without contextualizing or historicizing them.

Consequently, the Zimbabwean government used these kinds of representation to create counter hegemonic discourses. The neo-imperialism discourse was used to justify and mask covert government actions such as intimidation, sponsored violence and 'land invasions' during elections. The representation of the Zimbabwean crisis by the South African Weeklies is explored in ten chapters with the introduction laying the foundation for further discussions in the subsequent chapters. The problematic Zimbabwean politics and elections coincided with a series of other economic and social problems that the Weeklies heavily represented and are perceived to have contributed to the crises. The representation points to a direct relationship between the electoral politics, economic downturn and social upheaval in that country. Further, the semiotic and ideological analysis of the representation show how the Weeklies were pushing for regime

change in Zimbabwe in line with the Western neoliberal ideology of human rights and democracy. The latter was presumed to be the necessary condition for social and economic progress without considering the implications of liberal democracy given the African context.

Democracy in Africa has been met with controversy and it cannot be simply implemented through the prescriptive measures suggested by South African Weeklies. Such controversies stem from left-wing scholars and politicians who are driven by discourses of liberation solidarity and pan-Africanism (See Ndlovu Gatsheni, 2009b). The contention is that the 'wars' concerning what democracy entails, whether it is a Western concept or whether or not it undermines what is, essentially, African are open for debate. What is very clear, though, is that cultural relativism has created room for universalism regarding ideas of humanity, values and rights which can be applicable both in Africa and the West and as such, these values are non-negotiable. What is contentious in the Weeklies' representations is how values with an obvious Western origin are given primacy over those that are non-Western, while those that seem to have a commonality are applied selectively when dealing with global affairs. For example, African states have often criticized the West of double standards where human rights discourses are applied selectively to benefit the West's political and economic interests. A good example is how the West supports dictatorial regimes in Africa to advance their interest while demonizing others who refuse to be kowtowed. One would wonder why the West is very critical of Mugabe but mute on leaders such as Museveni of Uganda. Why did the West suddenly fallout on Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt? It is because the leaders ceased to serve their interests? Is the media simply designed to reinforce ethnocentrism and Western agenda?

This thesis used critical political-economy of the media, cultural studies and theories of news production as the theoretical framework and semiotics (ideological analysis) as the methodological approach to answer such problematic questions. The contention is that the representation of the Zimbabwean elections by the selected South African Weeklies was superficial, sensational and amounted to misrepresentation. However, this conclusion is not meant to undermine the role the Weeklies played in creating the necessary pressure needed for reforms. The South African Weeklies sensationalized the events in Zimbabwe and the plight of ordinary Zimbabweans attracting both local and international attention. The general consensus in

the public discourse was that something needs to be done to save Zimbabwe from the multiple crises. Even though this thesis shares the same position, it problematizes the casual manner in which events unfolding in that country were represented by the South African Weeklies. Therefore, it was important to point out what characterized the Weeklies' superficial and sensational representation of the situation in order not to be accused of being superficial and sensational and yet that is the very object of criticism in the thesis.

The selected South African Weeklies were characterized by 'othering' and negative stereotypes about President Robert Mugabe in an attempt to explain aspects of social reality regarding events unfolding in Zimbabwe. Even though such representations underscore the common narrative that define the Western media representation of events unfolding in Africa, Africa is generally misrepresented or represented negatively based on a number of genuine negative events that usually unfold in the continent. Whether or not these representations accurately capture the 'reality' of those events or misrepresents them is the problem. For example, Mugabe is represented as a tyrant, anti-white dictator solely responsible for the socio-economic and political problems in that country without giving reasons that might have led to his character change given that the same person was celebrated by the West in the 1980s and early 1990s and even awarded honorary degrees from Western institutions of higher learning. Has the West suddenly given up on Mugabe? This question has largely been addressed in this thesis, especially, under the neo-imperialism debates.

Among many issues that were represented by the Weeklies, one that received extensive coverage is the Zimbabwean elections. Often, the representation of elections was centered on events as they were 'then' and their consequences without any critical look at the historical trajectories that have contributed in shaping them – this amounted to misrepresentation with personalization and simplification prominently featuring. ZANU-PF was given bad press while the opposition was represented as the 'savior' to the state of disorder, rot and decay that has been symbolic of Mugabe's reign. It is assumed that change in leadership will automatically lead to socio-economic and political recovery in Zimbabwe. Little effort is made to scrutinize state colonial institutions that have conceived and nurtured a 'tyrant' and how the opposition would cope with such institutions that have monopolized power for many years. Zimbabwe's elections were

therefore represented as a sham and a fiasco with no possibility that they can, in any way, be free and fair. Apart from the fact that such representations reflected how many South Africans and Zimbabweans perceive the elections as flawed, they 'reflected' or spoke to the 'reality' regarding democratic elections in Zimbabwe leading to conclusions that pointed out serious problems in that country.

Similarly, economic collapse and social upheaval, characterized by high inflation and food shortages on one hand and Operation *Murambatsvina* and Cholera on the other respectively, were represented as consequences of the ruling party's sponsored electoral malpractices and politics of disorder. The South African Weeklies did not bother to give historical accounts of events that might have led to economic problems even though various scholars have discussed the causes of the economic crisis. Most of the scholars utilized in this study contend that economic collapse is, partly, driven by the political uncertainty in Zimbabwe characterized by the lack of strong democratic institutions of governance to guarantee free and fair elections. What currently constitute the institutions are colonial apparatuses that protected partisan interests. The Weeklies' representation, however sensational or superficial, pointed out these institutional weaknesses that often increased the potential for political instability witnessed before and after elections. The Weeklies had the view that such institutions must change by, first and foremost, unseating the obstacle (Robert Mugabe). The latter was seen as the cause of economic problems in Zimbabwe prompting this thesis to point out the dangers of personalizing the crises. The causes of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe should be understood beyond personalities since several other issues such as colonial legacies, election violence and land invasions are also, partly, responsible for the 'economic free-fall.'

Characteristically, the representation of the situation puts Mugabe at the epicenter of the socio-economic and political problems in Zimbabwe and further links electoral politics to severe food shortages and high inflation. In some instances, the representation indicates how food is used for political mileage while operations such as *Murambatsvina* are used to disenfranchise opposition votes. Such representations lack nuance considering the various reasons other than politics that led to food shortages as established in Mason's (2009) study. The Weeklies had the view that violence during election, land invasions and unnecessary operations have negatively impacted on

the economy and Mugabe was to blame. The Weeklies therefore omitted the discourse of colonization and colonial legacy well captured by neo-imperialism from the left. The representation further suggests that for Zimbabwe to recover economically, then 'Mugabe must go' – a conviction that expressed the economic and political class fear of the prospects of "a Zimbabwe in South Africa." The latter would threaten the prevailing societal hegemony of the ruling ANC and harm South Africa's ambition and strategic positioning as a regional and continental hegemon. As far as social upheavals are concerned, operation *Murambatsvina* was equally represented as a strategy used by the ruling party to remain in power and a consequence of failed elections. The operation was represented from the perspective of the experiences of victims. It was understood as a violation of human rights. The positive aspect of the representation of the Operation was the fact that it attracted public sympathy which led to humanitarian responses from different stakeholders. The Weeklies attracted responsive action both from within and outside Zimbabwe by highlighting the plight of the victims of the operation. However, the manner in which the operation was simplified obscured its inherent complexities and made the audience lose the opportunity to understand its real motives.

The entire textual analysis examined the narrative genres such as cartoons, photographs and captions used to represent the situation. It also looked at textual devices, specifically: headlines, metaphors, analogies and intertexts in selected stories to thematically unpack their meanings. The analysis revealed that the representation was done using icons and symbols that capture the indexical relationship of the existence of a problematic situation in that country. The narrative genres and textual devices used suggest that the problematic situation in that country is as a result of decaying democracy due to dictatorship and tyranny courtesy of Robert Mugabe. There is a common narrative thread that runs across the politics, economics and social upheaval themes and their sub-themes that suggests the need for regime change to restore democracy and the rule of law in Zimbabwe. This restoration should, first and foremost, guarantee that property and other human rights, including press freedom and freedom of expression are respected. The argument from the semiotic analysis of the Weeklies' representation of the situation is that for Zimbabwe to recover, socio-economically and politically, Mugabe must go.

The master narrative is a human rights Western-liberal one, basically, because newspapers in liberal democracy act as watchdogs and guard against the abuse of power by the state. This is meant to protect the 'rights' of the citizens. The AVUSA media group, for example, has a media pledge that guarantees freedom of expression and the rights of the public to be informed. Going by such a pledge, the Weeklies pointed out 'universal' human rights concerns in Zimbabwe explicated in state sponsored violence as strongly attested in the scholarly literature in this thesis. In other instances, the violation of human rights was witnessed in the provision of basic services like health and education, access to food, housing and clean water. This shows that there are genuine human rights concerns in Zimbabwe that require attention. The central thesis regarding debates on human rights in the Weeklies' representation is the manner in which property rights were ethnicised. For example, the plight of white farmers affected by land invasions was sensationalized while that of farm workers was not emphasized. The acquisition of property was reduced to a black-against-white racial discourse.

The most compelling issue, though, is how the South African Weeklies constructed a human rights agenda that led to an overwhelming push for change in that country from within and outside Zimbabwe leading to the formation of a unity government. But is the latter sufficient to conclude that Zimbabwe has indeed changed? If the answer to this question is yes, then what are the implications of the change? This thesis wants to give a critical appraisal of what constitutes 'change' as represented by the South African Weeklies. The 'change' pointed out by the Weeklies meant toeing the line regarding democracy as spearheaded by Anglo-American states and their allies, as they seek to restructure the world into a new order (NWO). This kind of change that seeks to help rogue states find their way back into 'enlightenment,' civilization and global economy has been controversial as argued in this thesis. Genuine changes should concern those that emphasise the idea that the difference in cultural values is an empirical fact and civilizations have different sets of indicators or measures regarding such values. If this idea is acceptable, then it means genuine changes should constitute those that accommodate cultural values in Africa as distinct from Western ones and establish how such values could be keenly integrated in the democratic project in the continent to suit the local context. If these concerns are taken for granted, then democracy is in danger of losing the crucial grassroots support and goodwill that is necessary for success in Africa. Otherwise, democracy might transform into

something else as evidenced by the worrying dictatorial trend of political systems in some countries in Africa like Zimbabwe and Uganda. This is why it is rather expensive and difficult to pin-point countries that are purely and genuinely democratic in the continent and not even the perfect models of democracy in Africa, such as South Africa, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria can foot the bill.

While democracy as an ideology is universally fashionable due to its human rights underpinning, it may be wrong for the West to perceive their standards as the benchmark for progress regarding the concept. This is due to the fact that democracy has been experienced variedly in different parts of the world and, not least, in African countries. Similarly, there are well established occasions where the West has failed to uphold human rights when it comes to protecting their own interests. One reason why democratic reforms are dragging in Africa is because of their ahistoric nature and failure to take into consideration the uniqueness of socio-cultural and political values on the continent that sometimes act as obstacles to change. The media has often taken these prevalent values in Africa for granted making democratic change in the continent elusive. For example, the concept of freedom in neo-liberal democracy as exported to Africa is tied to capitalism and the idea of consumerism and economic growth. This concept has swept other serious concerns in Africa under the carpet where the buck has been passed on critical issues such as ethnicity, corruption, nepotism and, most importantly, land reforms. This has been done by various political leaders in order to maintain a particular socio-economic dispensation at the expense of fundamental problems affecting poor people. The negligence also applies to the incumbent black majority regimes in Africa that have successfully used neo-liberal democracy as raw material for constructing machineries of tyranny and dictatorships and for primitive accumulation of wealth.

It is no wonder that, apart from how South African Weeklies represented the situation, the ruling party in Zimbabwe created counter discourses that contested the ‘reality’ of events in that country in protest. Such counter-hegemonic discourses are crucial in trying to understand the decade long problematic situation in Zimbabwe. Understanding the situation calls for going beyond the ruling party versus opposition discourse (the demands of objectivity) with regard to

the utilization of sources. It calls for desk research, a thorough investment in issues of journalism in Africa and its role in democratization and development. It also calls for the answering of tough questions such as; whether or not there is anything like African journalism. The universalizing concept of journalism often comes with values that don't consider the historical trajectories with reference to Africa and needs rethinking to suit the African context. What happened to the ideology of "developmental journalism" that seemed to have set important precedence on the pressing issues in the continent? Did it just play the role of forging nationalism and nation-state formation before its death? Did it contribute to the realization of nationalism and modernity in Africa in anyway and therefore it did not have any reason to exist? Most importantly, why was it dismissed by the West as sunshine/ minister journalism and sensationalism? The latter damaged the image of an approach that could have set an important epistemological precedence for the nature of journalism that should be practiced in Africa for democratization and development based on the universalism of human rights and liberty – In an interview with Nick Dawes, editor in chief of the *Mail & Guardian,* a question was posed about developmental journalism. Nick Dawes actually agreed that their journalism was absolutely developmental, indeed, which means that the ideology is, perhaps, still alive in the continent and should be natured. Mkandawire Thandika (2001:289) in his essay titled "*Thinking About Democratic Developmental States in Africa"* rightly points out that:

> Democracy in Africa cannot be understood without referring to the discourse on the State and development. One remarkable feature of the discourse of the state and development in Africa is the disjuncture between an analytical tradition that insists on the impossibility of developmental states in Africa and a prescriptive literature that presupposes the possibility of their existence. States whose capacity to pursue any national project are denied at one level (theoretical or diagnostic) are exhorted at the prescriptive level, to assume roles that are, *ex definicione,* beyond their capacity, character or political will. Such states are urged to 'delink,' to reduce themselves, to stabilize the economy, to privatize the economy, to engage in 'good governance,' to democratize themselves and society, to create an 'enabling environment' for the private sector and so on. In other words, to do what they cannot do – Western journalism has been an advocate of this literature (Thandika, 2001:289).

Thandika (2001:289) observes that "most of the analysis about African states in the press and elsewhere...are based on the individual comparison between African states in crisis like Zimbabwe and idealized states elsewhere." African states as they ought to be rather than what they are make efforts to deal with policy issues appear misplaced due to the impossibility of analysing their concrete character. Headlines appearing in the selected South African Weeklies such as "Mugabe must go and he must go now," "Zim crisis: Our wake-up call," "Flawed system 'must go,' "An election to quicken Zims's sunset," "South African stance on Zimbabwe remains unchanged" are testimonies to the role played by the Weeklies to advance the discourse of Zimbabwe as it 'ought' to be rather than Zimbabwe as 'is.' Thandika, (2001: 289) posits that "literature on Africa as 'ought' to be has taken prominence where alien ideas such as privatization, Economic Structural Adjustment, good governance and democratization have taken centre stage without the structural and economic capacity to implement them." Issues such as poverty, ethnicity and corruption have been overlooked. In such a scenario, economic retrogression has been enhanced by primitive accumulation and consolidation of wealth (See Moore, 2001b; Moore, 2001c). On one hand, this has made ministerial positions a political jack-pot worth competing for and, on the other hand, made African leaders unpopular. Thandika (2001:290) argues that "the elite must be able to establish an 'ideological hegemony' [at the ideational level], so that their developmental project becomes, in Gramscian sense, a hegemonic project to which key actors in the nation adhere voluntarily" (Thandika, 2001:290). If you ask many people in Africa about whether or not they are happy with their leaders, the answer would most probably be no. This means that there is something wrong with states in Africa.

The state must have some social anchoring and properly structured institutions that create policies that can spearhead economic development. It is such anchoring that the state in Zimbabwe lacks. The early years of Mugabe's presidency demonstrated a few strengths in terms of adopting certain elements of the ideological underpinning of a developmental sate that seriously attempted to deploy administrative and political resources to the task of economic development. It did this through proxies such as increasing public expenditure on health and education and nationalizing the economy. However, it still failed to establish an 'ideological hegemony' to gain adhesion of social actors leading to a problematic socio-economic and political situation. The lack of ideology has weakened many African states and this should not be

overlooked. Trajectories of the African experience when it comes to development need to be critically examined for useful lessons that would formulate its future predicament. This has been hindered by an excessive leveling of the African political and economic landscape as full of irredeemably greedy and corrupt actors – evidenced in headlines such as *The Mail & Guardian'*s "Bob Plans R3m Bash – as Harare burns, Mugabe is planning a lavish anniversary celebration" (Godwin, 2005), "Mugabe Must go and he must go now" (Govender & Rank, 2008), and "Flawed system must go" (Thabane, 2005).

African economies have been represented as hopeless, evidenced in headlines such as *Sunday Times'* "There is a simple African plan that will get Zim back on its feet" (Makhanya, 2008), "Race for Zimbabwe" (Makhanya, 2010) and "Its democracy not land that is at stake in Zimbabwe" (Leon, 2000) even though Africa is the only continent that has registered impressive economic growth in the last decade (African Presidential Center, 2009; 2011). The misreading denies us the opportunity to think and imagine creatively modes of social organization at both macro and micro level that can extricate African countries from the crises they confront. But what really was the cause of the crises according to the South African Weeklies? The politics of elections in Zimbabwe is presumed to be largely responsible. The representations show how electoral politics coincided with economic collapse and social upheavals, especially "land invasions," which are directly linked to economic collapse. The study however recognizes the limitation of these findings since the newspapers in the study happen to be the mainstream of the conservative establishment in South Africa. National newspapers and electronic press in South Africa are hardly nonpartisan in reporting topical national and international issues. Both regular and occasional readers and observers can easily tell the ideological positions and subtle agenda of the print and electronic press in South Africa. The study could have possibly benefited from the inclusion of left-leaning newspapers. However, this option would have undermined the central ideological frame of democracy and human rights, which is pervasive in the right-wing liberal newspapers, that shaped the general manner in which the South African Weeklies viewed the situation in Zimbabwe. The left-wing reporting of Zimbabwe can be a separate study that would complement this study which relied heavily on the conservative press. Due to this limitation, the findings of this study cannot be over-generalized.

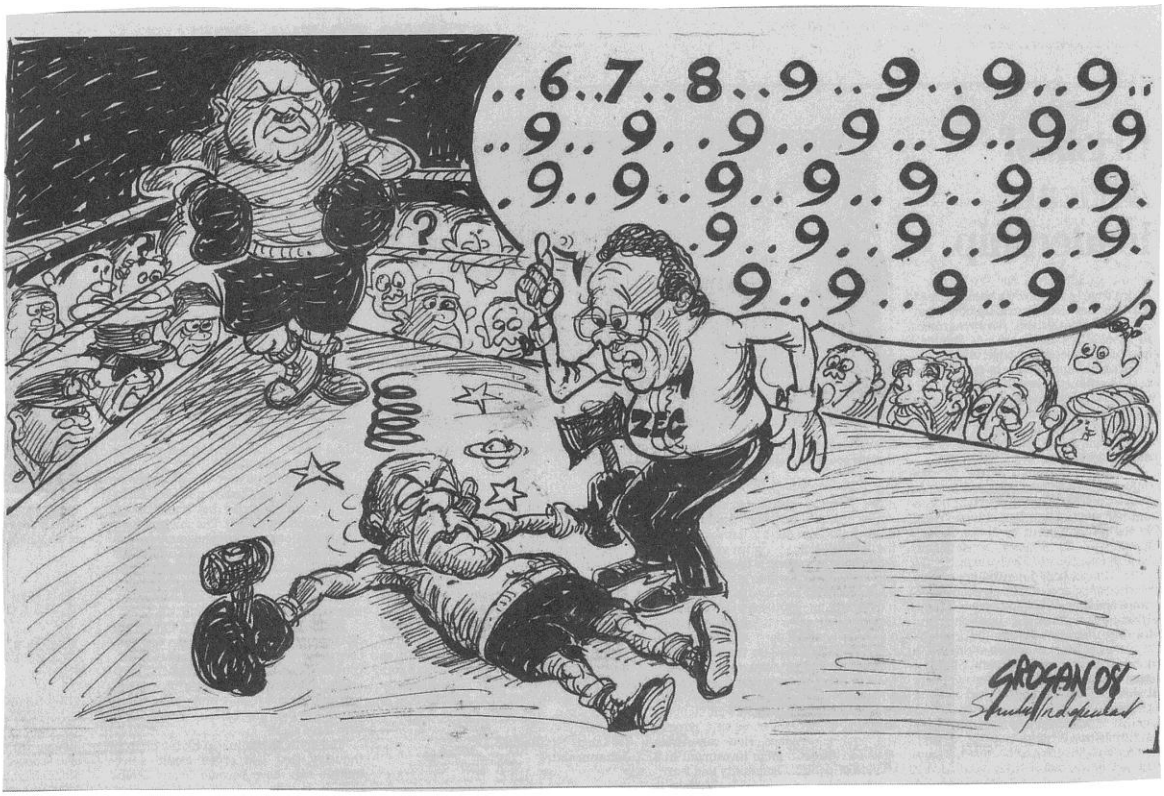
This study confidently and safely concludes, as the findings suggest, that the South African Weeklies misrepresented the crisis in Zimbabwe, although not deliberately, in order to fulfill a uni-polar, ahistoric and Western 'bogus' if not excessive universalism in the name of human rights and liberal democracy. This agenda was achieved within the contextual pressure emanating from journalistic imperatives that are defined by the micro and macro level contexts of news production. The latter is defined by broader political and economic systems prevalent in South Africa, as elsewhere in the West, while the former by Western ideologies of journalism. Therefore, the Weeklies' push for human rights and democracy in Zimbabwe was a counter thesis to discourses of national history, liberation solidarity and the spirit of pan-Africanism advanced by sections of the political elite in South Africa and Zimbabwe. As far as democracy in Africa is concerned, this thesis borrows from Moore's (2001c) conclusion that this time round, perhaps the imperialists blamed by Mugabe for the crises would have to step in to save democracy from itself with assistance akin to the Marshall plan.

Appendix 1

1.1 Mugabe used food to bribe voters (*Mail & Guardian*, 7th March 2002)



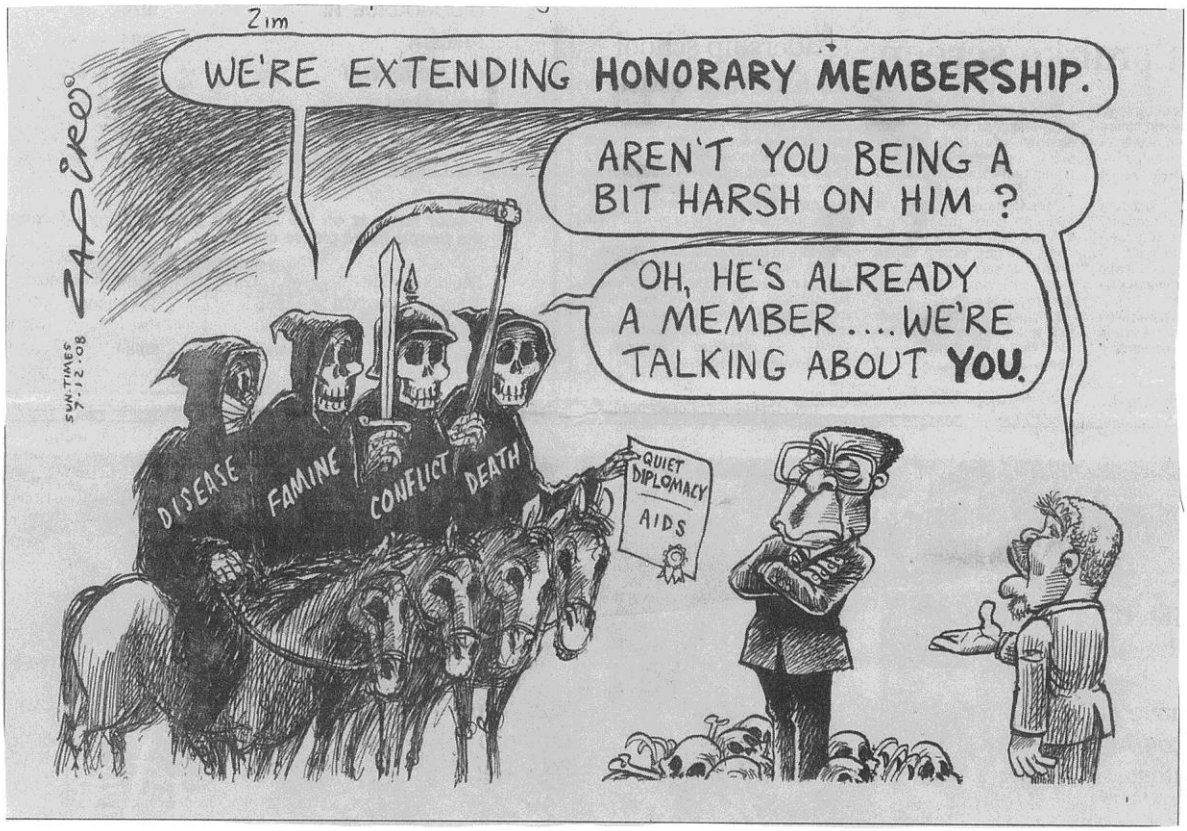
1.2 Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) is corrupt (*The Sunday Independent,* 13th April 2008)



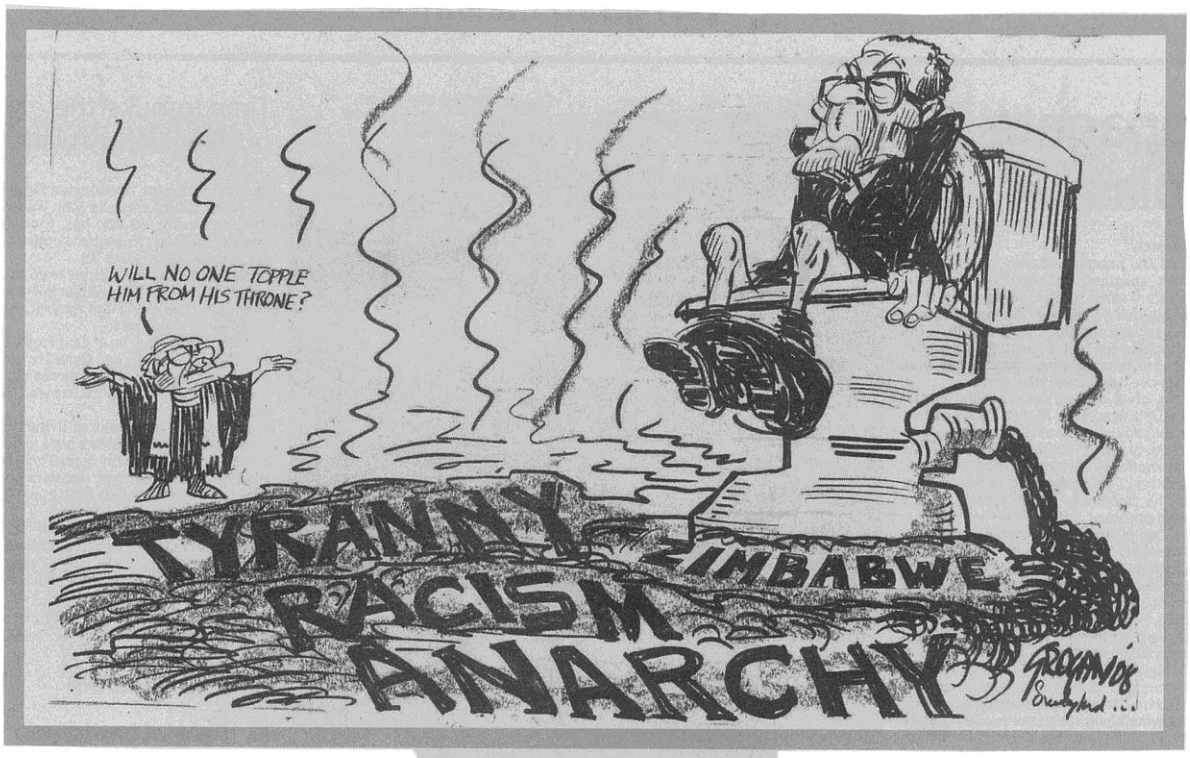
1.3 ZANU-PF has a tradition for rigging elections (*The Sunday Independent,* 3rd April 2005)



1.4 Fears of a Zimbabwe in South Africa (*Sunday Times*, 7th December 2008)

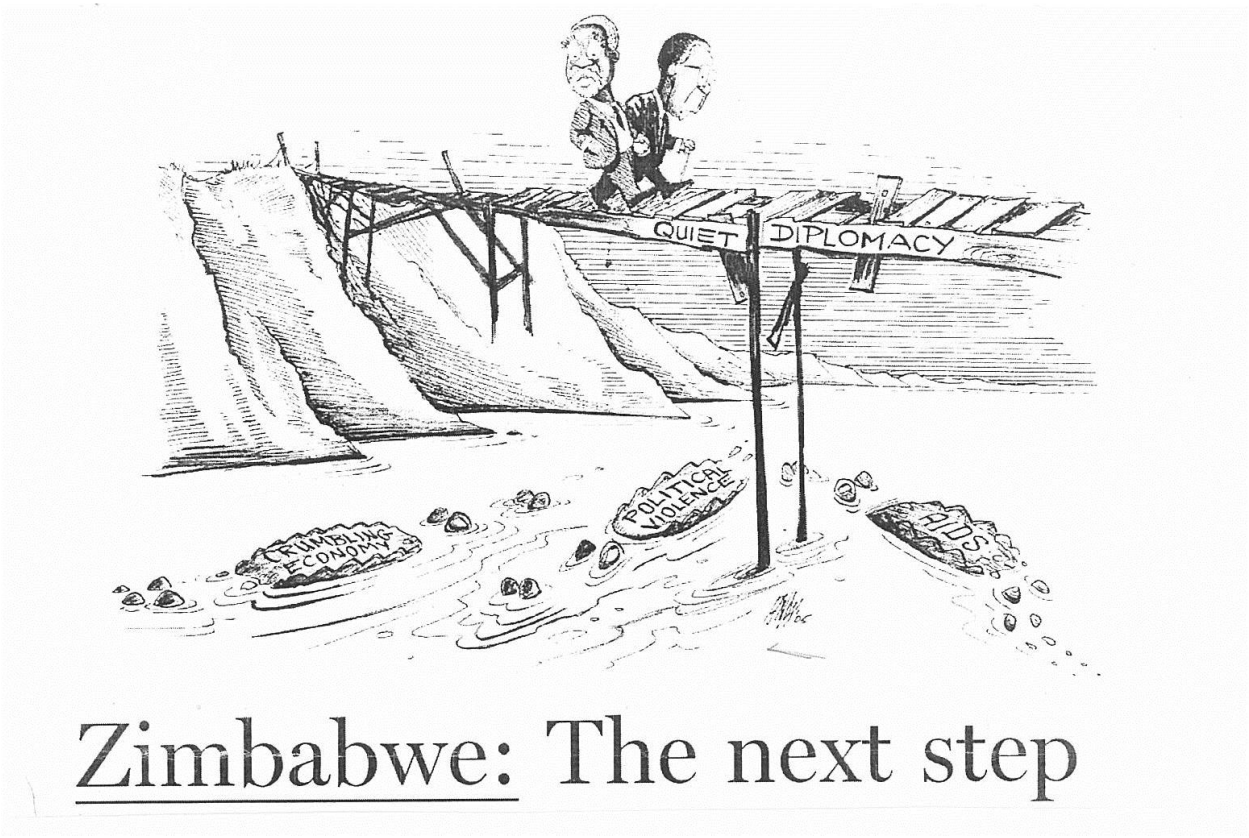


1.5 Is Zim a failed state? Politics of disorder (*The Sunday Independent* 7th December 2008)



THE SUNDAY INDEPENDENT

1.6 Mbeki's quiet diplomacy (*Sunday Times* 3rd April 2005)



1.7 Mugabe's government played down cholera death statistics (*The Sunday Independent,* 30 November 2008)



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