MUGABE MUST GO: Textual Meanings of the Representation of the Zimbabwean Situation by the South African Press

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ABSTRACT: This article is a textual analysis of the South African press representation of the political, economic, and social situations in Zimbabwe. The article argues that the South African press presents a stereotypical and sensational view of Zimbabwe, as the international press portrays all of Africa. Further, it argues that the press’s deeper agenda is to get Mugabe to go so that Western norms of democracy and human rights 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 agrees with the “negative” analysis of what is happening in Zimbabwe. The South African press is reflecting the views of South Africans and Zimbabweans that, seemingly, lean towards the fact that Zimbabwe is faced with a problematic situation. The article examines the headlines, photographs, captions, and cartoons used to represent the situation in Zimbabwe. It also analyzes the metaphors, analogies, and intertexts in selected stories to thematically unpack their meanings. 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.

KEY WORDS: South African press, representation, text, Zimbabwe

I. INTRODUCTION

This study begins from the premise that there is a fundamental socio-economic and political problematic situation in Zimbabwe that has attracted huge press attention. Among the multitude of international press that has covered the Zimbabwe situation, the South African press is most engaged in the covering the crisis. Although the South African press represents the situation in a sensational and stereotypical manner, the study concedes that the situation in Zimbabwe merits some negative coverage. This sensationalization and negativity is most evident in the news headlines. Some of the typical headlines on elections, for instance, include, “Zim Crisis: Our Wake-up Call,” “Step by Step into Chaos,” and “Flawed System ‘Must Go.’” The study examines the way the South African press represents the situation in Zimbabwe, the factors that influence such representations, and the kind of meanings arising out of such representations. In particular, the study looks at how the South African press structures the production of knowledge about history, causality, perceptions and misperceptions, personality of leading actors, and dynamics of the situation in Zimbabwe. The comparative textual analysis reveals a negative sensationalization of the Zimbabwean imbroglio with an apparent political agenda of demonizing President Robert Mugabe by the neoconservative South African press. The study argues that the neoconservative South African press has bought into the regime change agenda of Western powers, which have over the past quinquennium invented and magnified Mugabe as the epicenter of Zimbabwe’s political conflict and hipped the flawed elections, allegedly attributed to Mugabe’s self-rule agenda, as the cause of the economic and social upheaval in the country.

While the press in neoliberal democracies acts as a watchdog against state tendency to abuse power, the nature of the press in neoliberal democracies such as South Africa is that it normally frames events to qualify certain discourses and restrict others and thereby
limits or sanctions the possible ways of understanding “reality.” Nevertheless, the press must play the watchdog role as a condition for its very existence. The press frames debates to suit certain interests, sometimes compromising on its role in the society. One common way of framing issues is through stereotypes. The Western press is a culprit of such framing, as far as covering Africa is concerned, and the South African press follows this trend (Hawk 1992; Ndlela 2005). However, the fact that the South African press operates as a custodian of human right and democracy is a positive factor. It is this role that the South African press has extended to the situation in Zimbabwe, which began tumbling down after independence in 1980. With much excitement about being free, Zimbabweans walked right back into bondage of their own making. This was manifested in the rule of terror that crippled the country and squeezed the population into pulp (Zunga 2003). The independence that was hard fought for became the property of one person and a few who manipulated it. The country descended into abject decay, reducing the electorate to poor, starving, and desperate people who are easy to manipulate and overwhelm.

Mugabe and his advisors constructed negative discourses around the need for renewed liberation struggle solidarity against the continued marginalization of the African continent in the globalization process and liberal imperialism. This discourse resulted from his conscious awareness that his authoritarian rule, which centered on a critique of Western notions of property rights, human rights, and the rule of law, would be confronted with widespread national and international condemnation. However, behind this rhetorical shield is the fact that the Zimbabwean African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government effectively suspended the rule of law as it attempted to suppress and destroy the opposition (Phimister and Raftopoulos 2004: 390).

Against the background of violent land seizures, collapse of the economy, continuous violation of human rights in a bid to suppress the opposition, and flawed parliamentary and presidential elections in 2000 and 2002, respectively, the European Union (EU) and the United States imposed targeted sanctions on the ruling party. In 2002, Zimbabwe was also suspended from the Commonwealth for one year, during which the heads of state of South Africa, Nigeria, and Australia sought to persuade Mugabe and his government of the need to restore democracy. When no agreement could be reached over what progress, if any, had been made, Zimbabwe’s suspension from the Commonwealth was controversially extended. This impasse culminated in Zimbabwe’s abrupt withdrawal
from the Commonwealth, which the government called “a white racist club” (Raftoupulos and Savage 2004).

The collapse of Zimbabwe can be linked to several factors, including the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) of the International Monetary Fund, the intervention in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the payment of war veterans as compensation for their role in the struggle for independence, and the failure of the British to support the Land Reform Programme as stipulated in the 1980 Lancaster House agreement, due to alleged corruption in the program (Richardson 2004; Brett 2005). However, the genesis of the Zimbabwean crisis can be more directly attributed to poor governance, corruption, and consolidation of wealth by Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF cronies as they struggled to fulfill their desire of making Zimbabwe a de facto one-party state. The situation in Zimbabwe deteriorated, culminating into violence-driven operations such as Murambatsvina, the outbreak of cholera, and “economic collapse.”

It is against this political and social background that this study examines the representation of the situation in Zimbabwe by the South African press. The study focuses on three key areas, which have been extensively covered in the press. These include the representation of politics through elections, the representation of economic collapse through the land resettlement program (i.e., “land invasions”) and food shortages, and the representation of social upheaval as a result of contested elections. The three themes, which are central to the Zimbabwe crisis, are informed by the theory-driven studies on Zimbabwe (Brett 2005; Bond and Manyanya 2002; Raftoupulos and Mlambo 2009; Richardson 2004; Phimister and Raftoupoulos 2004; Mlambo 2005; Mbaya 2005; Tibajjuka 2005). The study argues that the representation of the Zimbabwean situation employs icons and symbols that connote the existence of a problematic situation in that country. Such connotations and inferences are reminiscent of some of the stereotypes about Africa in the news. The textual analysis indicates a high frequency of occurrence of the discourse of change through the phrase “Mugabe must go” in various news stories in the neoconservative South African press.

II. THE NATURE OF NEWS AND THE NEWS ON ZIMBABWE

Generally, there is a common form of representation of Africa in the world that is characterized by negative stereotypes (Fourie 2001;
One of the reasons Africa is generally represented negatively is because Western journalists do not have proper contextual knowledge of the unusual historic relations that have shaped peculiar structures of knowledge regarding Africa. Repertoires of knowledge, symbols, and the structuring of Africa are Western creations (Hawk 1992). This problem is also true of the white-dominated South African press. The South African white press has been criticized for giving stories from the frontline nations (i.e., nations bordering South Africa) a South African (national/local) angle that is similar to the Western perspectives on Africa (Paterson in Hawk 1992: 187).

The dilemma facing media scholars, as far as such negative representations are concerned, is related to the epistemological issues on the nature of journalism and the ideologies that inform the practice. A good example of this dilemma is simply trying to define what constitutes news or identifying the value criteria for news selection, such as time, objectivity, fairness, prominence, novelty, proximity, and extent. The application of these criteria puts journalists under pressure, which results in sensationalization, superficiality, and ahistoricism of the news. The notion of time, for example, forces journalists to take a fresh angle on every story even if there are no major new developments. Similarly, the nature of press funding, through advertisements, sales, and ownership, often leads to sensationalization. The dominance of Western values and ideologies also inhibits a more nuanced coverage of Africa (McGregor 1997: 68–71).

The reporting of news about the 2000, 2002, 2005, and 2008 elections in Zimbabwe, for example, was largely determined by the South African society’s consensus on the prevailing international hegemony about democratic elections. In a nutshell, elections are measured in terms of the degree to which they are deemed free and fair. The South African press, operating under the notion of liberal democracy, paid extensive attention to the manner in which Zimbabwean elections deviated from the notion of free and fair elections. The key issue here is not whether the newspapers were biased in their coverage of ZANU-PF or MDC during the elections. Rather, the nature of the reporting is the issue. For example, reporters tend to establish the existence of electoral conflict, rather than electoral harmony. They emphasize those facts that lend weight to their perspective and play down opposite facts. News, it would seem, is sacrosanct or somehow beyond the editors’ control. They are selected using a mythmaking criterion that assesses their degree of worthiness. The criteria of selection based
on newsworthiness define what news is and explain why some stories would appear in newspapers but others would not (Bignell 1997).

Braham (1982: 270) argues 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 contents of the news pages are 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. But it would be much more appropriate to visualize the press 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. In fact, the “few” stories that are printed are not representative of the many stories that reach the newspaper offices, let alone those that do not get that far.

It is important to recognize that the political situation in Zimbabwe has been characterized by a chaotic electioneering period that includes fraud, intimidation, and violence. The situation affected white commercial farmers especially through “land invasions” following the ZANU-PF government’s failure to “fast track” its land redistribution program to fulfill its campaign promises (Ndlela 2005). These stories made regular appearances in the South African mainstream press. The Zimbabwean government was under pressure from the War Veteran Association, which wanted compensation as a reward for their role in the struggle for independence (Willems 2005). Land invasions were the results of frustration, especially among the war veterans and the ZANU-PF youth brigade, with the slow pace of land resettlements in the country. However, as Muzondidya (2009) argues, land invasion was also a result of the legacy of the Lancaster house constitution dilemma and the willing-buyer/willing-sellers principle that made white commercial farmers reluctant to sell their land. Such factors led to socioeconomic and political problems that the newspapers covered. The textual analysis of the coverage of Operation Murambatsvina, the cholera outbreak, and the influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa shows that these events were symptoms of the political disorder during which the chaotic situation was used by the regime to promote group, partisan, and individual interests and engage in electoral malpractices (Brett 2005: 91; Chabal and Daloz 1999).

Zimbabweans became captives in their own land. Many of them migrated into South Africa as economic refugees during the flawed elections, which were characterized by violence and intimidation. The
massive migration led to common phrases such as the “influx of Zimbabwean into South Africa” into the public discourse on migration in South Africa. Such events fit in the general criteria of news in terms of worthiness and were extensively covered by the South African press. As Braham rightly argued, news reports tend to neglect background material. Events are most likely to appear as sudden and unexplained or as having only direct and immediate causes (1982: 274). The underlying state of affairs that helps explain or give rise to particular events tends to be absent or to be taken for granted in the news reports. Braham further argues that reporting is not simply a matter of collecting facts. Facts do not exist in a vacuum but are located within wider-ranging sets of assumptions, and which facts are thought to be relevant depends on which sets of assumptions are held. These sets of assumptions are defined as “news frameworks” (1982: 270). Bignell argues that the news value are useful in showing that despite the different referents of news stories, news stories exhibit a number of consistent and repeated features (1997: 86). News selection criteria, determined by news value or worthiness, can be regarded as a coding system that is knowingly or unknowingly used by journalists in order to structure and shape the meaning of events as news.

One of the consequences of the news selection criteria is that journalistic “objectivity” has become a myth created by assumptions about news that underpins the professional activity of newspaper workers. 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 the commercial, ideological, and semiotic structures through which it is produced. This is not at all to accuse journalists of “bias” or distortion, since that accusation assumes that there is such thing as “unbiased” news story. Signs never denote a “reality” objectively. They are always encoded meanings that support a particular ideological point of view.

Journalists faced with the need to meet deadlines must have a set of preconceptions of “what is related to what,” a sort of ready reckoner. If both journalists and readers, for instance, associate Zimbabwean 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, may simply treat news about Zimbabwean elections and migration in a way that fits the
existing construct. In other words, what they are doing, as they must, is to present news that is unfamiliar in as familiar and easily digestible a fashion as possible. In reality, headlines such as “Why Have Elections? They Are Colonial,” “A Crisis Larger than One Election,” “Mugabe and the Mountaineer,” and “Zim Needs a Miracle” could have been qualified in a variety of ways.

The texts, photographs, and captions used to represent the Zimbabwean situation reinforced what the story seemed to be talking about. Tomaselli argues that the text, in the semiotic sense, should not be confused with a conventional mass of words linked to the pages of a book or the images projected on a screen (1996: 32). Rather, they are a reconstruction of the idea, thought, associations, and images mentally generated by the act of reading, decoding, or interpreting. Reading involves an active negotiation on the part of the interpreter and sometimes there is discrepant decoding based on the fact that the meaning understood by the author of the photograph is not understood by the decoder. However, considering news writing as a conventional process, the photographs that were used to represent the Zimbabwean situation were characterized by sensationalism and negativity. The conventional process allowed for a significant fit between the semiotic instructions of how to read news as a genre and the general message usually inferred by the readers. Thus, the photographs about the Zimbabwean situation were anchored to match the words in order to construct meaning.

The analogies and intertexts also serve the purpose of driving forth change in Zimbabwe by drawing relations between Zimbabwe and other countries that went through more or less similar situations in the struggle for democracy and have since changed. Language and culture can only exist if meanings are largely agreed upon within and between groups of people. As links, codes result in the generation of the news genres that structures messages into instantly recognizable forms (Tomaselli 1996). Similarly, Berger argues that the meaning decoded from a text is not necessarily the meaning that the creator self-consciously encoded (1989: 53). The meaning 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 International Criminal Court (The Hague) just like other tyrants.

III. DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a triangulated approach that employs multiple methods (Denzin 1978). The two primary methodologies in the study are quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The quantitative content analysis method was used to count the frequency of occurrence of various units of analysis related to the social, economic, and political dimensions of texts. It also laid the foundation for the qualitative analysis. Qualitative content analysis, which involved semiotics and ideological analysis, was predominantly used in the study because research on representation of reality by the media is qualitative by nature (Bertrand and Hughes 2005). The textual elements and narrative genres appearing in the selected stories and their frequency of occurrence were analyzed to thematically unpack their meanings.

A total of sixty-two newspaper editions of the *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Independent*, and the *Mail and Guardian* in South Africa were analyzed. The editions included randomly selected samples of *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Independent*, and the *Mail and Guardian* newspapers between the years 2000 and 2008. The selected newspapers utilized certain textual devices and narrative genres as techniques of constructing stories about elections, economic collapse, and social upheaval in Zimbabwe. The textual devices utilized were in the form of headlines, analogies, metaphors, and intertexts, while narrative genres included photographs and cartoons. Random sampling was applied to select the stories in the newspapers. The time frame used to select news stories and the selection criteria of the events analyzed are based on the fact that the critical elements of the Zimbabwean situation occurred between 2002 and 2008 and that they are tied to elections, economic collapse, and social upheavals.

Although there were many political, economic, and social events unfolding in Zimbabwe, the events selected for the study are the land invasions during elections, the economic downturn, Operation Murambatsvina, the cholera outbreak, and the influx of Zimbabwean into South Africa. All of these events received extensive coverage in the three presses. The stories were selected from the specific periods in which the events occurred. With respect to elections, for example, stories were selected from the 2000, 20002, 2005, and 2008 newspaper editions because these were the years in which elections were normally held in
Zimbabwe. The stories covered the three months before and the three months after the date of each election. Stories related to economic collapse and social upheavals were selected from the specific years and months in which the events were reported. For example, stories on economic collapse were selected from the March and April 2000, March 2002, and July, November, and December 2008 newspaper editions. The social upheaval stories were from the March and June 2005 and December 2008 editions. However, there were some limitations in the selection of stories in the *Sunday Independent* in the year 2000. The limitation was due to the fact that the *Sunday Independent* did not file stories for 2000. However, filed stories were available from 2002 to 2008.

The news stories selected for the study fall into three categories of events, namely: political, economic, and social upheaval. Under the political category, the major events were elections. The study focused on elections because they have been controversial and received a lot of press coverage. One of the central questions relating to this category of events is whether the prevailing conditions in Zimbabwe were conducive for “free and fair” elections and whether the issues surrounding the elections amounted to “a political crisis.” The study analyzed press coverage of each election between 2000 and 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* coverage of the 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 the food shortages (April and May 2002 and March 2002), the illegal land invasions (March to May 2000), and the hyperinflation (November and December 2008 and March 2002). These events were chosen because they were widely reported by the South African press. Zimbabwe was depicted as moving from being a “bread basket” to a “basket case.” 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 of these issues received considerable press attention. Unlike the elections, two newspaper editions of the *Sunday Times, Sunday*
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Independent, and the Mail and Guardian were selected in the months when the events occurred to examine how the papers covered the economic collapse and social upheaval. The study used the newspaper issues that came out during the month coinciding with the events depicting economic collapse or social upheaval. Probability sampling method 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 interview to gain a better understanding of the philosophical and practical issues that informed the press coverage of the Zimbabwean crisis. Three semistructured interviews that lasted two hours were conducted with the editors of the Sunday Times, Sunday Independent, and the Mail and Guardian. The editors are Mondli Makhanya, Peter Fabricious, and Nick Dawes, respectively. 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 (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.

IV. ELECTION AND THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ZIMBABWE SITUATION

Elections received the most coverage by the three selected newspapers (Sunday Times, Sunday Independent, and the Mail and Guardian) 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 upheaval. The selected newspapers used certain textual devices and narrative genres to represent the situation. Table 1 illustrates the textual devices and narrative genres used to represent the elections and the frequency of their usage:

Headlines

The selected South African newspapers gave more prominence to stories about elections than economic collapse and social upheaval in Zimbabwe. Some of the headlines on elections appearing between 2000 and 2008 include “Race for Zimbabwe” (Mail and Guardian 2008), “Mad Bob’: Man or Monster?” (Zvomuya 2008), “Mugabe’s Good Son: The President’s Softly-softly Approach to Mugabe Resembles the
Reluctance of a Son to Openly Correct an Authoritarian Father” (Gevisser 2008), and “Mugabe Must Go and He Must Go Now” (Govender and Rank 2008). All of the ninety-one headlines on elections noted in table 1 were negative. The frequency of negative headlines about elections suggests that the selected South African press perceived the elections to be flawed.

The thematic analysis of the headlines used to represent Zimbabwean elections indicates that the elections were framed to be neither free nor fair. Though the headlines represented the elections as a two-horse race between ZANU-PF and MDC, they seemed to rule out the possibility of an MDC victory due to electoral malpractices. The headlines constructed a discourse that seemed to support an MDC victory if the elections would be free and fair. They also emphasized the need to vote “for change” in Zimbabwe to remove Robert Mugabe who was branded as a “tyrant” and “dictator.” The Sunday Times, for examples, had headlines such as “A Refugee Too Scared to Go Back and Cast Her Ballot” (Makwebe 2008), “Mugabe Must Go and He Must Go Now” (Govender and Rank 2008), “Heady Rush as Tyrannized People Sense Tipping Point” (Raath 2008), and “Step by Step into Chaos” (Meredith 2002). The Mail and Guardian also had similar headlines, such as “Race for Zimbabwe” (Mail and Guardian 2008), “Flawed System Must Go” (Rapule 2005), and “Elections to Quicken Zim’s Sunset” (Win 2005), while the Sunday Independent had headlines such as “Too Late for Free

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Table 1

and Fair Elections in Zimbabwe” (Kapemba 2005). Even though these headlines were meant to push for change in Zimbabwe, the editor of the Mail and Guardian could not readily accept that they were pushing for change. As journalists, they do not consciously construct stories. However, there were factors that made them 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 bets 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.²

In this case, reporting was driven by the universal notion of human rights and democracy. As one editor acknowledged, “Broadly speaking, we 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.”³

A newspaper must have some general criteria to determine which stories are reported and which ones are discarded, though such rules may change dramatically. The three selected newspapers, which are right-wing newspapers in South Africa, used the general criteria of protecting universal human rights and democracy. News stories about Zimbabwean elections constituted almost a boycott or censorship of favorable news about the elections. This negativity is not necessarily intentional, but certainly conditioned by habitual contention that Zimbabwean elections are traditionally flawed (Gurevitch and Curran et al. 1982). Big stories on Zimbabwean elections usually have headlines that the South African audiences can easily identify with, such as “The ZANU-PF ‘Sponsored’ Land Invasions,” which interests white South Africans. As Peter Fabricious explains:

> 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 in initially
the victims of ZANU-PF policies. There may be some elements
of truth in that but I think we were more targeting the informed
readership which also includes a growing black middle class and
the story also started off being more appealing to white readers
because of obvious reasons, whites were quite interested and
sympathetic to what was happening to white farmers in Zimba-
bwe and concerned . . . 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.4

Although the headlines about election expressed the desire for change
in Zimbabwe, they also expressed the need to sell more newspapers,
underscoring how commercial factors influence news representation.
Headlines such as “Mugabe Must Go and He Must Go Now” and
“Heady Rush as Tyrannized People Sense Tipping Point” were made
to capture the readers.

Photographs, Cartoons, and Captions

There were few photographs used to represent the elections as indicated in table 1. This is in part because it is difficult to capture through visual images the allegation that the elections were neither free nor fair. One interesting fact about the photographs used by the three selected newspapers is that they were copied from other news agencies and private organizations, which indicates that they were mostly copied to construct the stories. The photographs reflected the views of the journalists and their broader ideological views of freedom of expression, democratic practices, and human rights. These views were extended to the situation in Zimbabwe. All three editors interviewed in this study indicated that they did not have any particular guidelines on reporting Zimbabwe and that they were guided by the idea of adhering to universal principles of human right and democracy as fundamental values.

The fact that photographs were copied from news agencies presented a problem in terms of representation. This is because an image alone in the news is polysemic. To clarify what the image means and make it relevant to the purpose of the news, texts are added. The image serves as a “hook” while the text anchors the meaning. The same photographs take on a different connotation with different accompanying texts. As Peter Fabricious points out:
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. I mean there are the very static ones of President Mugabe wearing a Sash and …saluting a crowd somewhere. We have used pictures of kind of key figures in politics, because our coverage is pretty political [...] so people know who this individual are that we are referring to [in the content].

The photographs that were used to represent Zimbabwean elections, for example, were selectively chosen to reinforce the discourse of change in Zimbabwe and rigged elections. For example, The Sunday Times March 30, 2008, headline story, “Mugabe Must Go and He Must Go Now,” was accompanied by a huge photograph with a caption that reads: “Praying for change—A woman calls on higher powers while hundreds of Zimbabweans queue to vote early yesterday in the capital, Harare.” The above-mentioned photograph suggests that it is difficult to realize change in Zimbabwe unless there is was divine intervention.

Similarly, the opinion and analysis article of the March 30, 2008, issue of the Sunday Times, “Heady Rush as Tyrannized People Sense Tipping Point,” was 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 photographs suggest that even blind people can “see” the need for change and are determined to achieve it by casting their ballot and “seeing that it is indeed through” the ballot box. The notion that the conditions in Zimbabwe were not conducive for a free and fair election was captured by a photograph in a story in the March 30, 2008, issue of the Sunday Times, “A Refugee Too Scared to Go Back and Cast Her Ballot” (Makwebe 2008). The article was accompanied by a close-up photograph with a caption that reads: “DESTITUTE—MDC activist Althea Roberts.” The photograph connotes the plight of some white Zimbabweans seeking refuge in South Africa.

Cartoons acted as political satires that ridiculed the main players in the Zimbabwean political derby with the intention of pushing for reforms and action. These kinds of representations have arguably exposed the situation in Zimbabwe in a manner that has attracted attention in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region as well as internationally. It has further created a discourse of the need for reforms and change in that country. The discourse is presumed to have led to the
formation of a Government of National Unity. In addition, and like the photographs, the cartoons acted as powerful open texts that could be read differently by the audience, but most important, they seemed to reinforce the stories. Most of the cartoons are by Jonathan Shapiro and Tony Grogan, who are famous South African freelance political satirists based in Cape Town. Zapiro has been known for his powerful political satire and has always been involved in controversy, especially for his cartoon depicting former ANC vice president Jacob Zuma taking a shower as a measure to help prevent HIV/AIDS infection.6

Cartoons, especially those related to the regional pressure on Mbeki to act decisively and swiftly on Mugabe, were widely used. According to Peter Fabricious, cartoons focused on the regional politics. A classic example, Fabricious noted, is the cartoon of “Mugabe lying on the massage couch and all the leaders sort of pressing him, putting pressure on him, saying ‘is this hard as this feels?’ Then Mugabe responds ‘Oh, just a little bit further down . . . press there . . . that feels so good. That is Zapiro’s notion of regional pressure on Mugabe.”7 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, represented as the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) official, keeps repeating the ninth count to give time for Mugabe to recover, which the spectators find amusing.

**Analogies, Intertexts, and Metaphors**

It is important to note that when the selected newspapers made reference to the negative events in Zimbabwe, they used intertexts and analogies that draw negative connotations to the objects. In particular, they draw attention to the negative events and atrocities associated with electoral politics and antidemocratic practices in Africa and elsewhere in the world. Moreover, they point to how those events were addressed by the “guardians of global democracy” at major world organizations such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court. These kinds of representations reinforce the discourse of change in Zimbabwe and the idea that it has to be pushed through internal and external forces.

The Sunday Times April 13, 2008, story “Mugabe Is Losing the Chance to Save His Skin” 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, the Chilean dictator who overthrew Salvador Allende, and how he was prosecuted for crimes against humanity. In the story, the government’s “fast track” program of 2000 was dubbed the third Chimurenga. A discourse of change was constructed by comparing Zimbabwe to other African countries that were once ruled by dictators. The story uses a first-person narrative technique to push for change by quoting how change was realized in Zambia and Malawi. It used a first-person narrative of the journalist who noted:

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 . . . . Two years later, I felt it in the wet, lightless street of Blantyre in Malawi at 4 am . . . . I asked the people waiting in silent determination what they were going to do. Change, they said. And before long Hasting Banda 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. By inference, the story argues that there is no reason why the same could not be done in Zimbabwe.

The metaphors used in the newspapers captured two interlinked ideas that frame the press coverage of Zimbabwe. The first idea is that Zimbabwe’s socioeconomic and political problems are due to the electoral fraud that retained Mugabe in power and enabled him to plunder the economy. The second idea is that for Zimbabwe to recover from the situation, “Mugabe must go,” even if it means forceful removal. Words such as “ousting” were used in several stories. The MDC, which was seen as the party that could bring about the much desired change, was hailed and supported. Mugabe was compared to Idi Amin, Adolf Hitler, and other dictators, comparisons that draw negative connotation based on the atrocities committed by Amin and Hitler.

The rhetorical question posed in the Mail and Guardian February 29 to March 6, 2008, story “‘Mad Bob’: Man or Monster?” illustrates the negative connotations. The question limits the possible ways of
reading the text. While the text seemingly leaves the reader to decide whether Mugabe is a man or a monster, it advances arguments that support the latter view. In so doing, the text draws the conclusion that Mugabe is indeed a monster. The article is a review of the book *Dinner with Mugabe: The Untold Story of a Freedom Fighter Who Became a Tyrant*, by Heidi Holland. The review title “‘Mad Bob’: Man or Monster” juxtaposed the idea of “man” with “monster,” anchoring the meaning that the reader should carry along while reading the featured book.

V. ECONOMIC COLLAPSE AND THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ZIMBABWE SITUATION

The textual analysis of the reports 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 press suggests that electoral fraud and malpractices have guaranteed Mugabe victory in elections 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 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Representations</th>
<th>Number of Specific References to Elections</th>
<th>Number of References to Zimbabwe</th>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analogies and Intertexts</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>Metaphors</td>
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Headlines

All sixteen stories on economic collapse represented the problem as a consequence of failed elections. Most of the headlines suggested that the Zimbabwean economy had collapsed. Headlines such as “There’s 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), “Zimbabwe Crashes” (Thornycroft et al. 2008), and “Africa Would Support Tough Stance on Zim” (Monare 2008) called for action. Headlines such as “Now Mbeki Must Show Leadership” (Makhanya 2002) indicated the need for leadership to solve the Zimbabwean 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 in Zimbabwe, while others, such as “It’s Democracy, Not Land That Is at Stake in Zimbabwe” (Leon 2000), emphasized the struggle for democracy.

Photographs, Cartoons, and Captions

There were few photographs and captions representing economic collapse (see table 2). Perhaps this is because it is very difficult to capture the idea through visual images. However, the common photographs that were used represented empty shelves in supermarkets, the big Zimbabwean dollar notes, and long queues in banks. Other photographs captured the plight of the Zimbabweans as a country. For example, the Mail and Guardian March 8 to 14, 2002, story “Boom or Bust for Zimbabwe” was accompanied by a cartoon image of Robert Mugabe snifffing the last remains of food from a plate presented to him by an unidentified Zimbabwean whose long hands, the only visible part of his body, look wretched and are covered in a tattered shirt. The photograph represented the idea of how Mugabe has plundered the economy. The cartoons that were used mocked the economic situation in Zimbabwe. Just like the photographs and captions, the cartoons qualified or reinforced the existence of a problematic situation that needs urgent attention. The Sunday Times April 3, 2005, story “Zimbabwe: The Next Step” was accompanied by a cartoon of Robert Mugabe and Thabo Mbeki walking hand in
hand, crossing a fragile bridge over the crocodile-infested Limpopo River. In the cartoon, there are three crocodiles, visible under the bridge, representing a crumbling economy, political violence, and HIV/AIDS. The bridge is represented as quiet diplomacy. The story blamed South Africa for contributing to the poor economic situation in Zimbabwe through its diplomatic indecisiveness.

Analogy, Intertexts, and Metaphors

The December 7, 2008, edition of the *Sunday Independent* used intertexts in its story “Zimbabwe Crashes: Call for Action as the Dollar Plummets and Humanitarian Disaster Overwhelms the Country.” The story builds upon a report by Reuters to explain the extent to which Mugabe has ruined the country’s economy and the need to remove him from power. It quotes Reuters:

> With the nation ravaged by hunger crisis and in the grips of a cholera epidemic, the US and the UK called for the removal of President Robert Mugabe and his regime . . . . The meltdown of the economy was graphically illustrated by hyperinflation . . . . the US said at the weekend that Mugabe 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 Reuters report referred to in the *Sunday Independent* story quoted US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s speech in Copenhagen stating that it was well past time for Robert Mugabe to leave. Rice stated in the speech that the stalled power sharing talks, sham elections, economic meltdown, and humanitarian toll from the cholera epidemic required swift action. The Reuters report also included quotes from former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown condemning Mugabe and urging coordinated international action to help Zimbabwe overcome food shortages and the cholera epidemic. Nick Dawes, editor-in-chief of the *Mail and Guardian*, shared those views. He argued that Mugabe is personally responsible for the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe. As he noted, “Certainly I think, we [Mail and Guardian] have a view that . . . I mean, I have a view, I don’t know . . . I don’t think that the reporter basically does, I have a view that ZANU-PF as led by President Mugabe has damaged Zimbabwe very seriously.”

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The metaphors also reveal the press’s perception of the economic crisis and Mugabe. One metaphor compared Zimbabwe to a patient in hospital. The *Mail and Guardian* February 11, 2005, story “An Election to Quicken Zim’s Sunset” argued that most Zimbabweans are not stupid and they can see through the chicanery played out at elections time. The story described the Zimbabwean situation as similar to “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 and Guardian* March 8, 2002, story “Boom or Bust for Zimbabwe” compared Mugabe to a front runner in a demolition derby. It argued that Mugabe has left behind a trail of destruction as he has raced for the finishing line, frantically trying to avoid being overtaken. No matter who wins, it further argued, a massive amount of work would have to be undertaken to put Zimbabwe’s economy back on its feet. The story personalizes the situation in Zimbabwe and constructs Mugabe as the epicenter of the economic problems in that country.

VI. SOCIAL UPHEAVAL AND THE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ZIMBABWE SITUATION

The social upheaval in Zimbabwe is largely seen as a consequence of the political and economic crises. Political instability and violence during the electioneering period displaced people and their livelihoods. The social upheaval relates to three major events, Operation Murambatsvina, cholera, and the migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa. These events were reported through a variety of textual and narrative representations (see table 3).

**Headlines**

All twenty-four headlines on social upheaval represented the problems as symptoms of failed elections and economic collapse. The headlines fingered the government as evil, uncaring, 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) often depicted the unresponsiveness of the government in face of the harsh social realities of the people. Although the editors seemed not to agree that they were superficial in reporting the events, the contents of the stories bearing the headlines above were very superficial and ahistorical. They downplayed the historical trajectories and context of the prevailing circumstances in Zimbabwe. Nick Dawes, editor-in-chief of the *Mail and Guardian*, argued that they were quite nuanced, but sometimes they were not, because they are journalists. Journalists, he argued, tend to focus on the present instead of the past because they write news instead of history. Journalists tend to focus on current dramatic events as they happen and sometimes work under pressure for a scoop. As such, the dramatic and immediate causes of events, which are readily associated with conflict, tension, threat, and violence, are the stories most likely to make it into the news. The idea that conflicts, unrest, and violence make news is more or less the norm in both the popular press and the quality press. Headlines appearing in the selected newspapers in this study, such as “A Refugee Too Scared to Go Back and Cast Her Ballot” (Makwebe 2008) “Heady Rush as Tyrannized People Sense Tipping Point” (Raath 2008), and “Out in the Cold” (Mutasa 2005), are indicative of this reality.

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Table 3
Social Upheaval: Forms of Textual and Narrative Representations and Frequency of Occurrence (March and June 2005 and November and December 2008)
News values not only govern what will be selected as newsworthy, but also help determine how a particular story is presented to the reader. Whatever ingredients a story requires will be more acceptable, however unexpected or dramatic they appear, if they can be readily slotted in the framework that is reassuringly familiar to both journalist and reader. The coverage of the Zimbabwean situation changed in tone and scale according to the press’s prevailing view of the state of events in Zimbabwe. For example, electoral violence and farm invasions have been intermittently portrayed as isolated incidences, the results of a conspiracy, and as part of a growing wave of racial unrest. The sorts of considerations that influenced the editorial decision on how to treat the story included the similarities in historical trajectories of the politics of both South Africa and Zimbabwe and land reforms issues in both countries.

The influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa was treated as a symptom of a bigger political problem. The Sunday Independent editor argued that the influx was treated as a political issue that was not being properly addressed by the South African government. There was an element of denial of the problem, especially by the Mbeki administration. As the editor noted:

[Y]ou know that Mbeki’s administration tended to deny quite a lot of problems like the AIDS and xenophobia so there was, A: 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. 11

Similarly, the cholera epidemic was seen by the selected newspapers as a symptom of poor governance and corruption in Zimbabwe that has, arguably, robbed the government of the ability to avail the health facilities that would guarantee Zimbabweans primary healthcare. In such a situation, the outbreak of treatable and controllable diseases like cholera was seen as a potential disaster that could have led to the death of thousands of people. On the other hand, South Africa was represented as a country that failed to recognize the crisis. Peter Fabrichious noted:
[W]e 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, that was really a direct or indirect result of decisions made by ZANU-PF for example, you know, 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 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 source, 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 [. . .].

Photographs, Cartoons, and Caption

Photographs were meant to capture the emotions of the readers by sensationalizing and over-representing the plight of victims of Operation Murambastvina, cholera, and the Zimbabwean refugee crises. For example, the Mail and Guardian June 10 to 16, 2005, the story “Out in the Cold” is accompanied by a photograph of a weeping middle-aged woman and a child in the background next to a demolished house. Similarly, the Sunday Times June 26, 2005, story “Destitution and Despair in the New Zimbabwe Ruins” was accompanied by a photograph of a bulldozer destroying a house in Harare. The caption read: “MACHINERY OF STATE: A bulldozer destroys people’s homes and houses in Harare as part of President Robert Mugabe clean-up operation known as operation Murambatsvina.” In the Sunday Times February 24, 2002, edition, the article “Step by Step into Chaos” 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.” Another story in the Sunday Times March 20, 2005, edition titled “Will SA’s Poll Observers in Zimbabwe Be Free and Fair?” was accompanied by a close-up photograph of Mugabe addressing a crowd in Harare in a run-up poll gesturing his typical traditional 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.”

The *Sunday Times* December 7, 2008, article “There’s a Simple, African Plan That Will Get Zimbabwe Back on Its Feet” was accompanied by a cartoon by Zapiro indicating the possibility of the Zimbabwean socioeconomic problems, such as disease, famine, conflict, and death, spilling into South Africa due to Mbeki’s quiet diplomacy. The cartoon combines the common mythology of mysticism and adventure where disease, famine, conflict, and death are embodied through four human skeleton creatures dressed in black witch-like robes, two carrying sword-like weapons, each riding a horse. The cartoon ridiculed Mbeki’s approach to dealing with the situation in Zimbabwe and expressed fears of a Zimbabwe-like situation in South Africa. The *Sunday Independent* April 3, 2005, story “Zimbabwe Needs Us” also had a cartoon that mocks the Zimbabwe 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 another one is busy copying names of dead people from tombstones. MDC officials are seen 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, asks, “What could be more free and fair? Even the dead have a chance to vote.” Then an unfamiliar woman responds, “A very spiritual experience.”

**Analogies, Intertexts, and Metaphors**

There were few analogies, intertexts, and metaphors used to represent social upheavals. However, the ones used expressed the fears of the Zimbabwean political, economic, and social “crises” spilling into South Africa. With respect to the cholera epidemic, Nick Dawes noted:

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 were fundamentally a political and diplomatic story. 

As far as Operation Murambatsvina is concerned, the major features in the news were the victims of the operation, usually women and children. The women and children metaphorically represented and embodied the idea of pain and suffering resulting from the operation. The *Mail and Guardian* June 10 to 16, 2005, story “Out in the Cold” highlights the plight of the victims of the operation. It blows the plight of Chengatayi (a mother) out of proportion by devoting huge amounts of space to the impacts of the operation on her family and on diverse sections of the society. A part of story reads:

> At first she did not believe it. Reality hit when she had 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, Chengatayi’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. She was afraid to fall asleep by herself. People have no hearts there and would easily steal her food and the few belongings she has. They might even rape her two eldest daughters, she lamented.

The plight of women and children migrating into South Africa was also metaphorically represented as the embodiment of pain and suffering as far as the influx was concerned. The stories used a first-person narrative to appeal to readers. In the *Sunday Times* June 29, 2008, edition, the article “Bloodied and Bruised but Glad to Be in South Africa” sensationalized and magnified the plight of the Zimbabweans illegally entering South Africa. The article stated: “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.” Sibanda and his son
symbolized the desire for change in Zimbabwe and their imagination of freedom, which was perceived to exist in South Africa.

VII. CONCLUSION

The textual devices and narrative genres used by the Sunday Times, Sunday Independent, and the Mail and Guardian to represent situation in Zimbabwe are characterized by negativity and sensationalism. Their coverage of Zimbabwe suggests that the problematic situation in Zimbabwe is as a result of what Brett refers to as “politics of disorder” (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 political crisis, economic collapse, and social upheaval themes. The narrative suggests the need for regime change in order to restore democracy and the rule of law in Zimbabwe. It raises issues of private property rights, human rights, and freedom of expression. Clearly, the frequency of the phrase “Mugabe must go” in the selected newspapers indicates that they were pushing for regime change. The argument from the semiotic analysis of texts and narratives used to represent the situation is that “Mugabe must go” for Zimbabwe to recover.

Based on the press coverage of Zimbabwe, the study finds that the politics of elections in Zimbabwe had a direct relation to the economic collapse and social upheavals, especially “land invasions.” Furthermore, “land invasions” were directly related to economic collapse. The study, however, recognizes the limitations of these findings since the newspapers in the study happen to be in 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 newspapers that shape the general manner in which the South African press views 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 overgeneralized.
NOTES

1. ZANU-PF, faced with a major threat to their hegemonic power, had to strategize to maintain the status quo. Operation Murambatsvina, which many observers claimed was previously rehearsed (Vambe 2008: 135), became a viable solution. “Discourse of Dirt and Disease” by Harris (2008) explores the discourse of dirt in the Zimbabwean colonial and postcolonial contexts and considers the discursive context in which Murambatsvina occurred. Harris argues that Murambatsvina is symptomatic of various government anxieties about the loss of control of urban population irrespective of political affiliation (2008: 40). The government of Zimbabwe argued that Murambatsvina was aimed at “arresting disorderly or chaotic urbanization, including its health consequences; stopping illegal parallel market transactions and reversing environmental damages caused by inappropriate urban agricultural practices” (Tibaijuka 2005: 20).

2. Interview: Peter Fabricious, Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, April 7, 2010.

3. Interview: Nick Dawes, Mail and Guardian head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg, June 1, 2010.

4. Interview: Peter Fabricious, Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, April 7, 2010.

5. Interview: Nick Dawes, Mail and Guardian head office, Rosebank, Johannesburg, June 1, 2010.


7. Interview: Peter Fabricious, Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, April 7, 2010.

8. Chimurenga means the struggle or fight for liberation. There are several chimurengas that have taken place in the history of Zimbabwe, with the first one dubbed the first Chimurenga that saw Zimbabwe attain independence. Chimurenga therefore metaphorically represents the continuous struggle for liberation, politically, socially, and economically in Zimbabwe. In Shona, the word means the revolution. Fast-track program was dubbed the third Chimurenga. The government argued that white settlers had seized the land from blacks and it was correcting a historical wrong. Under the program, white commercial farmers were forced off their farms by militants led by veterans of Zimbabwe’s war of independence. See www.voanews.com.
11. Interview: Peter Fabricious, Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, April 7, 2010.
12. Interview: Peter Fabricious, Scusi restaurant, Parkview, Johannesburg, April 7, 2010.

REFERENCES


Mugabe Must Go

Fredrick Ogenga


