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Albert Chibuwe

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LANGUAGE AND THE (RE)PRODUCTION OF DOMINANCE: ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION-PATRIOTIC FRONT (ZANU-PF) ADVERTISEMENTS FOR THE JULY 2013 ELECTIONS

Albert Chibuwe

University of Johannesburg
albertchibuwe@yahoo.co.uk

ABSTRACT

Language is a political tool used to legitimise, delegitimise, produce and (re)produce dominance. In Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF advertisements for the July 2013 elections were an attempt to deploy language to (re)produce dominance. The advertisements were produced in the context of a power-sharing government comprising ZANU-PF and the MDCs. Adopting sign theory, the article uses legitimisation analysis to explore the ways in which ZANU-PF used language to retain dominance. Research revealed that ZANU-PF legitimated its dominance on the basis of performance, for example, implementing the multiple currencies system after the Zimbabwe dollar's collapse and delivering a constitution that guarantees the values espoused by the liberation struggle. Mugabe's incomparable "wisdom and deftness" in handling matters of state, ZANU-PF's care for ordinary urban ratepayers and economic indigenisation were used to justify the party's dominance. It also legitimated its rule by portraying the MDC-T as an uncaring, dishonest and sell-out party, thus delegitimising it while skilfully concealing its own blame in the collapse of the economy post-2000.

Keywords: anti-imperialism; election advertisements; election discourse; legitimisation; MDC-T; ZANU-PF; Zimbabwe



INTRODUCTION

The July 2013 elections in Zimbabwe were held in the context of a Government of National Unity (GNU) formed in 2009 following the September signing of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)-brokered Global Political Agreement (GPA) between the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)¹, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and the MDC-T.² The agreement was negotiated and signed following the disputed March and June 2008 presidential run-off elections,³ which opposition parties alleged were rigged and violent. The senatorial, parliamentary and council elections were not in dispute. The GNU, also known as the Inclusive Government (IG), which was sworn in in February 2009, was characterised by disagreements over policy issues and the implementation of agreed-on reforms. The MDCs accused ZANU-PF of resisting security sector and media reforms, while ZANU-PF claimed the call for security sector reforms was a Western ploy to weaken the country's security services.

Despite the disagreements, the GNU helped to halt Zimbabwe's economic decline and watered down the post-2000 anti-imperialist discourses and hate speech. In a bid to ensure that parties to the GPA would not promote violence and hate speech (see Articles 7, 10, 18 and 19 of the GPA), the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) was put in place, with all three parties seconding members. However, the state-controlled media on the one hand continued to publish a series of damning articles about Morgan Tsvangirai's sex scandals. On the other hand, the private press published articles alleging that President Mugabe was ill due to old age (see, for example, *The Standard* 2014, 1–2). In this context, the 2013 elections were for ZANU-PF a battle for survival and an opportunity to complete the unfinished business of the 2008 presidential elections. Mugabe indicated, for instance, that ZANU-PF was going to “fight like a wounded lion” (*Daily News* 11/12/2012, par. 12) during the elections, which pitted the party against the MDC-T and other smaller parties such as the smaller MDC faction led by Welshman Ncube; but ZANU-PF made it clear that the real threat to its hold on power was the MDC-T.

In this context, the present article focuses on the communicative war that ensued. It asks, in referring to the July 2013 election campaign in Zimbabwe, what techniques and discourses ZANU-PF used to reproduce its dominance. In light of Sonderling's (2014, 163) claim that communication resembles moves and counter-moves similar to

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- 1 The Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front has been in power since independence on 18 April 1980.
 - 2 The MDC split in 2005: a smaller MDC faction was led by Arthur Mutambara (now led by Welshman Ncube). Morgan Tsvangirai remained leader of the bigger faction which contested as MDC-Tsvangirai in the 2008 elections, in an attempt to distinguish itself from the then Mutambara-led MDC.
 - 3 Tsvangirai won the March 2008 election but failed to garner an outright majority of 50 plus 1 per cent. The opposition rejected the result as rigged. A presidential run-off was called for 27 June 2008, from which Tsvangirai withdrew citing violence against his supporters by ZANU-PF.

the blows exchanged in a boxing match, what kind of language games did ZANU-PF play to reclaim and maintain its dominance?

ZANU-PF'S LANGUAGE GAMES POST-2000

Post-2000, Zimbabwe was characterised by increased contestations between the ruling ZANU-PF and the opposition MDC on land reform, in which white-owned farms were compulsorily acquired for the resettlement of landless peasants (see Freeman 2005; Mazango 2005). ZANU-PF and its sympathisers hailed the programme as the 3rd *Chimurenga*,⁴ designed to finish the “unfinished business” (land reclamation) of the 1970s liberation war (the 2nd *Chimurenga*) and to prevent the British ‘puppets’/the MDC (see Mazango 2005; Muzondidya 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009b) from bringing back colonisation. The selective adoption of war language is noted: *Chimurenga* (war) confirms Sonderling’s (2013, 6) argument that “the only certainty is that communication generally follows the model of war because language has its origin in fighting and war”. The 3rd *Chimurenga* was, for ZANU-PF, ‘a war’ designed to bring about economic independence through land reform and economic indigenisation. Consequently, increasingly liberation - wartime physical attacks and terminology of cooption, coercion, legitimisation, delegitimation and denial were used, including such words as “sell-outs”, “puppets”, “patriots” and “imperialists” (see Freeman 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003; 2009b, 69; Ranger 2004; 2005).

The discourse accompanying the *Chimurenga* was, however, narrow and exclusionary (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003; 2009b; see also Ranger 2004; 2005) as it divided Zimbabweans into puppets and patriots. In terms of this discourse, MDC supporters and mostly urban voters were deemed sell-outs, while rural peasants and all ZANU-PF supporters were deemed patriots and authentic Zimbabweans (Freeman 2005; see also Mazango 2005; Muzondidya 2009). ZANU-PF justified its dominance on the basis of having liberated the country, while it delegitimised the MDC as a front for Western imperialists and dispossessed white farmers, and thus not an authentic Zimbabwean political party worthy of ruling the country even if it won elections (Freeman 2005). The period was further characterised by economic empowerment and indigenisation discourse in which the regime advocated for 51 per cent local ownership of the mining sector.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The origins of political advertising can be traced to mainstream marketing, where it is used to sell volumes of goods. In business, advertising is used to supplement the functional utility of goods through the manipulation of signs (Williams 1993). In the commercial production process, goods are produced as signs and signs are produced

4 *Chimurenga* is Shona for ‘war of liberation’.

as goods, such that the goods are given value by the differential signs with which they are associated (Baudrillard, Lovitt and Klopsch 1976). The signs attached to the goods are valorised societal signs that advertisers lift from society and attach to their goods in order to give them value (Harris 1996). The goal of this process of advertising and/or branding is to achieve maximum positive differentiation over the competition (Jain n.d). It is a process that has been adapted to politics, such that its increasing centrality has led Falkowski and Cwalina (2012, 10) to argue that “modern democracy has found itself in ‘the age of manufactured images’”. Political advertisers are ‘image makers’ who attempt to win votes through the manipulation of images. Through these manufactured images, politicians brand themselves, their parties and policies in ways that are designed to differentiate them from the competition. This manufacturing of images through political advertising and/or branding enables politicians to gain votes through positive differentiation from the opposition (see Butler, Collins and Fellenz 2007, 97; Dickson and Ginter 1987; Downer 2013, 5). It is a process that “leads to a build-up of demand” (Dickson and Ginter 1987, 2). Advertising plays a key role in electoral politics and in the engineering of consent in any polity (Bernays 1947; Kaid 2012; Lilleker 2006), including dictatorships (Menon 2008). It enables politicians to gain votes or “engineer[] consent” (Bernays 1947), while simultaneously enabling the citizenry to make informed political decisions (Lilleker 2006; Pinkleton, Um and Austin 2002). It is possible to differentiate between negative/attack, advocacy and comparative advertising (Lilleker 2006; Pinkleton et al. 2002).

Understanding that in the process of manipulating discourse, “the rationality of the sign is based on the exclusion” and discrimination of others (Baudrillard et al. 1976, 115) enables one to read the ZANU-PF advertisements in ways that avoid simplistically castigating the discourse as bankrupt nationalism, nativism, character assassination, patriotic history and/or dictatorial (see Kriger 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003, 2009; Ranger 2004). There is value in acknowledging that consensus, which entails either the cooption or pulverisation of opponents in the language game, can only be achieved through terror (Sonderling 2013, 3). From this perspective, negative political advertising and comparative advertising are acts of terror used in political contestation (see Lilleker 2006; Meirick 2002; Waldahl 2005; Žižek 2007) designed to gain the originator positive differentiation. Negative advertising (terror) – and its sub-type comparative advertising – is the ultimate mobilising principle, even in democracies (see Žižek 2007).

Implied in the foregoing is that political advertisements emerge in opposition to other advertisements in the same genre. For example, ZANU-PF’s patriotic history and journalism of the post-2000 era (see Muzondidya 2009; Ranger 2004; 2005) emerged in opposition to the MDC’s counter-discourses of “democratisation, human rights and good governance” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009a, 70). Arguing that, as signs, advertisements are an ideological site of struggle (Clark and Ivanic 1997, 29) whose meanings are multiple and contextual, the article also utilises sign theory to understand the meanings (see Metro-Roland 2011, 2) of the ZANU-PF newspaper advertisements published in

July 2013. There is value in utilising sign theory since it examines how advertisers plunder the past for images, lift them from their original contexts and purify them into signs attached to new products (see Baudrillard 1994, 88; Harris 1996, x). The centrality of semiotics in the creative process in advertisements (Stokes 2003) also calls for the utilisation of sign theory. The discriminatory nature of the sign (Baudrillard et al. 1976, 115), which emerges in opposition to other signs, renders valid the argument that communication is war (Sonderling 2014, 163). From this perspective, the article treats ZANU-PF newspaper advertisements (discourse) for the July 2013 elections as moves and counter-moves resembling the blows exchanged during a boxing match (Sonderling 2014, 162–163) in which Zimbabwe becomes a boxing ring. The article examines the moves and counter-moves which ZANU-PF made in order to eliminate the opposition from the communicative field, whilst simultaneously legitimising its dominance.

ON LEGITIMATION ANALYSIS

The article utilises qualitative research, but the researcher's epistemological positioning is interpretivism, which finds meanings in phenomena (Schwandt 2003, 296). From this position, reality is subjective and contexts affect the meaning of texts such that even though a great deal has been written about ZANU-PF, it is not unusual for researchers to attribute different meanings to a single phenomenon (Corbin and Strauss 2008, 50; Schwandt 2003, 302). Analysts never reach a final and correct interpretation (Schwandt 2003, 302), since interpretation is their "impressions of ... data" (Corbin and Strauss 2008, 49). Furthermore, texts have multiple rather than fixed meanings "that could be 'found', 'identified', and 'described' for what they are" (Krippendorff 2004, 22).

Specifically, data for this study were collected through archival research, where the researcher built his own archives (see Murchison 2010, 165) consisting of all the major national newspapers. From this archive, all ten ZANU-PF advertisements which appeared in *The Patriot*,⁵ *The Standard*, *Daily News* and *Newsday* newspapers of 21–30 July 2013 were purposively selected. Four privately owned newspapers were purposively selected, because ZANU-PF did not place advertisements in any state-controlled newspapers.⁶ The advertisements were subjected to legitimation analysis (Van Leeuwen 2007, 109) – a strand of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The study

5 The *Patriot*, which according to rumour is a project of the country's spy agency, the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), is pro-ZANU-PF. Given the secretive nature of CIO it is difficult to verify whether it indeed owns the paper. Critics have always argued that the country's spy agency is central to ZANU-PF's power retention strategies.

6 Perhaps it is because the state-controlled media are known to be pro-ZANU-PF, while the privately owned media are largely pro-opposition. Maybe placing their advertisements in the privately owned press was designed to tap into the opposition supporters and sympathisers who are believed to be the main consumers of private media in Zimbabwe. The observation that ZANU-PF did not place any advertisements in the state-controlled print media under the Zimpapers stable was confirmed by journalist friends at Zimpapers.

does not, however, utilise the more linguistic form of CDA, but rather a more informal form of discourse analysis that is prevalent in media and journalism studies.

The study examines the tactics and/or signs which ZANU-PF used to legitimise (beautify), delegitimise (uglify) on the basis of ‘facts’, and simultaneously distance (proximise) itself from the MDC-T (Mazid 2008, 438; Van Dijk 1993, 264; Van Leeuwen 2007). As Van Dijk (1993, 263) notes, “the justification of inequality involves two complimentary strategies, namely the positive representation of the own group, and the negative representation of the others”. It explores how ZANU-PF used differentiation “to contrast themselves with their opponents [the MDC-T], their views with an opponent’s views ... to make both alliances and distinctions” (Mazid 2008, 450; see also Van Leeuwen 2007). The researcher operates within an ideological square (legitimation and delegitimation), since dominance can be reproduced through the following modes of discourse: “overt support, enactment, representation, legitimation, denial, mitigation or concealment of dominance among others” (Van Dijk 1993, 250).

The study examines the persuasive tactics/moves through which statements in the advertisements sought to reproduce, conceal, justify/deny dominance and seek credibility. It explores the use of argumentation in ZANU-PF’s advertisements, that is, how it used double-speak or the shield-and-weapon strategy (Mazid 2008; Van Dijk 1993). The unsaid or “incompleteness which is part and parcel of argumentation, concealment and positive self-presentation” (Van Dijk 1993, 276) is also examined. It is on this argument based on ‘facts’ and ‘incompleteness’ that the credibility of ZANU-PF’s legitimation, concealment and denial of dominance, as well as its delegitimation of the MDC-T rests. The study interrogates, in certain instances, the choice of words and how hyperbole was used in ZANU-PF’s advertisements to portray a positive image of the self and a negative image of the opposition (Van Dijk 1993, 264). In addition, the source(s) or experts quoted (if any) in its advertisements to lend credibility to the positive portrayal of the self and the negative portrayal of the opponent (Van Dijk 1993, 264), are examined.

The study analyses how the following aspects were used to legitimise ZANU-PF and Mugabe: an awareness and/or assertion of the target audiences’ needs and wants, and the “reinforcement of global and indisputable ideological principles, charismatic leadership projection, boasting about one’s performance [and] positive self-presentation” (Mazid 2008, 438). These strategies are what Van Dijk (1993, 264) calls persuasion moves that lend credibility to “semantic ‘content’: statements that directly entail negative evaluations of THEM, or positive ones of us”. However, Van Leeuwen (2007, 92) identifies four forms of legitimation: authorisation, moral evaluation, rationalisation and mythopoesis, which can be used “separately or in combination ... to legitimize ... to de-legitimize, to critique”. How ZANU-PF used these tactics of legitimation in the July 2013 electoral contest in Zimbabwe is explored. Also investigated are ZANU-PF’s use of awareness or assertion of the target voters’ needs and wants; and the ways in which it sought to sell the party and its leader, Robert Mugabe. Finally, the study examines how

the ruling party sought to direct voters' attention towards its achievements, rather than its failures.

In the analysis of the advertisements, the researcher is reflexive and critical since he is a Zimbabwean who experienced the country's post-2000 economic and political turmoil. As a critical scholar, the researcher cannot afford to be neutral as "the point of critical discourse analysis is to take a position [since analysis] is not – and cannot be – neutral" (Van Dijk 1993, 2, 250; see also Kress 1996, 15).

FACT VERSUS FICTION; A CARING VERSUS AN UNCARING PARTY

Breaking with post-2000 tradition, ZANU-PF advertisements generally refrained from attacking the person of the MDC-T leader, Morgan Tsvangirai, or the party's candidates, despite making use of attack advertising. Unlike in previous elections, the party also largely refrained from the fear appeal or intimidation which critics had come to associate with it. The party utilised football discourse, with *bhora muggedhi-ibhola egedini* (Put the ball in the net) as its campaign slogan. The slogan was influenced by the 2008 *Operation bhora musango* (kick the ball out), in which ZANU-PF parliamentary and senatorial candidates urged their supporters to vote for them, but to "kick the ball out" – i.e., not to vote for Mugabe as president. ZANU-PF candidates campaigned against Mugabe, allegedly because they were disillusioned by his failure to step down before the elections. Mugabe's loss to Morgan Tsvangirai⁷ in the 29 March 2008 election was attributed to *bhora musango*. Thus, *bhora muggedhi ibhola egedini* in 2013 signified voting for Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

ZANU-PF also largely resorted to rebutting MDC-T claims through appropriating that party's discourse and turning it on its head to ridicule them. The rebuttals were quickly turned into attacks on the MDC-T. For example, in the 'Our manifesto has excited everyone' advertisement, ZANU-PF used the picture of MDC President, Morgan Tsvangirai, and Secretary General Tendai Biti and other officials holding a ZANU-PF manifesto to claim that 'Our manifesto has excited everyone'. The MDC had produced an advert with the same picture ridiculing the ZANU-PF manifesto, but ZANU-PF strategically turned that negative (attack on its manifesto) into a positive by using the same picture to claim that its manifesto had impressed even the opposition MDC.

In another advertisement, ZANU-PF turned the MDC's campaign message – claiming that it [the MDC] had implemented the multiple currencies policy – on its head and accused the MDC of dishonesty and failure to draw up policy during its time in government. In this advertisement, ZANU-PF used argumentation to legitimise itself

7 In the March 2008 election Mugabe lost the presidential election to Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC-T. However, Tsvangirai failed to get the required 50 plus 1 per cent of votes to ascend to the presidency. This resulted in a run-off election from which Tsvangirai withdrew citing violence against his supporters.

while simultaneously delegitimising its opponent. It argued as a ‘fact’ that the multiple currencies system was put in place by ZANU-PF, and that the MDC’s claims to have implemented the policy was ‘fiction’. ZANU-PF’s negative evaluation thus sketched the MDC as a dishonest party. That party’s dishonesty and failure to implement policy was the reason why, in ZANU-PF’s view, voters had to vote for the ruling party, having implemented the multiple currencies policy to alleviate citizens’ suffering. In the same move, ZANU-PF differentiated itself and created distance (proximisation) (see Van Dijk 1993, 264; Mazid 2008, 438) between itself (originators of policy which alleviated people’s suffering) and the MDC (a dishonest party that failed to come up with policy during five years in government). The choice of words such as ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ was designed to widen the gap between ZANU-PF (us/honest party) and the MDC (them/dishonest party). It is precisely on the basis of these distinctions that people were urged to vote ZANU-PF, rather than MDC-T. As Van Leeuwen (2007, 99) notes, “comparisons in discourse almost always have a legitimatory or de-legitimatory function”. The same techniques and tactics of differentiation, argumentation and proximisation were used in other two advertisements: ‘Council bills cancelled’ and ‘We will compensate you’. Here, ZANU-PF used positive self-presentation to boast about its exceptional performance, when compared to that of others, to legitimise itself.

ZANU-PF sought to shift the blame for the suffering brought about by the country’s use of the multiple currency system, onto the MDC. Ironically, in their 29 January 2009 advertisement, ZANU-PF ridiculed the MDC for claiming that it had introduced the multiple currencies, taking the credit for doing so prior to the swearing in of the GNU. In the ‘Council bills cancelled’ and ‘We will compensate you’ advertisements, ZANU-PF positively presented itself as the party that ‘cared’ and negatively portrayed the MDC as uncaring. It urged voters to vote for a government that cares and understands the plight of the people, unlike the MDC whose ministers were allegedly refusing to compensate people’s loss of bank savings and to cancel unfair electricity bills accumulated as a result of the adoption of multiple currencies. This incompleteness in the ZANU-PF discourse – where it did not acknowledge its own role in the suffering of Zimbabweans – is one tactic the party used to legitimise its rule. In the two advertisements, the party did not mention the negatives associated with the multiple currencies, but instead dwelt on the positives, strategically exposing the positives in two other separate advertisements where it accused the MDC of dishonesty in claiming to have introduced this system. The party thus used concealment (ignoring negatives) or the political advertising tactic of card stacking/selective omission. ZANU-PF concealed/omitted those factors that led to the adoption of multiple currencies, that is, the collapse of the Zimbabwe dollar due to political and economic crisis-induced hyperinflation. It concealed the fact that it had presided over the economic collapse that brought about citizens’ suffering in the first place. At the same time, it absolved itself of the negative impacts wrought by the introduction of multiple currencies (high electricity and water bills). This

incompleteness in the ZANU-PF discourse, where it failed to acknowledge its own role in Zimbabweans' suffering, is one tactic the party used to legitimise its rule.

ZANU-PF opted to assassinate the character of the MDC-T party, not its candidates, by delegitimising it as a dishonest and uncaring party, unconcerned about the plight of the urban poor and the Zimbabwean populace in general. By contrast, it legitimised itself as a caring party by identifying the needs of, amongst others, marginalised persons, groups and communities. This new tactic saw it claiming to have ensured that the new constitution guaranteed measures to empower the marginalised. It is a discourse that should be understood in the context of contestations around Zimbabwean-ness, ethnicity and complaints about marginalisation by various ethnic groups. Apart from the above, the choice of the word 'people' in some advertisements was intended to create emotional attachment between ZANU-PF and the citizenry. In 'The people's constitution', 'Council bills cancelled' and 'We will compensate you', ZANU-PF created the impression that it was a party of the people, that it cared deeply about them, whereas the MDC did not. It nevertheless used the terror of being ruled by a dishonest party to eliminate the MDC from the language game. This was a shift from its alleged tendency to assassinate the character of opposition leaders as imperialist stooges (see Mazango 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2003; Ranger 2004).

PUPPETS VERSUS PATRIOTS; HOMOSEXUALS VERSUS HETEROSEXUALS

In its 'Lest we forget' advertisement, ZANU-PF pinpointed the former white colonial masters as the enemy, using a colonial-era picture of a white man crossing a river riding on the back of a black man. And it advised: "Don't let them take you for a ride, again." The advertisement deliberately used 'them' (referring to the whites) without mentioning their race because that much was obvious. It created the impression that it was common sense that the whites were behind the MDC, which made the connection all the more powerful. Here, ZANU-PF relied on memory to delegitimise the MDC as a puppet party. It also used the word 'ride' both literally (piggy-back riding) and figuratively. And without the need to mention it explicitly, ZANU-PF implied a link between the MDC and the former white colonial oppressors – a connection made all the more powerful since it was taken as given. In so doing, ZANU-PF successfully 'uglified' the opponent while beautifying the self, without necessarily resorting to the crude fear appeal tactics of previous elections. It also uglified the MDC as sell-outs, while beautifying itself and its supporters as patriots.

The 'Lest we forget' advertisement, for example, implied that the MDC was a front for the former colonial masters, the whites, while ZANU-PF was the party of patriots. Again, in 'The people's constitution', ZANU-PF negatively portrayed the MDC's Tsvangirai as a sell-out and Mugabe as a patriot. The party boasted that it had ensured

that the new constitution would not recognise homosexuality and would guarantee the values of the liberation struggle, implying that a sell-out could not become president. It also boasted that 80 per cent of the views contained in the new constitution had come from ZANU-PF (see Mazid 2008, 148). Here, the party used positive self-presentation (we are a revolutionary and patriotic party) and negative presentation of the MDC (implied: homosexuals and sell-outs) (see Mazid 2008; Van Dijk 1993). ZANU-PF also used analogies (ZANU-PF = patriots; MDC-T = sell-outs) to legitimise itself while delegitimising its opponents. From a sign theory perspective, ZANU-PF produced itself as patriotic and patriots as ZANU-PF supporters, while simultaneously producing MDC supporters as sell-outs and sell-outs as MDC-T supporters. In addition, in the same advertisement, ZANU-PF ridiculed the MDC's claim to be a democratic party, urging voters to "vote for a party that knows that 'democracy' is not a word but a way of life". The implied meaning – especially the use of quote marks – was that the MDC was not a democratic party but it only used the word to fool voters. Thus, ZANU-PF delegitimised the MDC's democracy discourse by presenting itself as the more democratic party. The MDC was thus negatively presented as a pretender, which tied in well with ZANU-PF's argument that it had brought democracy to Zimbabwe and thus could not be lectured on the concept by either the MDC or the West.

The discourse on homosexuals and sell-outs should be understood in the post-2000 Zimbabwean context, in which ZANU-PF labelled the MDC as sell-outs and agents of regime change that acted as a front for British attempts to recolonise Zimbabwe (see Muzondidya 2009; Ranger 2005). The ruling party also alleged that there was a 'gay gangster' plot to unseat it due to Mugabe's characterisation of homosexuals as un-Christian, i.e., worse than dogs and pigs (see "Gays" 2013). Similarly, during the constitution-making process of the GNU era, ZANU-PF accused the MDC of trying to smuggle gay rights into the draft constitution. During the constitutional outreach programme, ZANU-PF urged its supporters to speak out against homosexuality. Thus Tsvangirai and the MDC were also accused of being a front for gays and lesbians; the 'gay gangsters'. ZANU-PF created the impression that as soon as the MDC was in power it would legalise homosexuality. Here, the party used moral evaluation to legitimise itself while delegitimising the MDC. As Van Leeuwen (2007, 97) notes, "legitimation [may be] based on moral values...[and may be asserted by phrases such as 'good' and 'bad' but can also be done through] adjectives such as 'healthy', 'normal', 'natural', 'useful' and so on. These adjectives are the tips of a submerged iceberg of moral values." In Zimbabwe, the submerged icebergs may be those biblical and traditional views that regard homosexuality as abhorrent. Associating the MDC with gays and lesbians was a blow meant to eliminate that party from the language game. It was aimed at delegitimising the MDC while simultaneously legitimising ZANU-PF as the guarantor of African traditions and Christianity, which both regard homosexuality as abhorrent and sinful.

EXPERT AUTHORITY: MUGABE ‘A GREAT MAN’ OF A ‘GOLDEN MIND’

ZANU-PF also “quoted credible sources” and a “charismatic leadership projection” (see Mazid 2008, 438) – or what Van Leeuwen (2007, 94) calls expert authority – to legitimise its dominance. In the ‘Chamisa’s secret Mugabe praise note’ advertisement, the ruling party rebutted opposition and private press claims that Mugabe was too old and frail to rule. ZANU-PF turned the attack on its head; it remained silent on claims that Mugabe was too old, instead arguing that he was a “great man” of a “golden mind – agile and special in many ways”, whose challengers (the aspirants to the presidency) “do not possess a quarter of the wisdom and deftness” he possesses “in dealing with matters of the state”. In the same movement, this defence of Mugabe was turned into an attack on his opponents. ZANU-PF used denial [he is not too old to rule], language as a shield [he is a great man of a golden mind] and a weapon [the aspirants do not possess even a quarter of the wisdom and deftness he possesses in dealing with matters of state] to legitimise Mugabe’s continued rule. ZANU-PF thus used a combination of expert authority [Mugabe is an expert statesman] and analogy [comparing his superior wisdom to that of his less skilled challengers] to legitimise the president’s continued dominance.

The legitimisation of Mugabe’s continued rule on the basis of his expertise dovetails nicely with ZANU-PF’s discourses of *Mugabe chete*⁸ (Mugabe only) which created (and still do) the illusion that there is no one, either within the party or the opposition, with the leadership credentials to replace him. It is a discourse that creates the impression that the history of independent Zimbabwe starts and ends with Mugabe’s leadership. It is indeed a discourse that has been used to perpetuate Mugabe’s rule and one that in 2013 was continued through the *bhora musedhi* (score the ball) discourse. Mugabe’s expertise in running the country was deemed unparalleled, and consequently he had to rule forever.

To lend credibility to their claims, ZANU-PF quoted Nelson Chamisa, the then MDC’s National Organising Secretary and Minister of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) in the GNU. Quoting credible sources is a technique of reproducing dominance (Van Dijk 1993, 264), thus ZANU-PF wanted to convince the MDC supporters that even their leaders acknowledged Mugabe as a special leader: “This is what Chamisa says and you know what? We agree.” As Van Leeuwen (2007) observes, in advertising, celebrity endorsements and/or role models also act as means of legitimising a product. Following on the above, Chamisa’s alleged endorsement of

8 Upon his return from a state visit to China at the beginning of September 2014, Mugabe was greeted by placard-waving ZANU-PF supporters who were allegedly not pleased about the election rigging that had taken place during the party’s Youth and Women’s League conferences. Some placards read *Mugabe chete* (Mugabe only).

Mugabe was intended to legitimise the latter in the eyes of MDC supporters who viewed him as a role model.

The advertisement, obviously targeted at MDC supporters, was intended to convince them that even Tsvangirai's closest confidantes acknowledged that the president's wisdom and expertise in state craft was greater than Tsvangirai's. The advert should also be understood in the context of media reports that Wikileaks cables revealed that Chamisa told the American ambassador that Tsvangirai was an indecisive leader. To authenticate that indeed Chamisa had said that of Mugabe, ZANU-PF included in the advertisement a picture of a very legible note, that Chamisa had allegedly authored, praising Mugabe. However, the name of the addressee was deleted, with the salutation "Hon" [Honourable] remaining to create the impression that it was during a cabinet meeting chaired by Mugabe (the only one who chairs cabinet meetings) that Chamisa authored the note as it refers "to the man in the chair ... Meetings are different with him". Thus the 'Hon[ourable]' was undeniably a fellow cabinet minister, as members of parliament and cabinet ministers usually address each other thus. ZANU-PF used differentiation and proximation to claim that Mugabe was different, since "meetings are different with him" and put a significant distance between him, Tsvangirai and other opposition candidates as untried pretenders to the throne.

It is possible that given the highly publicised alleged factional fighting in ZANU-PF as regards the succession, Chamisa could have been referring to those aspirants to Mugabe's post within ZANU-PF, rather than to opposition political leaders. It could be that the image – which was obviously lifted from its original context – had been purified and detached from the context it once referred to – possibly even the two alleged factional leaders in ZANU-PF. It is highly probable that the image of Chamisa's secret note was bastardised by ZANU-PF in an attempt to legitimise Mugabe while delegitimising Tsvangirai.

THANKING ZIMBABWEANS FOR A PEACEFUL VOTE

Finally, ZANU-PF tried to coopt the MDC and its supporters in its reproduction of dominance. In the 'What a peaceful campaign!' advertisement, ZANU-PF thanked Zimbabweans for "heeding our call for tolerance and brotherliness". Amongst a picture montage made up of ZANU-PF rallies there was also a clip of an MDC rally, implying that they were amongst the Zimbabweans being thanked. This signified a complete break with the past, where post-2000 ZANU-PF had characterised the opposition MDC and its supporters as sell-outs and not 'authentic Zimbabweans', while ZANU-PF supporters were depicted as patriots and true Zimbabweans (see Freeman 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). The exclamation mark in the headline was meant to show that the statement was an emphatic one, betraying strong emotions of gratitude. It was intended to leave no room for doubt and objection as to the peacefulness of the campaign. The exclamation mark provided "structural emphasis" (see Van Dijk 1993, 264). Further, the statement

“heeding our call for tolerance and brotherliness” was meant to reinforce the headline, attempting to show that unlike in previous elections that were characterised by violence and intimidation, in the July 2013 voting Zimbabweans chose to agree/disagree in peace and harmony. The phrase “our call” is meant to give ZANU-PF credibility for preaching the gospel of peace, as previously it had been accused of intimidation and violence. The phrases sought legitimation for the party through positive self-evaluation.

The emphasis on peace as a break with the past should be understood in the context of a GNU where all the parties were preaching peace and tolerance in the elections. It was also a context in which the international community was keenly watching proceedings – especially given the violence that had marred the heavily disputed 2008 presidential run-off elections. In this context, the advertisement could be viewed as a strategic move by ZANU-PF designed to forestall any likely rejection of its electoral victory by Western countries on the basis of violence being perpetrated against the party’s opponents. While the MDC-T had an advertisement prematurely celebrating victory, ZANU-PF instead thanked Zimbabweans for going to the polls in peace. It could be that it had learnt its lesson from the June 2008 election debacle, where the results were rejected by the opposition MDC, civil society and the international community, including SADC, on the basis of acts of torture, violence, murder and intimidation having been committed. Apart from the ordinary voters, the advertisement was probably strategically targeted at civil society, the opposition and the international community (some of whom had sent election observers) as these groups had (in previous elections) rejected ZANU-PF’s legitimacy to rule on the basis that it rigged the vote and meted out violence. The advertisement, placed in the *Daily News* on 30 July (a day before the elections) was designed to show that the campaign had been peaceful, thus the elections would be free and fair. If the elections were peaceful then they were free and fair, which meant that ZANU-PF’s legitimacy to rule was incontestable – it would be the legitimate winner. These actions thus constituted an attempt to pre-emptively legitimise ZANU-PF’s expected victory.

CONCLUSION

The article set out to investigate the persuasive tactics ZANU-PF used in the July 2013 elections in Zimbabwe, to reproduce its dominance. Premised on the claim by Sonderling (2013; 2014) that speaking or communication is war, the study found out that ZANU-PF strategically rebutted the MDC’s attacks on it and its presidential candidate. The ruling party turned defensive moves into attacking positions by, among others, using tactics such as skilfully maintaining silence on opposition claims that Mugabe was too old, while differentiating and distancing the party and its candidate from those of its opponents. The party also legitimised its domination on the basis of its achievements (such as implementing multiple currencies; ensuring that the new constitution guaranteed the gains of the liberation struggle and empowered minority

groups, peoples and communities; not recognising homosexuality). In the same vein, the party negatively presented the opposition as sell-outs while positively presenting its own supporters as patriots. Similarly, it strategically blamed the opposition MDC for the huge bills the urban poor were saddled with as a result of the adoption of multiple currencies, while concealing the fact that it had implemented the policy in the first place. In the same move, ZANU-PF skilfully delegitimised the MDC by branding it a dishonest party which had lied about introducing the multiple currencies system. ZANU-PF claimed that it had implemented the policy but it concealed (and in the other advertisements blamed the MDC for) the effects this policy had on depositors and urban rate-payers. Indeed, the study revealed that ZANU-PF's strategies reflected Sonderling's characterisation of communication as war, as it always sought to shield itself from the MDC blows while strategically landing some punches. It also mined the past, society and even the opposition (and opposition advertisements) for images which it plucked out of context, purified into a sign and attached to a new product: Mugabe (see Harris 1996, ix). The party further relied on the often effective football or war tactic of counter-attack, waiting for the opponent to attack first before hitting him hard on the counter-attack. Finally, it can be concluded that applying sign theory and war-centric communication theory to the study of political advertisements yielded fresh insights to the existing body of knowledge on the topic.

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