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'What a peaceful campaign!' The peace discourse as ZANU-PF's legitimacy seeking tool in the July 2013 election

Albert Chibuwe

Media and Society Studies Department, Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

State-sponsored electoral violence targeting opposition political party supporters prior to and in the aftermath of elections remains a recurring phenomenon in post-independence Zimbabwe. Significant literature shows that the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party are the main engineers and beneficiaries of this culture of electoral violence. Much scholarly work has focused on the violent side of Zimbabwe's electoral contests. This paper, however, focuses on the peace discourse deployed by ZANU-PF during the July 2013 election in an effort to win legitimacy both locally and globally. The paper deploys sign theory and hegemony to interrogate how ZANU-PF sought to avert a legitimacy crisis post-2013 election. Methodologically, the paper subjects selected advertisement(s) to semiotic analysis. The paper's findings show that ZANU-PF's peace discourse was designed to create the illusion that its dominance is premised on consent. This was intended to subvert the dominant view that its longevity in power is due to coercion.

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Introduction

The paper interrogates the peace discourse deployed by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) during the July 2013 election. It is a discourse that was utilised in the context of a Southern African Development Committee (SADC) guaranteed coalition government between ZANU-PF, its main challenger the Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and the now-defunct MDC faction then led by Arthur Mutambara. The backdrop to the discourse was also the extremely violent 2008 election. The paper's aim is to interrogate the peace discourse deployed by ZANU-PF in its print media election advertisements in a context where the deployment of its trusted weapon of violence was untenable. The paper seeks to complement earlier studies of Zimbabwean elections and ZANU-PF's power retention studies (CCJP, 2009; Chibuwe, 2017a, 2017b; Chuma, 2008; Dorman, 2006; Kriger, 2005; Lindgren, 2003; Masunungure, 2009; Moysé, 2009). Whereas these studies interrogated media framing of previous elections (Chuma, 2008; Moysé, 2009) ZANU-PF's use of violence and violent discourse (CCJP, 2009; Kriger, 2005; Masunungure, 2009), constituency gerrymandering, conflation of party and state, vote buying and outright rigging (Dorman, 2006; Kriger, 2005; Meredith, 2011); and how ZANU-PF's peace discourse rendered MDC's good governance

and democracy discourse redundant (Moore, 2013; Ncube, 2013); none has interrogated the actual peace discourse that ZANU-PF deploys to retain dominance. Even those studies that argue that Mugabe did not just rely on violence to retain power (Chibuwe, 2017a) did not make the peace discourse their major object of analysis in their studies. This paper does not seek to render irrelevant the above-mentioned studies but it seeks to augment them by interrogating the actual peace discourse ZANU-PF used to neutralise MDC-T's tried and tested post-2000 ZANU-PF de-legitimation tool: the good governance and human rights discourse.

Background

Post-2000 elections in Zimbabwe have always been characterised by violence and contested election results (see Kriger, 2005; Masunungure, 2004). But the 2008 elections will go down in history as the most violent election in Zimbabwe (see CCJP, 2009; Masunungure, 2009). The ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front's (ZANU-PF) Robert Gabriel Mugabe lost to Morgan Richard Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC-T) – who did not garner enough to win outright – during the first round of voting on 29 March 2008 (see CCJP, 2009). But the run-off election that happened on 27 June 2008 was a violent affair as ZANU-PF youths and the state security apparatus embarked on a systematic campaign of terror against MDC-T supporters especially in rural areas (see CCJP, 2009; Masunungure, 2009). Morgan Tsvangirai withdrew from the election citing beatings, torture and murder of his supporters though ZANU-PF insisted the withdrawal was null and void (Chibuwe, 2017a; Masunungure, 2009). The one-man election results were dismissed by the MDC-T, civil society, the SADC, Africa and the rest of the world as a sham election. The ZANU-PF regime was pressured by the international community and the crippling economic crisis at home to enter into talks with MDC led by Tsvangirai and MDC led by Arthur Mutambara. The end result was the signing of the Global Political Agreement between the three parties – an agreement that ushered in the Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2009 (Chibuwe, 2017a). This culture of violence has been a key feature of Zimbabwe's (electoral) contestations since independence in 1980 (see Lindgren, 2003; Masunungure 2004). The post-independence violence owes its origins in the equally violent liberation politics (see Masunungure, 2004; Tekere, 2006).

However, in a major break with the post-2000 tradition the July 2013 elections were peaceful (Chibuwe, 2017a, 2017b; Moore, 2013; Ncube, 2013) leading *invited* observers to declare the elections free and fair. Local civil society groups rejected the election as not free and fair. For its part, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) celebrated the election claiming to have delivered 'democracy on a platter' whilst the MDC [Movement for Democratic Change] rejected it as a 'huge farce' (Ncube, 2013, p. 100). The peace that characterised the election, it is arguable, masked the existence of subtle violence in the form of 'sending more or less implicit messages of "you know what to do if you don't want a repeat of mid-2008" (Moore, 2013, p. 60; see also Chibuwe, 2017a, 2017b). Despite these democratic deficiencies, addressing the media after ZANU-PF's first politburo meeting following the July 2013 election, the party's then national chairman (now spokesperson) triumphantly declared 'vox populi vox dei' (the voice of the people is the Voice of God) (Chibuwe, 2017a). The peace that characterised the election not only convinced observer missions to declare

the election free, fair and credible; it also rendered ineffective the reasons rendered by the opposition to discredit previous elections. As Ncube (2013, p. 100) notes, 'The peacefulness of the 2013 election and the absence of gross human rights abuses by ZANU-PF not only during these elections but since the formation of the coalition government [this government which comprised ZANU-PF and the two factions of the MDC was formed following the disputed 2008 election] in 2009 seems to have diminished the effectiveness of the rights based discourse as a tool to make morally and politically based demands of or claims against the state' (see also Chibwe, 2017a, 2017b). It is important, in this light, to explore the peace discourse that ZANU-PF deployed in its July 2013 election advertisements. Such an exploration will elaborate how ZANU-PF sought, not only to eliminate the opposition from the language game (Chibwe, 2017b), but also to eliminate them from the electoral game, and the political arena locally, regionally and globally. This is significant especially considering that the human rights, democracy and good governance discourse have been the lynchpin on which the opposition's counterhegemonic project was premised post-2000 (Chibwe, 2017a; Ncube, 2013; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003). How this discourse was rendered redundant by ZANU-PF's peace discourse is worth academic scrutiny.

Post-2000's contesting discourses: anti-imperialism Vs human rights and democracy

It is worth noting that two polarised discourses dominated post-2000 Zimbabwe, that is, on one hand was ZANU-PF's anti-imperialism discourse whilst on the other hand was the MDC's democracy and human rights discourse (see Chibwe, 2017a; Ncube, 2013; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003). But in the July 2013 election campaign, the anti-imperialism discourse was muted (Chibwe, 2017a, 2017b). Similarly, violence as a campaign tool was discouraged (Chibwe, 2017a, 2017b). A key feature of the 2013 election was the absence of political violence but other less violent strategies of rigging such as vote buying and implicit threats were deployed (Ncube, 2013; see also Moore, 2013; Chibwe, 2017a). The elections were non-violent but were not essentially free and fair (Moore, 2013; Ncube, 2013). They were, 'instruments of authoritarian rule rather than instruments of democracy' (Schedler 2006 as cited by Ncube, 2013, p. 107). It is arguable that, the absence of violence notwithstanding, the elections continued a long tradition of post-2000 elections where the vote has become what Willems (2012) calls an embedded ritual. This non-violence, however, was a break with the post-2000 tradition of violent elections (Chibwe, 2017a, 2017b; Ncube, 2013). This no-violence or peace of the elections and the absence/decline of human rights abuses during the coalition government 'seem to have curtailed the deployment of the human rights discourse to demonstrate the illegitimacy of ZANU-PF regime' (Ncube, 2013, p. 107). This was to prove problematic for the MDC as its selling points had almost become redundant during the 2013 elections. But for ZANU-PF this was a positive.

The absence of violence and human rights abuses in the July 2013 election and the subsequent endorsement of the poll by observers (African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC)) as a true reflection of the people's free will solve the crisis of legitimacy that had always haunted ZANU-PF post-2000 (see Chibwe, 2017a; Moore, 2013; Ncube, 2013). This absence of violence, it is arguable, was accompanied by messages that dissuaded people from engaging in violence. In other words, it is arguable that restraining

itself from brutalising its supporters and opposition supporters (see Ncube, 2013, p. 107), was accompanied by a peace discourse (Chibuwe, 2017a, 2017b). In this light, it is imperative to explore the peace discourse that accompanied the peace that characterised the July 2013 elections so as to unravel how ZANU-PF sought to prevent the post-election crisis of legitimacy that had dogged its rule post-2000. The centrality of discourse to power seizure and retention (see (Foucault, 1980; Van Dijk 2006) makes this paper worthwhile. The paper builds on observations by Chibuwe (2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2013) that: a.) ZANU-PF does not solely rely on coercion – it also uses language to reproduce dominance; b.) Mugabe still retained (at the time of the 2013 elections) some measure of popular support. The paper also builds on Ncube (2013), but whereas Ncube explores the polarised discourse of post-2000 and how the peace that prevailed during the 2013 elections rendered that discourse especially, the opposition's democracy and human rights discourse ineffective as a counter-hegemonic tool in the 2013 elections, he does not grapple with the peace discourse that ZANU-PF deployed to neutralise the opposition discourse. In other words, Ncube (2013) grapples with the effects that the peace that prevailed in the July 2013 had on the democracy and human rights discourse in Zimbabwe; a discourse that had been one of the two contending discourses post-2000. Similarly, Moore (2014) interrogates whether the elections were a sign of the 'death or dearth' of democracy in Zimbabwe whilst Moore (2013) proffered some theses to explain the election. None interrogated the discourse that ZANU-PF deployed to sidestep both the opposition and regional and international community. It is the intention of this paper to fill that void by exploring the discourse ZANU-PF deployed in its use of peace as a tool to neutralise the opposition's post-2000 tried and tested discourse of democracy and human rights. Moore's (2013, 2014) argument that the crushing manner of the opposition defeat undid 15 years of opposition efforts to bring benefits and choice through electoral policies calls for a measured analysis of ZANU-PF's peace discourse. It is this discourse, coupled with the absence of violence, that made regional and continental observers declare the elections free, fair and credible and in the process lend legitimacy to ZANU-PF whilst making opposition and civil society claims of vote fraud ring hollow (see Moore, 2013, 2014; Ncube, 2013). This, together with Van Dijk's (2006, p. 278) observation that, 'Politics is one of the social domains whose practices are virtually discursive; political cognition is by definition ideologically based; and political ideologies are largely reproduced by discourse', makes the paper worthwhile. The paper specifically interrogates ZANU-PF's peace discourse for July 2013 with a view to establishing how it rendered the opposition's counter-hegemonic project ineffective.

Theoretical and methodological note

Theoretically, the paper is grounded in Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony and sign theory. Hegemony is rule by consent where the subordinate groups voluntarily accept their subordination (Gramsci, 1971). In the neo-liberal western democratic tradition this consent, which grants legitimacy to a political authority, is achieved through; periodic, peaceful, credible, free and fair elections. As Adejumobi (2000, p. 60) argues,

Conceptually, elections symbolize popular sovereignty and the expression of the 'social pact' between the state and the people, defining the basis of political authority, legitimacy and citizens' obligations. It is the kernel of political accountability and a means of ensuring reciprocity and exchange between governors and the governed.

Consent entails that the regime does not need to constantly rely on coercive instruments of the state to retain power (Adejumobi, 2000) as the subordinate classes view their domination as common sense. However, in post-2000 Zimbabwe, the ruling ZANU-PF party has relied more on violence/coercion and other unorthodox strategies to retain power (Kriger, 2005; Masunungure, 2009; Moyse, 2009) than consent. It used what has come to be described as the carrot and stick approach where they persuade through promising things but if it fails to work they resort to violence. However, coercion/violence and threats of violence (CCJP, 2009; Moyse, 2009) a strategy whose deployment is evidence of the collapse of hegemony, was the main tool.

The utilisation of violence amongst a chain of other anti-democratic strategies by ZANU-PF resulted in the regime being dismissed as illegitimate – legitimate regime's rule is premised on consent. The west imposed sanctions whilst encouraging the regime to return to democracy and the rule of law. Given this background, in the 2013 election ZANU-PF and its coalition government partners; and other opposition parties preached peace. This is because rule by consent demonstrated through credible, free and fair elections is central to the legitimacy of the regime (see Adejumobi, 2000; Teshome, 2009). On the contrary, the brutalisation or death of even a single person signals the failure of hegemony. In the context of elections, the deployment of coercion or violence renders the whole process illegitimate. In this context, hegemony will be utilised to explore and interpret how ZANU-PF sought, through the peace discourse, to demonstrate that the election was credible, free and fair. The paper will interrogate how the party manipulated signs in order to gain hegemony and legitimacy. This is important given that ideology and/or discourse is the tool by which consensual control is attained and maintained (Foucault, 1980; Van Dijk, 2006). In other words, language is central to the establishment and retention of dominance (see Chibwe, 2017b).

The paper also utilises sign theory because advertisements are signs (see Metro-Roland, 2011; Stokes, 2003). The theory is useful since it helps us understand how signs are manipulated or come to mean what they mean in advertisements (see Baudrillard, 1981, 1983). In other words, the theory helps us understand how the signs simulate things or result in what Baudrillard (1983, 1994) calls simulation. Simulation is a process whereby the real (product and product utility/use value) are substituted by signs of the real (product sign value). For example, in the commercial sector shoes for women (product) that they wear to keep warm (utility value) may be substituted by beauty or beautiful feet (sign value) (see Packard, 1957). The dictum 'when selling shoes to women sell them beautiful feet, do not sell them shoes' (Packard, 1957) best captures how simulation occurs. As Foster (2010) and Williams (1993) note, advertisers augment product use value with product sign value. In the light of the foregoing, the paper deploys sign theory whilst semiotics is utilised to analyse the advertisements. Semiotics which is defined by Priest (1996) as the science or study of signs is the most appropriate method to use in the analysis of signs. It helps unravel the context in which the advertisements were produced and the ideological work that the text do (see also Fairclough, 2001; Metro-Roland, 2011). It is hermeneutic in nature and it 'breaks down the content of texts into their component parts and relates them to broader discourses' (Stokes, 2003, p. 72). In other words, the purposively selected ZANU-PF advertisement that is analysed is examined in context (intertextuality, political-economic and socio-cultural) because meaning is contextual (see Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999, 2007; see also Mick, 1986; Stokes, 2003). The meaning of a sign or word exists in

opposition to other signs or words within the same context (Deacon et al., 1999), and as a result, the selected advertisement will be analysed in opposition to an opposition MDC-T advertisement produced at the same time. The MDC-T advertisement prematurely celebrated electoral victory and it was placed in the newspaper at the same time as the ZANU-PF advertisement that was placed in *Daily News* of 20 July 2013, a day before the election. The MDC-T advertisement was also placed in the same paper on the same day.

I purposively selected this single ZANU-PF advertisement because it is the only one amongst the ZANU-PF print media election advertisements that explicitly talked about peace. In qualitative research, the focus is on meanings and not quantity of texts under study thus it is not unusual to analyse a single advertisement (see Deacon et al., 2007).

What a peaceful campaign! – A description

The 'What a peaceful campaign!' is a full-page advertisement (made up of a collage of pictures) that appeared in the *Daily News* of 30 July. The main picture on the advertisement shows a ZANU-PF campaign rally held at Aerodrome at Sakubva at Mutare (near Mutare Teachers' College, Sakubva 1 High School and Sakubva 2 High School) on 23 July 2013. The advertisement, however, does not indicate that the picture was taken at the Mutare rally but I know the place because I went to college near the venue of the rally. In the background on the picture are the Dangamvura-Fern Valley Mountains and the ZANU-PF green campaign truck. The branded truck was a key feature of ZANU-PF's rallies addressed by President Robert Mugabe across the country. I attended their rally in Gweru on 26 July 2013 and the truck was present. The crowd in the picture is clad in the ZANU-PF campaign regalia of predominantly green and yellow tee-shirts and caps. The other two clips at the bottom of the picture also show ZANU-PF rallies, as the people are clad in ZANU-PF's campaign gear. However, the advertisement has another small clip with red borders and people with red caps and red tee-shirts and this shows MDC-T supporters at a rally. MDC-T's colours are red and white, but for the July 2013 election, they predominantly used red. They are also thanked as part of 'Zimbabweans' who voted in peace. This advertisement is analysed in the context of an MDC-T advertisement celebrating the party's anticipated electoral victory on 31 July 2013.

On the same day (30 July 2013) that ZANU-PF placed the above advertisement in the *Daily News*, the MDC-T also placed an advertisement celebrating victory. In the foreground of the advertisement was a man dressed like a football goalkeeper wearing black shorts and a red jersey with the number 1 (one) inscribed at the front. His hands are raised and pointing at the sky in a goal-scoring celebration posture usually used by most football goalkeepers when their teams score. In the background are MDC-T crowds at a rally. The advertisement's headline is 'VICTORY' with the sub-headline 'Our team wins. Everyone Wins. Zimbabwe Wins. GAME OVER'. The advertisement utilised football imagery and this should be understood in the 2013 electoral context in which ZANU-PF's slogan was 'bhora musedhi-ibhola egedini' which literally translated means 'put the ball in the net'. Football discourse dominated the 2013 electoral contest (see Chibuwe, 2017a; Ncube, 2016). At the bottom of the advertisement in-between the party symbol (an open palm with the face of the late MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai) and the picture of Tsvangirai and his wife Elizabeth Macheke is the slogan 'JULY 31: TIME TO MOVE TO MORE'. It is arguable that, for the MDC-T, putting Tsvangirai's wife and not Tsvangirai only in the advertisement was an attempt to rebut ZANU-PF's attacks during the election that the MDC-T leader was

a womaniser. They sarcastically name called him 'Mr Open Zip Shut Mind'. It was an attempt at projecting him as a happily married man contended with his wife. This is the advertisement in whose context the selected ZANU-PF advertisement will be analysed.

Victory vs peace: a case of different celebrations?

ZANU-PF's thanking of Zimbabweans for voting in peace in contrast to MDC-T's premature celebration was strategic. While the MDC-T on 30 July 2017 and before prematurely celebrated victory, ZANU-PF thanked Zimbabweans for voting in peace. The MDC-T's premature celebration of victory implies that indeed the elections were peaceful, credible, free and fair. It inadvertently weakens their arguments before the election that it was not going to be free and fair. By celebrating victory, rather prematurely, MDC-T scored an own goal. In contrast and strategically, ZANU-PF thanked Zimbabweans for a peaceful election. It could be that it had learnt its lesson from the 2008 election debacle. The 27 June 2008 presidential run-off election results were rejected by the opposition MDC, civil society and the international community, including SADC, on the basis of torture, violence, murder and intimidation. In the light of this, ZANU-PF celebrated peace because it had learnt that violence will not gain it the much needed legitimacy. It had to be seen to have delivered a free, fair and credible election and thus celebrating the peace was meant to emphasise the fact that the campaign period had been characterised by peace. ZANU-PF, it is arguable, was acutely aware that power without legitimacy meant that they would have to spend five years defending their legitimacy because the absence of consensual control means that the elite may have to rely on coercive control more often. This advertisement, it is arguable, was probably strategically targeted at civil society, the opposition and the international community (some of whom had sent election observers), as these had in previous elections rejected elections outcome post-2000 on the basis that ZANU-PF resorted to violence and rigging amongst many other anti-democratic practices to 'win' elections. But most importantly, ZANU-PF wanted to convince the international community that the election was a true reflection of the free will of people – the 'popular sovereignty and the expression of the "social pact" between the state and the people' upon which ZANU-PF's authority, legitimacy and the citizens' obligations will be premised (Adejumobi, 2000, p. 60).

The advertisement and the attendant peace messages that ZANU-PF preached during the election were meant to avert the crisis of legitimacy in the post-election regime. In previous elections, ZANU-PF was accused of using youth militia, the police, intelligence and the military to intimidate, beat up, torture and murder opponents. The death or brutalisation of a single person [in an election] signals the failure of hegemony and thus, for ZANU-PF, demonstrating that no one had been beaten up, tortured, threatened or murdered was a way of signalling that the elections were a true reflection of the people's free will. It is on the basis of the citizenry's free will that political authority is premised. The peace discourse deployed by ZANU-PF was meant to create the veil of a radical break with its behaviour in recent past elections in which; ZANU-PF youth militia a state security agents reportedly brutalised and even murdered opposition supporters; police and military commanders had openly declared their support for ZANU-PF and disdain for the opposition; the state-controlled media were openly biased against the opposition; and there were claims of constituency gerrymandering amongst

other ills that made the elections deeply flawed and thus anti-democratic (see CCJP, 2009; Dorman, 2006; Kriger, 2005; Moyses, 2009).

The ZANU-PF advertisement's meaning can also be fully understood in the context of a press conference held by the then President Robert Gabriel Mugabe at State House on 30 July. At this press conference, Mugabe, as reported by the *Daily News* and *Newsday* of 31 July among others, promised a smooth transfer of power to the opposition if he lost the election. He indicated that if the opposition MDC-T were to win the election he would gladly hand over power to Morgan Tsvangirai. He also dispelled fears that the Army Generals would stage a coup should he lose, saying that the Generals, not the army, were expressing their personal views and were bound by military discipline and would do no such thing. Given the events of November 2017 in which the military overthrew Mugabe himself after 37 years in power, one is bound to speculate that whereas Mugabe might have thought the Generals were merely sabre rattling, in truth they meant it. Mugabe was mistaken. Mugabe is quoted by *Newsday* as having said, 'If you go into a process and into a competition where there are only two outcomes—a win or a loss—if you lose you must surrender and those who have lost must also surrender' (Mpfu & Nleya, 2013, p. 3). The press conference was held at a time local media, civil society, the opposition and the international community were speculating on whether Mugabe and his then military backers would hand over power were they to be defeated by Morgan Tsvangirai. In this context, the press conference was thus meant to dispel fears of a possible 2008 repeat in which Mugabe with military, intelligence and police backing refused to hand over power to MDC. They held on to the election results for six weeks. In this context, the advertisement together with the press conference were part of a broad ZANU-PF strategy meant to avert the crisis of legitimacy that would result from the elections being declared violent, not credible, and not free and fair. The strategy, it is arguable, also included military Generals not making any political utterances likely to be construed as voter intimidation. The Generals' uncharacteristic silence during the election campaign lends credence to this argument. However, strategically the military itself remained silent and did not unequivocally indicate that they will accept an opposition victory. The silence, it is arguable, was in itself meant to send a warning to the voters to vote 'correctly'.

The advertisement and the press conference, it is arguable, were meant for both local and international stakeholders. It is, however, plausible that they were meant mainly for the international community and the country's regional and continental peers who had observer teams in the country for the election. The regional Southern African Development Community (SADC) had a keen interest in the election since it was the guarantor of the coalition government that was in place between 2009 and 2013. The intention of the advertisement was to create the impression that if the election was peaceful then it was free and fair. ZANU-PF wanted to manage *public opinion*. The sign peace became a tool to simultaneously secure ZANU-PF's legitimacy in the post-election period whilst rendering the MDC-T's expected rejection of election results ineffective. It was a double-edged sword. It is thus arguable that in rendering the MDC-T's human rights and good governance discourse irrelevant in 2013 (Moore, 2013, 2014; Ncube, 2013), ZANU-PF utilised practical peace and the peace discourse. In other words, it kept its alleged militias and military-security establishment on a tight leash in 2013 in a bid to neutralise the opposition's counter-hegemonic human rights and democracy. ZANU-PF appropriated this discourse through not utilising

violence and through preaching peace and strategically used it to weaken the opposition. This strategy was helped on inadvertently, as argued earlier, by the MDC-T's premature celebration of victory; a celebration that implied that the campaign period provided conditions for a credible, free and fair election.

The peace discourse unlike the violence of 2008 and other previous elections was a tool designed to hoodwink the locals, civil society (both local and global), SADC and the global community especially western governments, into believing that the elections were a true reflection of the free will of the people. Peace and peace discourse were a vital cog to this legitimacy seeking strategy by ZANU-PF – they became a symbol of consent. In other words, ZANU-PF deliberately conflated peace and, free and fair elections. It is through free and fair elections that hegemony or consensual control is attained. Peace was conflated with consensual control/hegemony and political legitimacy. As Moore argues the death of a single person signifies the failure of hegemony hence demonstrating that none died became key in attaining legitimacy from, if not from the citizens – who knew all too well ZANU-PF's subtle threats during the campaign – then from SADC and the global community who, no doubt, most likely missed the subtle threats and other subtler ways of manipulating the vote. However, the absence of violence may not necessarily equate to credible, free and fair elections and consensual control. The discourse was meant to negate other forms of anti-democratic practices that had been noted in previous elections through creating the illusion of consensual control.

ZANU-PF's co-option of MDC-T in order to dominate

ZANU-PF co-opted MDC-T supporters in the hegemonic project by including a clip of MDC-T supporters in a collage of pictures in the advertisement. The greatest space, strategically, is occupied by the picture of the ZANU-PF Mutare rally. Strategically too, two of the three smaller clips that make up the collage, feature ZANU-PF supporters. The intention was arguably to create the illusion that ZANU-PF has more supporters than MDC-T and therefore electoral victory was guaranteed. It could have been designed to create the illusion that the opposition supporters are in the minority. The dominance of ZANU-PF spatially in the advertisement was meant to create the illusion that electorally the party is also dominant. Elections are a game of numbers and numerically the ZANU-PF supporters in the advertisement are superior to the MDC-T supporters. This is so by virtue of the larger space dedicated to ZANU-PF images. It was, it is arguable, a strategy to mentally prepare: the opposition for defeat and, the ruling party for victory. This was perhaps meant to avoid the usual opposition claims of election rigging and violence. The MDC-T sign in the advertisement was thus strategically appropriated and it became a tool to justify an expected ZANU-PF victory. In the context of the opposition advertisement celebrating victory, the image of the MDC-T supporters at a rally became a tool to reinforce the discourse of peace and inclusiveness. Inclusivity and tolerance of divergent views are some of the key features of a democratic election – there has to be free will. In previous elections being seen among opposition MDC supporters or with the opposition, campaign material could signal death or torture.

Given the above post-2000 reality, the inclusion of the MDC-T supporters amongst Zimbabweans being thanked reinforced the myth of peace and inclusiveness. In this

singular act, ZANU-PF cleansed the opposition supporters of the labels of sell-outs and the totemless that they had been ascribed post-2000 (see Freeman, 2005; Mazango, 2005; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2003). They were re-humanised and thus re-integrated as authentic Zimbabweans. This was intended to demonstrate that ZANU-PF had reformed and had abandoned its post-2000 politics of violence and torture where it stripped Zimbabweans, both literally and metaphorically, of their birthright – citizenship. Literally, descendants of migrant workers of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian origin were denied citizens and were thus denied the right to vote. They were labelled aliens and had problems accessing even a passport and their national identification cards were labelled as ‘alien’. Metaphorically, Zimbabweans in urban areas – which had proven to be opposition hotbeds post-2000- were labelled sell-outs and ‘totemless mabwidi’. Mabwidi was/is a derogatory term used to refer to Malawian migrant workers and their descendants. Mugabe, who ironically was accused of being of Malawian origin, labelled them as such. Opposition supporters in the rural areas were not spared either from being labelled as sell-outs and these bore the brunt of ZANU-PF’s violence. This was a discourse of exclusion and violence as tracing back to the liberation struggle being labelled a sell-out had dire consequences on the target. In Zimbabwe, the sign’s violence (Baudrillard, 1983) was followed by real physical violence and displacement of the target. The sign is violent and works by discrimination (Baudrillard, 1983). However, in 2013 the sign was strategically used to ‘violently’ obscure the presence of ‘violence’. In other words, violence was absent physically but present virtually. The ZANU-PF peace advertisement was, it is arguable, deployed strategically to discriminate against the possible rejection of the election results on the basis that the elections were not free and fair. It was meant to suppress, eliminate and/or forestall such signs or discourses and grant legitimacy to ZANU-PF. The advert or sign thus sought to violently submerge any future opposition rejection of an envisaged ZANU-PF election victory.

Conclusion

The paper, which complements Ncube’s (2013) study, concludes that the peace discourse that ZANU-PF utilised in the July 2013 election was meant not only to legitimise an envisaged ZANU-PF electoral victory but also to mask the presence of subtle threats directed at opposition supporters. The intention, as epitomised by the co-option of MDC as part of Zimbabweans thanked for being peaceful and brotherly, was to hoodwink the international community and the various observer missions that monitored the elections. It was meant to create the illusion that ZANU-PF had reformed that the Government of National Unity (GNU) efforts had yielded the desired results. The peace discourse was meant to forestall opposition and international community rejection of an envisaged ZANU-PF which would, in turn, gain ZANU-PF legitimacy and the backing of the international community at the expense of the opposition. The selected advertisement appeared to be targeted at Zimbabweans but it is arguable that it was instead targeted at the international community including the foreign observer missions that monitored the elections. These observers, significantly, did not include European or American since they had not been invited. But it is plausible that these western countries were also being targeted by the advertisement since they have diplomatic missions in the country. The peace discourse and the attendant images of both ZANU-PF and MDC-T supporters became an ideological tool

to render irrelevant the MDC-T's human rights, good governance and democracy discourse. It was designed to remove one of the major reasons the opposition had used successfully post-2000 to delegitimise ZANU-PF's rule: violence/coercion. The discourse was meant to create the illusion that ZANU-PF's win would be a true reflection of the free will of the people thus its rule will be consensual and therefore legitimate. The signs that ZANU-PF used obfuscated the presence of subtle threats and virtual violence whilst creating the illusion that any ZANU-PF victory will be a mirror of the Gramscian hegemony – rule by consent and not by coercion. On the basis of the above, the study concludes that discourse, whether violent or peaceful, has always remained one of ZANU-PF's key power retention tools even during the most violent of the country's elections. In the July 2013 election, the peace discourse became ZANU-PF's main trump card to gain legitimacy whilst rendering ineffective MDC-T's human and good governance discourse. Finally, it became a key tool in the death of the GNU which ZANU-PF always considered an inconvenience.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Albert Chibwe is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Indigenous Languages Media in Africa Research Entity, North West University, Mafikeng Campus and lecturer in the Media and Society Studies Department, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe.

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