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Violence in the Discourses of Violence - the Case of Zimbabwean Political Crisis

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Abstract

Zimbabwe has undergone a vicious political showdown and violence has been topical in the analysis of the Zimbabwean political crisis. This article analyses discourses on Zimbabwe since the advent of the Zimbabwean political crisis. It reveals that the discourse used has not only exacerbated violence but has also been violent to the readers of the literature. Further, it exposes encampments in the writings on Zimbabwean politics and the polarization that exists between neo-colonial and globalization forces against pan-African and nationalist forces. This schism has unleashed a whole new perception of Zimbabwe and its identity in the global community and has determined the nature of its relations to the same. This has choked attempts by Zimbabweans to tell the Zimbabwean story as it should be in terms of its history, identity and dignity for the heritage of Zimbabwe's future generations. This article is a product of the analysis of various discourses on Zimbabwe and advances the notion that political crisis in the country can only be realized should the violence in these discourses find peace. Through Critical Discourse Analysis we are able to pluck out the violence within the discourse and advances that political resolution to this crisis can only be realized through studies such as these.

Key words: Violence, Violent Discourse, Discourse of Violence

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a branch of discourse analysis (DA). Discourse analysis investigates how language is used in a given communicative context to achieve specific communicative goals. Fairclough (1993:135) notes the following regarding CDA; that it is, discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts; and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

Put differently CDA aims at making visible or

transparent the organic links or connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures as well as connections that might be opaque to the lay person (Sheyholislami, 2001:1). CDA therefore presupposes that power and dominance is not 'imposed' on others but that situations/context, power or power abuse may seem 'jointly produced' (Fairclough, 1993:250) for example when dominated groups are persuaded 'by whatever means' (ibid) that dominance is 'natural' or otherwise legitimate.

To this end CDA is read as discourse analysis with a critical dimension. Van Dijk (2004:25) stresses that CDA is to be viewed not as a theory or method but to be seen as a movement of theoretically very different scholars who focus on social issues and not primarily on academic paradigms. Thus CDA recognizes the many directions in the study and critique of

social inequality and human problems specifically focusing on the role of discourse in the reproduction and challenges discourses that seek to dominate or in our case to violet. Following van Dijk (1998a) CDA allows us to study and analyze discourses or texts either written or spoken with an intention to reveal discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and even notions of bias and violence. CDA further examines how these discursive sources are maintained, reproduced and even perpetrated within specific social, political and historical contexts. In this article therefore, it allows us to understand how discourse enacts, expresses, condones or contributes to the reproduction of violence in the discourses about the Zimbabwean political crisis. This is done by critically looking at the structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk or verbal interaction.

In CDA van Dijk (2004) focuses mostly on the role of power and how this power is discursively reproduced, enacted and legitimated in a given society. He says, discourse plays a fundamental role in the cycle of the reproduction of social power (van Dijk, 2004:25). Van Dijk (1993) thus creates a foundation of CDA and finds it as a study of the relations between discourse on one hand; power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the social analyst on the other in such social relationships (van Dijk, 1993:249). And central in CDA is that CDA critically targets the power elite while at the same time working in solidarity with the purported victims for the basic reason that their problems are real. In other words these are serious problems that threaten the lives or well-being of many and in our case the wellbeing of the reader of literature on violence in the discourses of violence where he/she is compromised. And here the real problem created by these discourses is violence on the reader whose psyche is highly affected and later affects his/her behavior or actions. If readers who seek to understand the Zimbabwean story, participate and rebuild the Zimbabwean image continue to be subjected to textual or discursive domination, psychological violence and intellectual harassment, it is essential therefore to evaluate the texts and discourses they are exposed to, events and their consequences from their point of view.

Successes of CDA are measurable. Van Dijk (1993) holds that its success is measured by its effectiveness and relevance as well as its contribution to change. Based on these, this article is highly interested in the Zimbabwean political contexts from which the social and historical is later determined. We employ CDA in the examination of style, rhetoric, and means of texts for strategies that aim to conceal social power and violet the reader. Writers, authors or text producers are responsive agencies of powerful social actors in the events represented in their texts. We seek however to highlight how readers are violated or operate under the shadows of violence and are at the mercy of discursive violence in their struggle to understand discursively, or act against political violence in Zimbabwe. Discourses are language based although social and historical actions also have a factor in the linguistic choices. And since CDA is a branch of discourse analysis; a branch that interrogates how language is used in specified contexts in the realizations of various communicative objectives, it deals not with isolated language properties but deals with texts as defined by Stubbs (1996) and these texts as discourses.

One assumption made by CDA is informed by the Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory which finds speakers or creators of a text making ideologically based choices on grammar and vocabulary; and these choices are consciously and unconsciously made and are 'principled and systematic' (Fowler et al, 1979:188).

Semiotically, de Saussure (1966) (in Manghani et al eds. 2006) contends that there is an arbitrary relationship between words and the objects they refer to, in CDA choices made to the same are not arbitrary or conventional. According to Fowler et al. (1979), the 'relation between form and content is not arbitrary or conventional, but . . . form signifies content' (p. 188). In sum, language is a social act and it is ideologically driven. This explains why van Dijk (1988) claims that text as discourse analysis can be at the structural level (grammar etc.) as well as . . .not simply an isolated textual or dialogic structure. Rather it is a complex communicative event that also embodies a social context, featuring participants (and their

properties) as well as production and reception processes (Van Dijk, 1988:2).

Conceptual Frame Work

Violence is an extremely complex phenomenon. Notions of what constitutes violence and what does not are influenced by various factors. This article adopts the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2002:4) definition of violence which refers to it as, the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.

The definition encompasses interpersonal violence and armed conflict as well as covering a wide range of acts beyond the physical to include threats, intimidation, psychological harm and deprivation which can also be delivered through various discourses compromising the well-being of our societies.

Sources of Violent Discourse in Discourses of Violence

Discourse on Zimbabwe in the new millennium has been characterized by violence which has negatively impacted on Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political development. Violence has psychologically, socially and physically traumatized the Zimbabwean populace. One can trace the roots of the discourse of violence chiefly to ZANU PF regime's failure to deal with socio-economic and political crisis that engulfed the country toward the end of the 1990s decade and the regime change agenda pursued by both local and foreign opponents of the ZANU PF regime.

This article holds the view that violent discourses in the discourses of violence in Zimbabwe have their sources in western capitalist metropolises which have had a fall out with the ruling regime. In Zimbabwe the west seeks to maintain its stranglehold on the economic wealth of the country which comes from economic activities such as tourism, manufacturing, farming and mining amongst others. Zimbabwe is rich in mineral resources such as gold, iron, chrome, platinum, diamonds

and it has been referred to by some as the Persian Gulf of strategic minerals. Multinational companies based in Britain and the United States such as De Beers and Anglo-American Corporation are in the forefront of the exploitation of Zimbabwe's mineral resources. The West's violent demonization of the Mugabe regime through various media is prompted by its need to continually dominate the country's economic resources.

The rise of violent discourse in discourses of violence can also be traced to the decline of the economy and the emergence of frosty relations between the government and the white community in Zimbabwe. According to Smith (2003) Mugabe reacted to the country's economic woes in the post 1996 election period by blaming the whites. Furthermore to deflect attention from the regime in the face of fading popularity and discontent Mugabe reignited the land issue, grabbed white farmland and sucked into the fray, Britain, interested in protecting the investments, of its kith and kin. In the midst of the conflict government controlled newspapers unleashed a torrent of racist attacks against whites claiming that all whites were racist and denouncing them for trying to perpetuate white economic domination. In Zimbabwe's neo-nationalist discourse the whites were often described as unrepentant, racist and brutal. The whites retaliated to these acts by sponsoring opposition elements and publishing damning reports on the government's violation of human rights and democracy.

Violent discourse in the discourses of violence is also couched in a Western driven democratization process. In pursuit of spreading democracy around the world, the west has labelled the Zimbabwean government as an "outpost of tyranny" (www.newzimbabwe.com). The west has employed such terms and other nefarious ones such as cruel despot, diabolical regime to sully the Zimbabwean government and facilitate the removal of the regime; and possibly replace it with forces it shares similar notions of democracy a significant step in pursuit of fulfilling the objective of spreading its influence in various parts of the world.

Ndlovu–Gatsheni (cited in Raftopoulos 2006:8) accounts different violent discourse in discourses of violence in Zimbabwe he says that an evaluation of the new Zimbabwean state from 1980 to 1996 shows that the ZANU PF regime failed miserably to make a break with the tradition of nationalist authoritarianism and guerrilla violence as well as colonial settler oppression. The ruling party failed to demilitarize itself as a militarized liberation movement, not only in practice, but also in attitude and style of management of civil institutions and the state at large. This he argues has been responsible for the lack of democracy in Zimbabwe and the resultant political polarisation as opposition elements try to usher democratic reforms. This polarisation has unleashed violent discourse in discourses of violence as the ruling authoritarian regime and pro-democracy movements wrestle each other for political power. Both camps have been eager to win the hearts and minds of the populace and have resorted to propaganda, hate speech, falsehoods and biased reporting.

Opposition political parties have been actively involved in the production of violent discourse in the discourses of violence. This is particularly so with the MDC as it seeks to unseat ZANU PF from power. The MDC has lambasted futile ZANU PF policies and enunciated the need for both political and economic reforms. It has also exposed the ruling party's lack of accountability and transparency as well as portraying the party as being run by corrupt, self-seeking and authoritarian political elite. The manner in which the MDC has exposed ZANU PF's shortcomings has been perceived as violence by nationalists and some war veterans who regard some comments as a provocative and disrespectful to the sacrifices made for the liberation of the country such as statements like “kana muchiti makasungura nyika, chiidzorerei tinoisunugurawo”[if you claim to have liberated the country from colonialists take it back to colonial rule and we shall liberate it]. Furthermore the MDC hardly makes reference to ZANU PF's post-independence achievements in the literature it produces as it seeks to decampaign ZANU PF. This deliberate omission is violence to readers who believe that an objective and honest rendition of

Zimbabwe's history should be told regardless of political orientation.

Mugabe's long stay in power has also been the source of violent discourse in the discourses of violence in Zimbabwe. Mugabe has been in power for three decades and showing no signs of relinquishing his post to another leader despite massive criticism for policy failures which have led to a decline in the standard of living for the majority. Frustrated by Mugabe's long incumbency and stubborn resistance to regime change, discourses of violence in Zimbabwe have over the years increasingly become more violent particularly in the literature of those opposed to his regime. Some have called the leader “blood thirsty” “octogenarian dictator”, “genocidal” “tyrannical” all in an endeavour to turn opinion against Mugabe.

Civil society in post-colonial Zimbabwe initially confined itself to supplementing various social and economic activities carried out by the state however state and civil society relations have been strained in the neo-liberal era. Civil society organizations have joined the bandwagon of forces calling for a regime change because of the inability of the government to provide social services, the increasing corruption in the government coupled with rising repression. Civil society has been central in the production of discourse advocating for democratisation, an end to human rights abuse and other reforms. The literature on these issues is considered to be violence by the Zimbabwean government since it views democratisation as a forerunner of regime change in Zimbabwe.

Violent discourse in the discourses of violence can also be linked to the government's persistent refusal to grant operating licenses to independent broadcasters in the new millennium and the closure of the only independent daily newspaper, *The Daily News*, which had opened up new spaces for debate and news about Zimbabwe. In response to the lack of media freedom in Zimbabwe and the state control of the public media, independent media decided to operate from the diaspora namely *Studio 7*, *SW Africa* and *The*

Zimbabwean newspaper. It would appear that the prime objective of these media houses has been to broadcast and write reports that vilify and demonise Mugabe's regime in order to settle scores or to fulfil the agendas of their masters that are pursuing regime change in Zimbabwe. These organizations have managed to inform the public both in Zimbabwe and in the Diaspora about the regimes repressiveness and economic misgovernance but have also been notorious for exaggerated and biased reporting. A case in point was when the Financial Gazette published an article in which it claimed a soldier who had died in the DRC war had been buried headless. The body of the soldier was exhumed but was found to be with its head (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/1999/279.htm>). Motives behind the story were to cause alarm and despondency amongst the public in order to turn them against the government.

The anti-Mugabe industry has produced writers on Zimbabwe who have displayed violence in their works evidenced by the manner in which they present their material. In a case of corruption that occurred in the 1980s Merridith quotes Mugabe supposedly with the intention of explicitly exposing his arrogance and corrupt tendencies. The following is an excerpt from the text:

Mugabe pardoned the minister and turned the whole exercise into a charade "who amongst you has not lied?" he asked "yesterday you were with your girlfriend and you told your wife you were with the president. Should you get nine months for that?" (Merridith, 2002:87).

This presentation whips up emotions of disgust amongst opponents of Mugabe and may serve as a rallying point for violent protests against his rule.

Other sources of violent discourse in the discourses on violence lie in personalities like, Peter Stiff, Terence Ranger, Norma Kriger, Fay Chung the late Ian Douglas Smith and Edgar Tekere, who write alternative versions of Zimbabwe's history due to the dearth of books that give a true account of the history of the liberation war and post-colonial political developments. Their works uncover some of

the salient diabolical aspects which have been committed by the regime which have been omitted by writers of celebratory African nationalist history like Misheck Sibanda, Aenas Chigwedere, David Lan, David Martin, Martin Meredith and Phyllis Johnson. However, their works can also be perceived as violence because of the blatant bias they take on the Zimbabwe situation. For instance, Martin Meredith dedicates his book to a rendition of ZANU PF's use of violence since its formation in a book titled *Mugabe: Power, Plunder and Tyranny* whose contents totally ignore the virtues of ZANU PF.

Violent discourse in Zimbabwe has come as part of the regime change agenda in the country. The country is seen as under siege from Britain, her allies and domestic opposition elements led by the MDC seeking to overthrow the regime. In pursuit of regime persistence ZANU PF, Pan Africanists and Nationalists sympathetic to the regime have made use of patriotic, racist and nationalist rhetoric in discourses to stay in power. Both the proponents of regime change and regime persistence have employed violence in various media discourses in pursuit of success in their quests.

On the whole ZANU PF's failure to deal with economic and political problems facing the country led to a crisis of hegemony which ZANU PF tried to resolve through land redistribution which mainly targeted farms belonging to whites of British descent. The occupation of white farms and the formation of the MDC resulted in increased opposition to the government from both domestic and foreign forces bent on regime change. This unleashed a period of extreme political polarisation with the opposition MDC backed by Britain and white capital going against the ZANU PF government. Discourse in discourses of violence became divided and violent with some openly supporting ZANU PF while others supported its opponents.

The nature and effects of violence in discourses of violence

Violent discourse in the Zimbabwe situation comes in the various forms namely propaganda, indoctrination, patriotic history and journalism,

biased reporting, vilification, demonization and hate speech. These modes of propagating violence in discourses on Zimbabwe have had the tremendous effect of raising political tension that has resulted in violence in various forms that include direct violence, structural violence and psychological violence.

Using language to assert political positions and beliefs has seen the advent of hate speech. This has seen speech carefully constructed with linguistic items like words, phrases and adjectives whose semantic drive has been to redefine the other in a negative or derogative way. Hate speech has thus been used in discourse to injure the dignity, feelings and self-respect of those of a different political persuasion. Ordinary Zimbabweans have even gone further to adopted some of the derogatory terms used in various political discourses as part of their discursive material in everyday life. It is common place in Zimbabwe to hear people across political divides trading insults picked up from discourse of violence laden with hate speech. Hate speech is also employed to disparage political opponents and groupings. Commentators on Zimbabwe's political situation have made extensive employment of hate speech to incite violence or prejudicial action against perceived opponents.

As a result of the use of hate speech in discourses of violence, social disharmony has been sown in Zimbabwe making inroads to peace, reconciliation and political settlement quite challenging for the discourse that make up these has been seriously discursively tainted by a violent ideology. As such hate speech has displayed a tremendous ability to influence and control the thinking of ordinary people. It has excited hostility and propagated hateful motives and thoughts that have come to be expressed through actions. The consequences of hate language in a polarised and charged political environment that exists in Zimbabwe has precipitated in assaults, abductions, torture, murder and other acts of unbridled aggression in a 'speech-act' (Austin, 1962:15) kind of a scenario. This is hence explains the physical and psychological violence in the aftermath of the harmonised elections of March 2008.

Propaganda, again supported by language choice, has also been effectively used by

political rivals to influence the attitude of Zimbabweans. It has involved the selective presentation of facts via conscious choice of wording and speech to produce an emotional rather than rational response so as to further a political agenda. Political encampments have been guilty of deliberately trying to hoodwink the Zimbabweans through the use of half-truths, lies, suppression of truth, concealment, and distortion of facts. The above propaganda has thus been employed as an instrument of conflict and controversy and has served to exacerbate violence rather than stem it in the volatile Zimbabwean political environment.

The increasing use of indoctrination in political discourse on Zimbabwe in the new millennium has fostered and propagated violence. Politicians through mostly various media discourses have inculcated ideas in the minds of Zimbabweans partisan ideological points of view and to accept these uncritically. The language used to drive this home has created a unique discourse whose intended goal has been to effect as well as reshape violent attitudes, actions and behaviour especially where divergent political opinions exist. The language of accommodation has thus failed to see the light of day creating two hostile camps both arm-twisting language and any language at their disposal to demarcate their boundaries. The ordinary people and readers (both of whom are consumers of this discourse from the two hostile camps) have been caught up in between this discursive violence and as victims have been left viciously traumatised, without a sense of security as well as at the bream of ever burying the dead and nursing the crippled.

The Zimbabwean political crisis has in its making and existence given birth to a new form of violence in discourses of violence known as patriotic history and patriotic journalism. Patriotic history is referred to by Tendi (2010:1) as the history of Zimbabwe that has been revised in the service of the governing ZANU-PF party, disseminated by public intellectuals and state media. Barnes (2011) points out that "patriotic history" is ceaselessly trumpeted in official Zimbabwean media and other circles. She describes it as narrow and sectarian depicting the history of Zimbabwe as the story of one political party and one man,

and that in history there are only good patriots or evil sell-outs. It has had the violent effect of distorting the people's legitimate grievances and corrupting the intelligentsia thus prolonging the political and even the economic crisis. Ranger (2005:10) refers to patriotic journalism as what was practised during the regime of Jonathan Moyo as Information and Publicity Minister. He describes patriotic journalism as narrow journalism bent on dividing and provided as a substitute for ideology and analysis.

Tendi (2010:2) argues that patriotic history and journalism are narratives which depict ZANU-PF as sole champion, past and present, of the independence and sovereignty of a country under constant attack from 'imperialist forces'. This is inaccurate and violence on the reader and to many folk who participated and made enormous sacrifices in the liberation struggle without ZANU PF. Patriotic history and journalism refer to those that opposed the 2000 land seizures as 'sell-outs' or as 'saboteurs' of liberation principles. ZANU-PF supporters are by and large defined as 'patriots' while the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and Civil Society institutions are labelled as 'sell-outs' easily marking them as targets for political violence. Some sections of the population that have been tagged as "sell-outs" and "saboteurs" were in fact involved in the extension of human rights during land seizures. Such renditions in patriotic history and journalism have raised political tension and created a state of panic and war-time vigilance.

Patriotic history and journalism have perpetrated intellectual violence on readers as they are unashamedly pro ZANU PF and blind to its faults. For instance, the country's failure to be food secure in the new millennium has in the state media been presented apparently solely as a result of sanctions and droughts. Halliday, McItosh and Strevens (1964:87) observed that '...in every language...we have to make...choices; we cannot avoid them or remain neutral...' As such we notice how in the guise of unable to 'remain neutral' (ibid), pro ZANU PF intellectuals and politicians have constantly chosen using terms like 'sanctions' and 'drought' and in some cases the phrase 'Western sanctions' not by accident. This has

been well calculated, conscious and deliberate for the purpose of creating or coming up with a discourse to justify its stay in power as if ordained to fight the battles of the populace for life. To presume that general populace could not deduce the haphazard fast track land resettlement programme and poor government policies were the major cause to food shortages is an insult to people's intelligence and tantamount to intellectual violence on the population.

In the same vein, it should also be noted that the so called independent media also carries stories that violate the intelligence of readers. This media acknowledges sanctions but is quick to implore an adjective 'targeted' to describe these sanctions. The semantic realisation as used by ZANU PF and pro ZANU PF points towards sanctions affecting the entire populace and a national problem while the semantic realisation of 'targeted sanctions' as used by the anti-ZANU PF make it appear as if sanctions are an elite and specifically ZANU PF problem, a positive factor and a foot ahead in effecting regime change. The independent media seems to be rewriting ZANU PF patriotic discourse by emphasising that 'targeted' sanctions on Zimbabwe have only affected the ruling elite and not the generality of Zimbabweans. Readers of literature on Zimbabwe have thus been confused and abused by these discourses on Zimbabwe that has been blatantly partisan. It can therefore be argued that the discourse has been violent for it has killed independent thought and action, persecuted originality and creativity amongst the population. It has also created brainwashed zealots, non-questioning loyalists and sycophants who have been hypnotized into uncritical acceptance of views expressed by political leaders from both sides. This has led to civil unrest, dissent and rebellious behaviour in society leading to a rise in political tension and political instability.

Discourse makers have also gone a gear up to taint and disparage the personalities of the leaders of important political parties in the country. Descriptive terms that constitute violent discourse have been directed towards attacking for instance Robert Mugabe of ZANU PF. These have mostly been by proponents of

regime change. Mugabe has been referred to and described through lexical items like 'senile' an adjective carefully chosen to mean that he is mentally confused in his leadership and behaves strangely due to old age. The noun 'octogenarian' (which refers to a person who is between 80-89years old) is used usually in the same breath to emphasise the idea of 'senile' thereby presenting these as evidence for Mugabe's unfitness to rule. The expressions and nouns like 'demented dictator', 'demagogue' as well as the noun 'tyrant' accompanies Mugabe's name and description in the discourse as a way of presenting him as a ruler who has complete/absolute power and uses it in a cruel and unfair manner/way. The Anti-Mugabe industry through such language use is central in the fanning of this violent project whose objectives is to vilify Mugabe as a person and his regime; portraying him and the regime as 'diabolic', 'demonic' and the regime as or giving it a pariah status. These negative aspects, expressions and references used against Mugabe and his regime through lexical items noted above, alludes to psychological violence especially on the reader for the discourse seeks nothing but to fulfil its communicative goal of effecting or advancing regime change.

MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai on the other hand is referred to in pro-government literature as a 'running dog' suggesting mongrelism on his part and ineffectiveness. He is further seen through a noun 'charlatan' meaning a fake, pretender and 'swindler' therefore should not be trusted and respected. The term 'puppet' is also used to describe Tsvangirai as a doll or a model of a person that one uses by pulling wires. 'Saboteur', 'unschooler', 'chamatama'[one with extra proportionally big chicks], 'academic dwarf' are the other terms chosen and used to describe the MDC leader. In other words Tsvangirai is portrayed in this discourse as unpatriotic, anti-revolutionary; as having no independence of thought, decision making and actions therefore as an agent of the West and its interests. This explains why the noun 'stooge' is sometimes used interchangeably with puppet as well as with the term teaboy.

Questions one obviously put across is what therefore is the impact of these terms on the

society at large? Do they foster unity, development, freedom of conscience, expression for they influence the conscience of the populace? Thus their use by people in authority or intellectuals assures the uptake of the expressions and terms thereby cementing the adoption of the ideological violence in the discourse. It is as if by belittling and disparaging the character and personalities of these leaders it is to characterise what their political parties represent and as such justifying actions against them even if it is violent action either discursively or otherwise.

Britain is not spared virulent attacks for its overt support for the MDC and regime change agenda. Ranger (2005:11) cites one state publication which says 'the epicentre of hell is in Britain and the Queen or King in power at that moment is the devil himself or herself. It can thus be argued that violent discourse has been used to strengthen the regime change agenda and the regime persistence agenda thus setting the stage for further political violence.

A polarisation in the media circles has exarcebated violence. The state media refers to Mugabe not only as the president but with a string of other titles like, 'His Excellence the 'President' 'Head of State', 'Head of Government', 'Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces' usually presented in the same breath. While this is true, the language is in no way reconciliatory, it is provocative and riles MDC supporters who are reminded that power is not shared equally in the Government of National Unity (as expected) as expected. In the same vein the independent press uses derogatory terms when referring to Mugabe with terms as shown above. such as "octogenarian, senile," are frequently used. Through the use of provocative language and demeaning language violence is incited amongst the population.

The violent discourse is also revealed not in the media as everyday national discourse. Intellectual books on Zimbabwe and those that purport to write the history of Zimbabwe. The intelligencia and the student are the most victims here. An example is one we notice by Merridith (2002). The title of his work is

Robert Mugabe: Power, Plunder and Tyranny

The book rises to paint Mugabe black, in all his social, economic and political standoff. The book is even silent on Mugabe's achievements for example in education. The way Merridith uses language and how he describes the Zimbabwean people, events and situations is not by chance. On page 74 for example Mugabe is presented as having 'provoked' a war against ZAPU and its Ndebele and Kalanga supporters. Merridith by using the verb 'provoked' has taken sides and the term is used to blame Mugabe, to make him responsible, not only as an individual but as a leader/ruler; and to have him leave up to the notion of power and tyranny as captured in the title. The result is to make him a sinister character and one who can best be described as the 'abuser' of political Power, one who plunders the gains of the country and a tyranny associated with any form of violence to stay in power and plunder the nation's wealth. To justify Mugabe as unfit to rule and thus be removed or retire from power.

To emphasise the above point the concluding paragraph of Chapter 7: The Land Issue, Merridith writes,

By the mid-1990s Mugabe had become an irascible and petulant dictator, brooking no opposition, contemptuous of the law and human rights, surrounded by sycophantic ministers and indifferent to the incompetence and corruption around him. His record of economic management was lamentable. He had failed to satisfy popular expectations in education, health, land reform and employment. And he had isolated the entire white community.

Yet all the while Mugabe continued to believe in his own greatness. Isolated and remote from ordinary reality, possessing no close friends and showing clear signs of paranoia; he listened only to an inner circle of conspiratorial aides and colleagues. Whatever difficulties occurred he attributed to old enemies Britain, the West, the old Rhodesian network all bent, he believed, on destroying his

revolution. He was convinced he could overcome any challenge they posed, just as he had done during the war.

What he was not prepared for, however, was a revolt that erupted from inside Zanu PF citadel, from a group he had assumed were his most loyal supporters: the war veterans (emphasis ours, Merridith, 2002:131).

In this passage Merridith presents an overdose of negative violent adjectives to describe Mugabe's character, leadership and style of governance. Irascible could easily mean 'quick-tempered', petulant bad-tempered, or ill-tempered, huffy (annoyed) and dictator makes Mugabe a totalitarian, tyrannical ruler. Put differently Mugabe is described as a quick-tempered, ill-tempered, annoyed totalitarian ruler. These adjectives are carefully chosen to portray the negative character of the Zimbabwean leader and to include everything he believes in and those who follow him. The notion of power abuse is emphasized, tyrannical traits are pinned down and the violence does not end there. Mugabe's advisors too are portrayed as sycophantic (flattering) i.e. the advisors are seen as dishonest and working in pursuit of what Mugabe wants to hear and see rather than what is actually on the ground which comes in to explain in Merridith's perception, the 'incompetence' (inability –to advise and govern) and explains the silenced 'corruption' which ultimately makes Mugabe a virtual incompetent leader. The violent notion of 'plunder' and tyranny are thus reemphasized thus the conclusion that 'He has failed...' stands visible in the violated mind of the defenceless reader.

The last sentence of this paragraph Merridith uses sharp contrast. He describes the white community silently and innocently, making them victims of Mugabe's plunder, tyranny and power. The white community is not described by any adjective and this is no coincidence, the choice of diction is well calculated to portray Mugabe and his advisors in government as failures, plunders and bad while the white community is innocent and victimised in this regard.

The second paragraph of the conclusion is

marred by violent phrases. Mugabe is presented as preoccupied and believing in his own greatness and heroism for this is what Merridith is getting to. Mugabe is seen as having self-imposed and has violated the assumed principles of heroism which should be given. The idea of isolated and remote from ordinary reality and possessing no close allies shows Merridith disbundling Mugabe's character and ability as a leader and as a person. The phraseology seeks to present Mugabe as redundant and excommunicated from the so called reality (i.e. what is happening now) and reality for Merridith is the notion of democracy. The objective in this kind of language use is to make Mugabe an undemocratic leader which then silently makes the white community he referred to earlier as democratic and in touch with reality. Because Mugabe is thought to be an outdated, primitive leader, this explains his so called paranoia (suspicion and terror). Adjectives used to allude to Britain, the West and the Rhodesian network is a simple repeated old as if deflowering them of any active participation in the violent acts against Mugabe and Zimbabwe, against any hidden agendas. Even the so called revolution is quoted as first his and the possessive article makes the whole struggle for independence Mugabe's project to remain in power, a personal project to continue plundering.

Ultimately, how this chapter has been concluded is characteristic of Merridith's violent writing. Readers of his work come out of this reading exercise biased towards seeing or viewing Mugabe as a bad leader, a powerful and one who uses dictatorial tactics to remain in power; one who is unfair to the so called white community who are seen as fair, in touch with reality, democratic and above all victims of Mugabe and his inner circle's project of self-empowering and self-enriching. One sees this form of writing as well calculated with choice of diction presented finely to incite, influence, propagate that there is nothing good that can come out of Mugabe's leadership therefore a call for his removal by all means possible. This becomes an act of violence exerted on the reader either to one who is in agreement with Meredith or a conspiratorial Minister who is likely to raise and refute Meredith's claim. The reader is thus caught in between and

psychologically and consciously is unable to exist as a free being as either his/her behaviour will be conditioned by this psychological violence peppered with neo-colonial ideology.

The violence in the discourse should not only be confined to the reader but the reader's reaction and behaviour after interaction with the literature. There are certainly no limits to the influence that these works may have on the response of the reader who is hypnotized and propagandized translate latent feeling into physical rage on perceived political and social opponents. A case in point is the violent reinvigorated occupation of farms by landless peasants after the pronouncements by the state media that former white land owners were planning to retake their farms after Morgan Tsvangirai's first round victory in the 2008 March elections. Such unsubstantiated reporting to the public thus served as a trigger that unleashed bottled anger over the threat of a retake of farms by whites in the event of regime change.

Conclusion

This article has shown how language used in the discourses of Zimbabwe's political crisis has created a violent discourse. The enactment of violence in this discourse has seen the exacerbation of violent acts in Zimbabwe leading to the deepening of the political and economic situation in the country, making peace and harmony quite challenging to achieve. The article has also shown that dealing with violence in Zimbabwe's political crisis should start with a revamp and radical change in the discourses created to communicate Zimbabwe's experiences.

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