



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Alternative democracy? Crisis, discourse and versions of democracy in Zimbabwean politics in the post-2000 context

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ABSTRACT

Democracy is a much contested concept in political movements and politics. The post-2000 context reveals a multiplicity of complex political, social and economic challenges linked to the Zimbabwean crisis which can be best unpacked and understood through critical discourse analysis (CDA). These challenges reflect multiple contestations to the conceptualisation of democracy. This chapter will debunk the political personalisation of democracy and how political parties insert their parties in the narrative of the concept's modern manifestations, conceptions and practices of democracy. Democracy incorporates multiple layers of meaning and practices. This chapter focuses on how Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) narratives and stylistic designs are incorporated into their agenda-setting strategies, identity construction and discursive legitimation. Analysis of the theory and discourse of democracy illuminates the conventions, logic and dictates of language, knowledge and meaning. It exposes the inherent politics, nuances and paradoxes of democracy. Analyses of democratic movement(s) through CDA highlight democracy as a political strategy that at once contests power but also gestures to a political alternative and a sustainable development plan. Considering that CDA as a qualitative and narrative analysis method focused on generic features of whole texts rather than isolated features of the text, this chapter analyses the politics of democracy discourse and its relationship to Zimbabwean politics in the context of broader narratives of the Zimbabwean crisis. The paper problematises selected party manifestoes to illuminate and dissect the discourses and power contestations characterising Zimbabwean politics since the emergence of a strong opposition contender, the MDC in 2000. In contrast to normative representations in political discourses, knowledge is embedded in specific cultures, that is, institutionalised practices of decision-making and means of legitimation. In this regard, insights from cultural enquiries necessitated by CDA create the prerequisite for the analysis of political texts.

Key words: democracy, language, power, politics, critical discourse analysis

INTRODUCTION

The post-2000 context reveals complex political, social and economic challenges linked to the Zimbabwean crisis. These issues present multiple challenges to democracy, as conceptualised by different political parties within the context. Widdowson (2000, p. 126) characterises context as “those aspects of the circumstance of actual language use, which are taken as relevant to meaning”. He expands this concept by highlighting that, “context is a schematic construct [... and] the achievement of pragmatic meaning is a matter of matching up the linguistic elements of the code with the schematic elements of the context” (Widdowson, 2000, p. 126). This implies that meaning permeates the context in which language is used and that notions like democracy have multiple layers of significance that are institutionalised in organisational thought patterns and processes. Context either facilitates or constrains the frames and meanings that can be generated. This accounts for different conceptualisations of democracy by different parties. They vary depending on the political identities and interests of the people using them.

Given the ambiguity of political concepts such as democracy, analysis of such prompts definitions and explanations. Because democracy is a buzzword, it is rarely defined by its users. It represents what everyone ‘knows’ and wants. It is deliberately equivocal and euphemistic. Due to this conceptual and semantic malleability, it is important to comprehend the limits of democracy in its implementation by various political parties in the context of Zimbabwe. One of the oldest and most popular concepts of democracy was proffered by the American President Abraham Lincoln who defined

democracy as “the government of the people, by the people and for the people” (Lincoln, 1863). A related and useful notion of the concept was made by De Dora (2010) who characterises democracy as “a form of political governance that secures basic natural rights of citizens within a society and allows them to collectively and openly work toward their goals both socially and through government”. Noting the critical influence of context makes certain conceptions of democracy more meaningful than others.

According to Tendi (2010), the crisis engulfing Zimbabwe since 2000 cannot be reduced to the nation’s economic meltdown and the struggle against absolute rule. Instead, the conflict involves the crisis of discourse, that is, philosophical disagreements and enduring historical problems related to the unfinished task of decolonisation. Fayemi (2009) bemoans the conceptual problems inherent in conflating democracy as a concept and as it is applied in various political systems. So, concepts like democracy itself and democracy projects need critical attention as they become problematic due to the ways they are conceptualised by different actors. Since one major aspect of the Zimbabwean crisis has been depicted as the polarisation of ideas caused by the discursive struggle to establish and maintain systems of social meaning, it becomes imperative to understand how defining concepts like democracy are exploited to appeal to people. Critical analysis of such illuminates how social processes and relations have been constructed and cemented through the use of discourse.

This chapter primarily focuses on ZANU PF discourse as represented in its 2013 election manifestoes, *The People’s Manifesto 2013*. This text is critical as it gives an overview of ZANU PF’s discourse within the whole post-2000

spectrum. #Team ZANU PF as inscribed on the title on the 2013 manifesto illuminates how ZANU PF as a party plays to score and win. This is best captured by the election motto *Bhora Musedhi/Ibhola Egedini. The People's Manifesto 2013* highlights ZANU PF's orders of discourse¹ and modus operandi which are even representative of the post-Mugabe era. In November 2017, Mugabe was removed through a coup that was dubbed Operation Restore Legacy. Mugabe was accused of having decimated the ideals of the liberation struggle together with a clique of criminals that surrounded him, hence the need for a 'restoration of a legacy'. Emmerson Mnangagwa took over as ZANU PF's leader. The post-Mugabe period was christened the New Dispensation and the Second Republic. Though there was a shift in treatise in the New Dispensation discourse as reflected in dominant metaphors characterising *The People's Manifesto 2018* and official discourses such as "Zimbabwe is open for business", "The voice of the People is the voice of God" and the "Servant Leadership" ideology deployed to sustain a new world order, ZANU PF's order of discourse remained the same. The legacy ideals of "the land, economic emancipation, independence, sovereignty, democracy, patriotism, ubuntu, national pride and dignity" (ZANU PF, 2018, p. 1) which ZANU PF claims to be restoring still run through the 2013 manifesto and any other of its official post-2000 narratives. The post-Mugabe trajectory with its nuances of an alternative, renewed democracy after Mugabe's waning respect for democracy and the essence of ZANU PF's discourse, are all catered for in the 2013 manifesto.

This chapter will also examine the framing of democracy in the main opposition party/parties,

with a special focus on how the discourse of democracy is packaged and instrumentalised to foreground politically convenient identities in the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC²) discourses. Analysis of the 2013 manifesto/policy statement, "Jobs, Upliftment, Investment Capital and Environment" (JUICE) also captures the major thrusts of democracy discourses in the main opposition party as reflected in MDC-A's 2018 *Sustainable and Modernisation Agenda for Real Transformation (SMART)*. JUICE is sufficiently representational of the democratic tenets that permeate the main opposition's democratic rhetoric. MDC-A which in 2023 had mutated to Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), positions itself as the more politically and economically viable alternative to ZANU PF's nationalist and conservative strands of democracy.

METHODOLOGY

Versions of democracy constructed and incorporated in ZANU PF and opposition parties such as MDC reflect the influences of the political and economic times – that is, the time of crisis. In light of this, this discussion will deploy Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodology that enables critical reflection on how democracy is functionally used within the socio-cultural and political context. CDA is closely related to narrative analysis and broadens the concept of discourse beyond utterances and texts to social practices. As a multi-perspective qualitative research method, CDA explores the relationships between "discursive practices, events and texts; and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes" (Taylor, 2004) which is the Humanities discipline's forte. It examines

1. Rules, systems and procedures that constitute and are constituted by how things should be known and talked about.

2. MDC and MDC-A will be used interchangeably to denote the main opposition party, not other immaterial MDC party splinters.

how texts construct “representations of the world, social relationships and social identities, highlighting how such practices and texts are ideologically shaped by relations of power” (Fairclough, 2001; 2003).

Considering the controversial politics of democracy within the post-2000 Zimbabwean context and in Africa in general with its hyped politics of change, and animated struggles for political power it is critical to explore how language is deployed as a resource for shaping knowledge production and providing frameworks for different kinds of democracy. It is important to recognise how speech uniquely connects challenges of national development, political ideas, and knowledge. Language plays a significant role in valuing some possibilities and devaluing others throughout the negotiation of various democratic threads. Analysis of the democracy movement(s) provides insight into the politics of democracy as a political strategy that at once contests power and also gestures to political alternatives and development plans.

#TEAM ZANU PF

The inclusion and establishment of democracy in Zimbabwe’s development program is political, and all political contenders frequently politicise it. ZANU PF portrays itself as a crucial political force in Zimbabwe, emphasising the connection between democracy and the country’s liberating past and present. Debunking this political personalisation of democracy and incorporating their parties into the narrative of the idea’s contemporary manifestations, beliefs, and practices are therefore challenges for opposition parties. The Zimbabwean setting itself defines the democratic discourse that may emerge, not just

in establishing the kind of issues to be addressed but also in defining the contexts in which people can compete, dominate or cooperate.

Neo-nationalist essentialisms and universalisms serve as the rigorous foundation for how ZANU PF frames national values and liberation history. ZANU PF mainly derives its legitimacy from the liberation struggle, which certifies the party as the defender of democracy. Its discourse certifies itself as a party with a revolutionary record which is characterised by a liberation armed struggle that overthrew colonial settler domination and ushered in independence, freedom and democracy. It synonymises all forms of machinations afflicting the nation as part of its waging the liberation struggle against Western forces. These stretch from colonialism to the crisis which is largely blamed on Western sanctions and framed around machinations by the West to sabotage the constitutionally elected government. As a result, by inference, ZANU PF portrays cherishing the liberation fight as cherishing ZANU PF. The liberation struggle values include independence, unity, peace, equity, freedom, democracy, and sovereignty, as stated in #Team ZANU PF 2013. These principles have become ingrained in the fabric that creates, underpins, and upholds the country. From this perspective, the ideals of independence, the liberation fight and democracy essentially become metonymic. ZANU PF’s political beliefs reflect hegemonic goals which delegitimise competitors as well as maintain the status quo. Social systems as sources of culture ostensibly mediate social values and favour some interests over others.

ZANU PF as a political party institutionalises efforts to develop and maintain consensual hegemony through carefully crafted discourses

rationalities, which Foucault (1977) terms “governmentality.” This refers to ways in which the state governs, shapes or controls bodies as a way of exercising control over its populace. This is accomplished through policies, institutions, and ideologies. A governmentality optic “enables recognition of political processes and power relations that become institutionalised, embodied in rules and practices that acquire predictability and staying power” (Leach, Scoones and Stirling, 2010, p.78). This governance is linked to a single, strong, exclusive, and exclusionary overriding narrative. Discursive exclusionary mechanisms in political ZANU PF texts reveal a pervasive self-alignment with historical orthodoxy and a desire to “naturalise” the created annexure of Zimbabwe being ZANU PF. This is the context in which ZANU PF asserts; “Only Zanu PF can achieve these (people’s) goals while working with the people because only Zanu PF has fought for all and not just some of the goals of the people. When Zanu PF wins at the polls, the people win their goals” (Zanu PF, 2013, p. 108). It is critical to see how effect is created in ZANU PF texts in relation to the democracy gambit. In the quotation above, the repetitive use of the word “only” not only reinforces ZANU PF’s self-legitimation but also serves to underline that there are no alternatives with regard to who exemplifies real understanding of democracy. The absence of alternatives is induced as commonsensical because ZANU PF depicts itself as the embodiment of the people. Subjective forms of self-construction reflected in #Team ZANU PF are typically discoursed in political rhetoric that is dressed as objectivity. Pragmatically, partaking in the liberation movement does not in itself automatically translate into guaranteed capacity to ensure democratic governance. Depicting the Zimbabwean problem as a continuation of the

liberation movement with roots in colonialism is a purposefully exclusionary political ploy meant to legitimise ZANU PF and delegitimise its opponents for power.

In ZANU PF’s discourse, history serves as a venue for self-legitimation and concretisation of the opposition’s political illegitimacy as they are labelled as Western political puppets. The political use of this historical expedient is seen in the party’s propensity to portray itself as an exclusively privileged player. Exclusive self-identification is evident, among other things, from the extensive use of the adjective ‘only’ in constructions of ZANU PF as the solution to the problems gripping the nation. We are told, for instance, that “[a]s the only liberation movement in Zimbabwe, ZANU PF ensured that the people were given an opportunity to freely express themselves” (ZANU PF, 2013: 67). “Only” functions as an adjective reinforcing the exclusivity of ZANU PF as a liberation movement. Beyond this, the adjective is used in the context of the constitutional-making process that culminated in the adoption of a new constitution in 2013 since independence. Although the constitution-making process was done during the period of the Government of National Unity when ZANU PF governed the nation with the opposition, the party gives the process a liberating spin that amplifies its participation and dwarfs that of the opposition. This association between the liberation movement, the drafting of the constitution, and concerns about free expression runs counter to the MDC’s advocacy of the democratic discourse. ZANU PF has mostly been accused of being authoritarian, unconstitutional and predisposed to curtailing the people’s freedoms³.

3. See scholars like Bond and Manyanya, 2003; Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009 and Sachikonye, 2012.

One of the main tenets of the liberation movement was democracy, hence ZANU PF cannot afford to be regarded as failing to uphold it. ZANU PF invokes its well-known anti-imperial rhetoric to reconstruct the constitution-making process as a teleological democratic process that is part of ZANU PF's decolonising history and identity, cementing this binary construction of a democratic liberation movement (ZANU PF) and an undemocratic opposition. Democracy was/is a site of political battle in re-negotiations of the nation's political culture. ZANU PF not only synonymise itself with democratic principles symbolised by the constitution but also subtly fixes any alternative dispensations without ZANU PF as fundamentally undemocratic. According to the ZANU PF, "the Party was vigilant throughout the constitution-making process to guard against treachery and to protect the process from being hijacked by foreign or regime change interests" (ZANU PF, 2013, p. 67). Ironically, the concept of free speech is put to the test by the phrase "enabling democracy" as it relates to "guarding" against neo-colonial forces in the constitution-making process. Here, ZANU PF betrays its proclivity for dictating and monitoring which is contradictory to notions of democracy.

When considering ZANU PF discourses, it is possible to see how the party, acting as political agents, appropriates and mobilises discourses like democracy in order to solemnise its founding, engulf itself in convenient silences, impose ritualised forms around the history of its capacity, and float within the environment. These ideas are described as "taboo on the object of speech, ritual of the circumstances of speech, and privileged or exclusive right of the speaking subject" by Foucault (1981, p. 52). These exclusions benefit some strong organisations, as is the case with ZANU PF. In Foucault's words,

"it does not matter that discourses appear to be of little account, because the prohibitions that surround it ...soon reveal its link with desire and with power" (1981:52). Naturalised contingencies and what seem unquestionable truths always unfold within fields of power.

Historical (re)contextualisation disrupts alternative discourses of the nation. Derived from liberation history, ZANU PF discourse creates uneven ground as it renders other voices powerless and alien to concepts such as democracy. This fixes alternatives. That ZANU PF alone can champion the people's aspirations as the sole liberators has nothing to do with guaranteed democracy. Rather, it is more about the appropriation of liberation war credentials to incorporate all that people aspire for as an extension of the liberation struggle. As a ruling party, ZANU PF's agency to take action on behalf of the nation is a manifestation of power and a form of legitimacy that is exclusivist.

RE-SITUATING DEMOCRACY

When political organisations employ speech to battle (for) power, according to Bourdieu (1991), "ideologies become more and more autonomous, like a game with its own rules and conditions of entry" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 27). A component of the MDC's rhetorical tactics of opposition is to portray the political bastions of ZANU PF as democratically untenable. Strategically, this establishes a foundation for the MDC to position itself as the obvious replacement.

Real democracy, at least in theory, enables types of control through proportional representation, giving voters the power to affect change through participation and giving political

leaders the freedom to act in the best interests of the country. The MDC, a self-described social democratic movement, promotes a neoliberal interpretation of democracy that challenges the frequently radicalised interpretations of the idea advanced and utilised by the ruling party. Given the ruling party's stranglehold on the political capital of the championship of democracy, the MDC perceived strong incentives to engage in what Feindts and Oels (2005) refer to as the politics of "scaling" to influence Zimbabweans to suspect the genuineness of a 'democracy' that caused so much suffering during the crisis years. Scaling refers to the skilful projection of the dynamics of the crisis and development challenges through the efforts of various players, with the goal of reorganising, reconfiguring, and enhancing their political relevance. It entails different levels of analysis and representation of causes and effects, ensuring that what is circulated as democracy in the crisis context is invested with the 'right' scale of political interests. Therefore, ZANU PF, MDC, or any other party can accept the idea of democracy and frame it in accordance with their ideologies, political objectives, and rationalised goals.

JUICE is a policy framework developed by the Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC T) to meet institutional objectives. The reflections in the text are conventionalised to reflect preferred interpretations of democracy. Understanding Zimbabwe's politics of democratisation entails an appreciation of how development is discussed in relation to democracy. MDC-T effectively encapsulates the principles of sustainable development within their democratic framework by asserting that, it is their "historic mission to meet the demands of the present generation, to fulfil the dreams of ... cadres no longer with us and the aspirations of

generations that will come after" (MDC-T, 2013, p.1). It thus becomes a matter of determining how the "scale" of a desired national future supports the need for neoliberal democracy and undermines ZANU PF's staunchly conservative nationalist stance on political legitimacy and democracy.

The MDC's opposition discourse, which is largely based on democratic value systems, portrays Zimbabwe's escalating socioeconomic and political crisis as a result of democracy's failure. Its argument is that the current system of government is undemocratic and that the economic downturn is a direct result of this absence of democracy serves as both its point of departure and its reason for implementing an alternative democracy. ZANU PF and its notions of democracy are depicted as (in) the past. The past – a site of ZANU PF's self-legitimation is identified by MDC as a source of the nation's problems. The pastness of ZANU PF democracy, mired in the party's political ills, is seen in MDC political discourse as diametrically opposite to the MDC's professed modernity and the efficiency it is poised to provide, tainted by how it connects to the current state of crisis. MDC represents itself as the future and ZANU PF's ideas of democracy as the past. The binary understanding of itself and ZANU PF as being members of opposing temporal domains (respectively, the future and the past), seek to denote symbolic consequences for how Zimbabweans must go forward.

Modernity in MDC discourse is first and foremost "not the past" because the past has been reduced to democratic paradigms that have plunged the country into catastrophe. Thus, the MDC invoked as the future, is in contrast to the past. It promises freedom from oppression, poverty and unpredictability. Good governance,

constitutionalism and respect for the rule of law are the hallmarks of MDC's asserted democracy. The MDC asserts that, as part of its democratic agenda, it has pushed for a new Constitution in Zimbabwe. The party believes it would perform national duties anchored on delivery alone and without political entitlements connected to the liberation struggle past as demonstrated by ZANU PF. JUICE (2013, p. 8) illuminates that, "[t]he MDC believes peace and stability are the absolute cornerstones of the construction of a viable state. We will create this environment for our society by upholding the rule of law and defending the principles of freedom and democracy". The crisis-ridden Zimbabwean context presents justification for this self-identification in comparison to ZANU PF. This ensured the MDC's relevance as a political alternative as the Zimbabwean crisis escalated.

Historical internal disputes within ZANU PF, where members disagreed about the necessity of reforms and transformation in the party's practice of democracy, provide justification for the deliberate association of MDC with newness, modernity, and efficiency and the ensuing synonymisation of ZANU PF with a failed past in MDC political discourse. Since the early days of independence in 1980, ZANU PF has come under fire for allegedly breaching essential freedoms and rights for people. For example, the Gukurahundi violence - a series of massacres of Ndebele civilians by a specially trained military wing called the 5th Brigade in the early 1980s - killed an estimated twenty thousand people (The Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice, 1997). Edgar Tekere, the former secretary general of ZANU PF, is well known for speaking out against the party's desire to create a one-party state and leadership corruption in the late 1980s. Tekere, who formed the Zimbabwe Unity Movement

(ZUM), lamented the lack of democracy and compared it to a patient in an ICU (Sachikonye, 2012). His stance led to his expulsion from the party and ultimately, like many other similar-minded former ZANU PF stalwarts such as Simba Makoni, Dumiso Dabengwa, and Joyce Mujuru who have at different times formed breakaway parties, in a quest to implement alternative forms of democracy. This context serves as the backdrop for how the MDC frames and defends its rhetoric on democracy, which it imbues with undertones of novelty, modernity, the future, and inferred connotations of effectiveness and development.

The MDC's mission is naturalised by the fact that other notable ZANU PF members left the party to pursue fresh iterations of democracy. Therefore, the MDC presents its mandate as justified by a demonstrated crisis of democracy in ZANU PF. It is affirmed that the MDC "... was formed in direct response to the needs and expectations of the people of Zimbabwe regarding better governance" (MDC-T, 2013, p.3). This sets the tone whereby ZANU PF is evoked as the epitome of a phoney democracy and the MDC as "the change agent" (MDC-T, 2013: 3). This is why in 2022 the movement extended to be a Citizens Coalition for Change as the quest for change remains the defining factor. In opposition discourses, there is always the binary characterisation of the good, democratic opposition versus the bad and autocratic ZANU PF. The Zimbabwean crisis is seen by MDC as a collective violation of fundamental human rights that is manifested as "political and economic turmoil, international isolation, and severe hardships" (MDC-T, 2013, p.1). It requires meticulous conceptualisation of the Zimbabwean problem as a crisis of, among other things, human rights in order to claim moral

justice in opposition to ZANU PF. As a result, the MDC portrays itself as a force for redemption as well as a means of reducing the political and economic risks connected with ZANU PF, hence the assertion: “Government had become arrogant, corrupt and repressive against the citizens. It did not care enough for the people” (MDC-T, 2013, p.3). To show ZANU PF’s political immorality as a site for defending the MDC’s assertion of strong political moral aptitude, the grammar of caring is purposefully entwined with the idea of morality. More crucially, the MDC’s use of language portrays the ‘facts’ in a self-redemptive way, emphasising the morality of its political interventions in addition to outlining the necessity of the party’s existence. This can be inferred from the following description of the party’s origins in JUICE: “The party was created to promote and protect citizens’ rights; to promote a government based on constitutionalism and to manage the economy fairly and efficiently, ensuring just and equitable distribution of resources (MDC-T, 2013, p.3).

The MDC’s narrative of the democratic crisis is accompanied by a vocabulary of conflict that uses the spectacle of political and economic victimisation to support the moral ideals of freedom and democracy that the MDC has pledged to uphold. In addition to being packaged metaphorically by people’s cries and “yearnings” for change, these spectacles are also manufactured by the MDC’s descriptive depiction of what it sees as ZANU PF’s ingrained propensity to do harm and destroy the country. Thus, fighting for the people is interpreted as supporting them. This is purposefully contrasted with ZANU PF’s perceived lack of empathy for the suffering of the country as a result of its estrangement from the populace. Thus where the MDC imagines a ‘democratic’ government

whose actions are inspired by the agency of the generality of the people, ZANU PF is evoked as keen on the “centralisation of power in the hands of the executive”—a political practice that the MDC finds “openly dictatorial” (MDC-T, 2013, p.3). This centralisation of power is depicted as creating a hierarchised society with clear demarcations of agency as the following shows: “[o]ver the last three decades the relationship between the government and the people disintegrated into one of predator and victim” (MDC-T, 2013, p.27). ZANU PF is depicted as the protector who turned predator in a way that makes the victims objects of sympathy. MDC constructs themselves as the heroic agents bent on rescuing the people from their ill-fated hopes.

Being the predator of the people involves betraying them. In the MDC’s manifesto, betrayal is utilised to arouse emotions, not just to persuade people of the goodness of the MDC and the evil of ZANU PF, but also, and more crucially, to discursively show the moral elements of such beliefs. The people’s aspirations, which were fuelled by the liberation promise, are the object of MDC’s linguistic portrayal of ZANU PF’s betrayal. The quotation “[o]ver three decades ago, we engaged in a liberation struggle and were successful” (MDC-T, 2013, p. 1) demonstrates how the MDC revisits and revises history, which ZANU PF frequently solely uses to justify its rule. Intentionally inclusive and designating Zimbabwe as a nation, the pronoun “we” is used. This indicates that the liberation war was led by Zimbabweans, not ZANU PF in particular. The story implies that ZANU PF, which was given control of the nation after “Zimbabweans” achieved their liberty, began ruthlessly governing it. The predator picture magnifies ZANU PF’s treachery in a way that imbues the relationship between the people and ZANU PF with agony and

passion. Nothing is done in the public interest under a predatory system because the masses become the prey. As Galbraith (2006) implies, in a predatory economy, the rules imagined by the law and economics do not apply as there is no discipline. To convince the victims to avoid ZANU PF as well as to align with the MDC's promise of salvation from ZANU PF, the MDC creates a visual representation of the predator and its predation.

There is a significant polarisation between good and bad when every aspect of the Zimbabwean situation is defined as a confrontation between what ZANU PF has done incorrectly and what MDC will accomplish well. MDC moralises both the problems attributed to ZANU PF and the remedies assigned to MDC. Assertions such as, “[t]he MDC formed the Inclusive Government with other parties in 2009 because it cared for the people of Zimbabwe and had observed that the political, economic and condition of the people was extremely desperate” (MDC-T, 2013, p. 5) is one aspect of the ways that the MDC orders discourse for affective purposes. The demise of ZANU PF is purported to have reached a national scale, which supports the necessity and the need for urgent action, hence the MDC's infusion of urgency in the party's motto: “A New Zimbabwe – The Time is Now!” (MDC-T, 2013, p. 31).

Semantic connections of words conjure meanings, connotations, arguments, and explanations that associate democracy with the resolution of the country's crisis in the context of oppositional discourse. Words and phrases with ideological connotations like “democracy,” “modern,” “a New Zimbabwe,” “transformation,” “change,” and “people-driven” facilitate the use of and connections between themes, deeds, and ideas. Particularly *JUICE* exposes languages and discursive structural patterns that exhibit

regularities, coherences, and consistency in the creation of an alternative democracy. The party's reform philosophy and the civic understanding of politics as the pursuit of public interests based on citizen engagement and participation are both grounded in the lexicon. The diction used in *JUICE* shows how the incumbent government is stereotyped and fixed as an institution that “did not care enough for the people” who are in turn characterised in hyperbolic terms as “tired”, “yearning for change” and have the “desire” for an open and democratic society (MDC-T, 2013, p. 3). These predetermined political symbols reaffirm MDC's status as a party that was founded on necessity rather than “politics.” The word “JUICE” is a component of a complex expressive scheme that appeals to viewers' visual, auditory, and cognitive abilities. The phrase is metaphorical by definition. It builds the opposition's political response to the country's predicament in physiological terms, which increases the potency of the MDC's responses. The MDC defines its manifesto, which it refers to as “JUICE,” as the answer to the problems with the country's economy. Consequently, the metaphor frames Zimbabwe as a ‘house of thirst and hunger’ (to adapt Marechera, 1978), characterised by deficiencies in various aspects of people's lives. MDC accounts of the nation as a result of ZANU PF misrule are rife with associations of deprivation. The nation is shown as being depleted by corruption, resource abuse, and political patronage, among other maladies, in the metaphor of “JUICE” and thirst. The MDC portrays itself as the institution that would be able to satiate the nation's economic thirst and revitalise the failing socio-economic “body” by invoking the typical connections of juices as life revitalisers that nourish an exhausted body.

Democracy itself is metaphorised in addition

to the juice metaphor. The MDC assumes that democracy is the answer to the problems facing the country, which supports the underlying metaphor DEMOCRACY=MDC. Democracy's prosodic link with politically charged concepts such as "freedom", "responsibility" "good governance", "devolution", "civic participation", "constitutionalism" and "inclusivity" strengthens its function as a political armament. The vocabularies are chosen for the layers of meaning they communicate and the cognitive effect they have. The diction is also instrumental in setting the tone for change. This can be inferred from the way that the word "hope" is used in the MDC's encouragement of the people to vote "the MDC to bring HOPE back to Zimbabwe" (MDC-T, 2013, p. 31). The word "hope" is capitalised – not only to emphasise the importance of hope in a crisis setting but more importantly to define hope as a force that can only be guaranteed by the MDC. Political discourses of democracy exhibit specialised fixations of terms and meanings intended to fix identities of the self and the rival other, as would be expected in language-mediated contestations. Associating with these established identities has both overt and covert political repercussions. Democracy is shaped and affected in its practicality by the fact that it is one of the most important and enduring political concepts that is vulnerable to "verbal hijacking" (Arblaster, 2002, p.9). Democracy discourses offer unique ways of framing problems and justifying certain policy responses while avoiding contradictions present in political actors and their political ideologies. Various components of the concept of democracy are projected using their own metaphors, images, and analogies, some of which may be incongruous. Democracy is essentially a contested concept that exists in theory and is very fluid in practice.

As Arblaster (2002) argues, to discuss democracy objectively, we have to acknowledge that it is "a concept before it is a fact." Its contingent structure makes it unrealistic to believe that politics can be separated from its politics. Analysis of oppositional language and narratives reveals the rules, logics, and tenets of democracy discourse that are intrinsic to and influenced by the inevitable complexities and paradoxes of power struggles in Zimbabwe. Ironically, these paradoxes explain some inconsistencies within the democratic movement(s), as seen by the divisions that exist within the largest opposition group, the MDC. It is ironic that splinter organisations like the Movement for Democratic Change -Ncube (MDC-N) opposition parties "fought for democracy within the fight for democracy" prior to their ultimate unification with the mainstream MDC before the 2018 elections. This means that democratic discourses should be seen as the primary and possibly only, as reflexive. The reflexivity of democracy makes it open to abuse. Ambiguities in the rhetoric and practice of democracy reveal its instability as a political philosophy, principle and practice. The ontological inconsistencies of democracy as a political philosophy inform the political identity crisis that cripples the Zimbabwean opposition. Its fluidity as an ideology erodes ideological grounding in opposition parties.

CONCLUSION

Discussions of discourse-mediated constructions of democracy illuminate relativism and reflect the place of discourse in strategies of (un)making power. The analysis draws attention to discursive practices deployed by major political parties in managing authority and agency over the narrative of the Zimbabwean

crisis and politics. Analysis of ZANU PF and the MDC's situated discourse within the context of contested notions of sustainable social, economic and political development helps to unveil "specifically, the incentives, relationships, and distribution and contestation of power between different groups and individuals". To understand the meaning espoused in different texts, there is need to understand how democracy discourses are constructed and how their constructedness establishes the ideological potential for action or even inaction. The chapter therefore explores how political manifestoes reflect strategic discursive strategies steeped in the historical context, realities and needs of the present. Leveraging its argument and political identity on the urgency of reacting to the failures of ZANU PF's 'democracy', the MDC's democracy discourse re-imagines what it means to be democratic, laying a special premise on how the national crisis symbolises the trigger factor setting in motion counter-democratic imaginaries of democracy. ZANU PF and the oppositional parties foreground the Zimbabwean crisis to re-imagine the nation as urgently in need of an alternative democracy. As highlighted in this chapter, democracy is a subjectively experienced reality because it comes in a variety of ideological and functional forms. In this way, regarding democracy as monolithic and characterising its outward manifestations as objective is equivalent to dismissing the ambiguous and concealed features that are present in politics. An examination of the politics of development in connection to various concepts of democracy is necessary for Zimbabwe to address some of its bedevilling national challenges.

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