The Origins and Functions of Demonisation Discourses in Britain–Zimbabwe Relations (2000–)

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Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and his ZANU(PF) government's violent seizure of white-owned commercial farms in 2000 heralded the nadir of diplomatic relations with British Prime Minister Tony Blair's New Labour government. Britain objected to the ZANU(PF) government's human rights violations and state-orchestrated violence, and, through the European Union, subsequently imposed sanctions. This article maintains that, from 2000, mutual demonisation discourses became a distinct feature of the Britain–Zimbabwe diplomatic conflict. Yet the nature and drivers of these demonisation discourses, and their influence, have not received systematic treatment in the literature on Britain–Zimbabwe relations. Drawing on constructivist interpretations of international relations, I argue that New Labour engaged in demonisation for normative reasons, while ZANU(PF) demonised New Labour for more instrumental purposes. Demonisation discourses promoted non-engagement between the British and Zimbabwean governments. This non-engagement partly circumscribed foreign policy options to aggressive measures, as evinced in Blair's covert canvassing for British military intervention in Zimbabwe. Lastly, it is demonstrated that demonisation discourses affected the third-party mediation efforts of South African President Thabo Mbeki.

Introduction

Britain–Zimbabwe diplomatic relations have been highly charged since 2000. The fractious relationship between their governments coincided with what a host of scholars regard as a period (1998–2008) of political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe.[1] The Zimbabwean crisis was internationalised in 2000, when British Prime Minister (1997–2007) Tony Blair's New Labour government publicly criticised President Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African

[1] For an overview of this vast Zimbabwean crisis literature, see B. Raftopoulos, 'The Crisis in Zimbabwe, 1998–2008' in B. Raftopoulos and A.S. Mlambo (eds), *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-Colonial Period to 2008* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2009).

National Union (Patriotic Front) (ZANU[PF]) party's employment of violence against domestic opposition and forcible seizure of white-owned commercial farms, in a programme it presented as aimed at addressing colonial land imbalance between whites and blacks. Moreover, in 2002 Blair led a successful campaign for the imposition of European Union (EU) sanctions on Mugabe and key members of ZANU(PF). The targeted nature of these sanctions manifested an erroneous belief that the ZANU(PF) leadership could be easily isolated because its rule rested on a very narrow popular base, in which cronyism and patronage were essential for maintaining power.

The concept of demonisation discourses provides us with a useful lens to understand relations in politics. According to Linn Normand, 'demonisation occurs when one actor portrays his enemy as devil or demon, or in league with them. Once rooted in the religious belief of literal diabolic possession, the demonic charge today retains a figurative force: it is a metaphor, a figure of speech, an externally imposed and symbolic characterisation of one's adversary'.[2] The New Labour government and British media's representations of events in Zimbabwe often demonised ZANU(PF) and Mugabe in particular. As Stephen Chan astutely observed, 'the demonisation of Mugabe and the personalisation of the Zimbabwean issue so that it seemed at times a campaign against him, reflected a public dimension in the UK that saw Zimbabwe as a stark case with a banally evil leadership'.[3] In response, ZANU(PF) accused Britain of 'evil' machinations and interfering in its internal affairs. 'Blair, keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe', Mugabe proclaimed in 2002.[4] According to scholars such as Ian Phimister and Brian Raftopoulos, ZANU(PF)'s appeals to sovereignty drew sympathy from many African governments and, importantly, South African President (1999–2008) Thabo Mbeki who, given his foreign policy goal that African leaders take the lead in resolving Africa's problems, was attempting to mediate in the Zimbabwean crisis.[5] Certainly, most African heads of state were reluctant publicly to condemn ZANU(PF)'s land programme and political violence, or Mugabe's long incumbency.

This article relies on constructivist insights to shed light on the reasons for and possible implications of the prevalence of demonisation discourses in the Britain–Zimbabwe

[2] L. Normand, 'Demonisation in International Relations Politics: the Case of Israel–Palestine' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2013), p. 7.
[3] S. Chan, 'The Sanctions of No Sanctions', E-International Relations, 25 July 2012, http://www.e-ir.info/2012/07/25/the-sanctions-of-no-sanctions/, retrieved 1 May 2014.
[4] S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 'Making Sense of Mugabeism in Local and Global Politics: "So Blair, Keep Your England and Let Me Keep My Zimbabwe"', *Third World Quarterly*, 30, 6 (July 2009), pp. 1139–58.
[5] I. Phimister and B. Raftopoulos, 'Mugabe, Mbeki and The Politics of Anti-Imperialism', *Review of African Political Economy*, 31, 101 (September 2004), pp. 385–400.

diplomatic conflict. Constructivism accentuates the significance of the social context in which politics occurs. The weight that constructivists accord social milieux causes them to highlight ideational factors as particularly influential in international relations.[6] Thus, for constructivists, discourses generated by state actors are influential determinants of state conduct, in contrast to the rationalist standpoint, which holds that states are merely rational actors seeking power and continued existence. In addition, non-state actors, such as non-governmental organisations and international media, are also important generators of influential discourses and norms about 'appropriate' state behaviour.[7] Following this constructivist logic, my analysis focuses on the generation of demonisation discourses by state actors (the Britain and Zimbabwe governments) and non-state actors (Zimbabwean and British media). I build on the scholarship of Normand, Chan and Julia Gallagher, who all draw from the constructivist tradition to make related arguments about the significance of ideational influences in international relations.

Gallagher observed first-hand the drivers of New Labour's foreign policy when working for the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the early 2000s. This experience partly informed her accomplished study of British foreign policy in Sierra Leone and Nigeria during Blair's prime ministership. Gallagher maintains that New Labour's policies in Africa generally had moral rather than political foundations.[8] Under Blair, Britain intervened militarily in Sierra Leone on humanitarian grounds in 2000, made African affairs central during its leadership of the G8 and EU, lobbied for the cancellation of bilateral African debt, and increased its aid to Africa threefold.[9] According to Gallagher, these policies were defined in an insubstantial and idealised manner, which associated Britain with a 'noble' cause in Africa. 'In differentiating Africa from "difficult politics", Blair expressed the way in which this "noble cause" came to be viewed as something apart from politics as usual, as a way of tapping into a form of "good" rather than "political" activity'.[10] Gallagher adds that 'this idea of politics – which helped define New Labour as it came to office – was derived by Blair and [Gordon] Brown partially from religious conviction, and resonated more

[6] A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).
[7] See for example: M. Keck and K. Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998); M. Finnemore and K. Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization*, 52, 4 (October 1998), pp. 887–917; M. Frost, *Global Ethics: Anarchy, Freedom and International Relations* (London, Routledge, 2008).
[8] J. Gallagher, *Britain and Africa under Blair: In Pursuit of the Good State* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2011).
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] J. Gallagher, 'Healing the Scar? Idealizing Britain in Africa, 1997–2007', *African Affairs*, 108, 432 (July 2009), pp. 435–51.

widely through parts of the Labour Party that drew on a traditional party belief that politics is a 'moral crusade'.[11] This traditional belief reduced political activity to a battle between good and evil. 'The word-decryption g(o)od and (d)evil clearly demonstrates the theological roots of these absolute terms of morality',[12] which empowered 'Britain to enter a morally clear-cut fray [Africa] to defend the good against the wicked', and constituted a 'central core of the British description of its project in Africa as ideal'.[13]

For Gallagher, Sierra Leone and Nigeria are 'particularly appropriate for studying British attempts to do good' because they are 'less complicated: there are no memories of bloody independence struggles as in Kenya, no remaining white populations with links to the motherland to remind Britain of the messier side of colonial relations, as in Zimbabwe. The colonial era appears more straightforward, its ending cleaner, and this colours perceptions of the current relationships' between her two African cases and Britain.[14] Zimbabwe is an interesting counter-example because it throws up 'all sorts of extra complexity and a deeper miring in the real', which 'make doing good much harder in southern Africa'.[15] This is an important observation, but one which Gallagher does not develop systematically, because Britain–Zimbabwe relations are marginal to her study. One of this article's main contributions, therefore, is its explication of a case (Zimbabwe) in which New Labour's simplistic moral project in Africa met with complex recent anti-colonial histories and politics. In the Zimbabwe case, the generation of mutual demonisation discourses was a predictable result of the moralising character of New Labour foreign policy.

The origins and functions of demonisation discourses have not been made central to analyses about the international dimension of the Zimbabwean crisis.[16] Yet, as this article will show, Britain–Zimbabwe relations were perceived by many key protagonists in terms of good and evil. Chan, however, is an exception to this omission. He rightly argues that 'for many years since the farm invasions in 2000, UK policy towards Zimbabwe has been without

[11] *Ibid.* The Chancellor of the Exchequer (1997–2007), Gordon Brown, succeeded Tony Blair as British Prime Minister in 2007. Brown was Prime Minister from 2007 to 2010.
[12] L. Normand, 'We Secular Fanatics', Exposition, 25 September 2010, http://expositionmagazine.com/?p=273, retrieved 1 May 2014.
[13] Gallagher, 'Healing the Scar?'.
[14] Gallagher, *Britain and Africa under Blair*, p. 104.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[16] Exemplars of literature exhibiting this oversight are: Phimister and Raftopoulos, 'Mugabe, Mbeki'; E. Worby, 'The End of Modernity in Zimbabwe? Passages from Development to Sovereignty', in A. Hammar, B. Raftopoulos and S. Jensen (eds), *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crisis* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2003); W. Gumede, *Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC* (London, Zed Books, 2007); M. Anstey, 'Zimbabwe in Ruins: Mediation Prospects in a Conflict Not Yet Ripe for Resolution', *International Negotiation*, 12, 3 (June 2007), pp. 415–42.

great nuance' because of demonisation discourses.[17] Nevertheless, Chan does not unpack the constituent elements of these demonisation discourses, and he presents Mugabe as demonised by Britain when in fact demonisation was mutual. Hence, additional contributions made by this article are: the demonstration of the important ways demonisation discourses shaped Britain–Zimbabwe relations in the post 2000 period, its illumination of the agency of demonised African leaders, and the deconstruction of the constitutive elements of demonisation discourses in the Britain–Zimbabwe conflict.

To demonstrate how demonisation discourses influenced Britain–Zimbabwe relations, I make use of Normand's work on the implications of demonisation discourses in international relations. Normand observes that the generation of demonisation discourses by political adversaries results in lack of progress in conflict resolution, because labelling one's foe as intrinsically evil is an inflexible enemy perception that denies the rational actor element accorded to states in international relations.[18] Normand also holds that demonisation partially undermines meaningful negotiation, because adversaries can become reluctant to countenance staging discussions with an enemy they regard as the devil incarnate, while instances in which negotiation occurs are likely to be characterised by deep mutual distrust. Furthermore, Normand suggests that this absence of engagement plays a part in diplomatic conflicts in limiting alternatives to more hostile measures. Lastly, she posits that demonisation discourses may well diminish the likelihood of impartial third-party engagement, because their good–evil dichotomy has potential to influence a 'with us or against us' mind set.

In the significant body of academic literature on South Africa's mediation in the Zimbabwean crisis, one of the unstated, but none the less important, goals of Mbeki's facilitation was the mending of Britain–Zimbabwe diplomatic relations.[19] Mbeki maintained that part of the Zimbabwean crisis was caused by the breakdown of diplomatic relations and co-operation between the ZANU(PF) government and Britain on the matter of financial

[17] Chan, 'The Sanctions of No Sanctions'.
[18] Normand, 'Demonisation in International Relations'.
[19] Literature that typifies this omission includes: B. Raftopoulos, 'An Overview of the GPA: National Conflict, Regional Agony and International Relations', in B. Raftopoulos (ed.), *The Hard Road to Reform: The Politics of Zimbabwe's Global Political Agreement* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2013); J. Hamill and J. Hoffman, 'Quiet Diplomacy or Appeasement? South African Policy Towards Zimbabwe', *Round Table*, 98, 402 (June 2009), pp. 373–84; M. Prys, 'Regional Hegemon or Regional Bystander: South Africa's Zimbabwe Policy 2000–2005', *Politikon*, 36, 2 (August 2009), pp. 193–218.

support for Zimbabwe's land reform, as agreed during the 1979 Lancaster House independence settlement.[20] Mbeki urged Blair as follows:

> The story that South Africa has got this potential, this enormous influence over what happens in Zimbabwe, is untrue. The people with the greatest potential influence over Zimbabwe are the British because the Zimbabweans feel very close to the British and Bob Mugabe is very angry with you because unlike Margaret Thatcher [British Prime minister 1979–90] you do not speak to him. Bob Mugabe used to quarrel violently with Thatcher but afterwards she would still talk to him. It is a very sore point for Bob Mugabe. You would help South Africa's efforts to mediate in Zimbabwe if you talked to him.[21]

Thus, the final contribution this article makes is its illustration of how demonisation discourses influenced Mbeki's mediation.

Drawing on elite interviews with a range of critical British, Zimbabwean and South African politicians, which is a significant absence in the literature, I argue that the moralising character of New Labour foreign policy resulted in the generation of mutual demonisation discourses. These discourses partially inhibited diplomatic engagement between Britain and Zimbabwe. Lack of diplomatic engagement between British and Zimbabwean political elites is one of the factors that limited foreign policy alternatives to more aggressive means, as will be verified by the evidence of Blair's clandestine canvassing for British-led military intervention in Zimbabwe to resolve the country's problems.

I draw a distinction between normative and instrumental demonisation. New Labour's demonisation of Mugabe and ZANU(PF) was normative – that is, it drew on a set of actual beliefs about British foreign policy in Africa, some of which have been identified by Gallagher. Instrumental demonisation underlines the agency of Mugabe and ZANU(PF), who found it useful to demonise Blair and New Labour in order to serve domestic agendas. Instrumental demonisation notwithstanding, Mugabe in particular harboured a historical grievance against the Labour party. This grievance was given renewed impetus in 1997 by New Labour's ahistorical 'do-good' or moral approach to land reform in Zimbabwe. Consequently, historically rooted grievance also fuelled Mugabe's demonisation of Blair and the New Labour government.

The article is composed of 3 major parts. The first part is a succinct history of Britain–Zimbabwe relations, which reveals the complex interplay of historically rooted

[20] Discussion with Thabo Mbeki and Dr Essop Pahad (Minister in the South African Presidency, 1999 –2008), 18 February 2011.
[21] *Ibid.*

grievances, politics and New Labour's 'do-good' approach. In the second section I examine the nature and generation of demonisation discourses in the Britain–Zimbabwe conflict. The final part sets out some of the behaviours that demonisation discourses encouraged.

A History of Britain–Zimbabwe relations

ZANU(PF) argues that the root cause of the breakdown of Britain–Zimbabwe relations is New Labour's Department for International Development (DfID) head Clare Short's letter of 5 November 1997 to the Zimbabwean government.[22] The letter addressed the matter of British financial support for land reform to resolve a colonial legacy of racially biased land distribution in Zimbabwe. In the now infamous letter, Short asserted:

> At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting [October 1997], Tony Blair said that he looked forward to developing a new basis for relations with Commonwealth countries founded upon our government's policies, not on the past. We will set out our agenda for international development in a White Paper.… The central thrust of this will be the development of partnerships with developing countries which are committed to eradicate poverty.… I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish, and as you know, we were colonised, not colonisers.… I am told Britain provided a package of assistance for resettlement in the period immediately following independence. This was, I gather, carefully planned and implemented, and met most of its targets. Again, I am told there were discussions in 1989 and 1996 [with the Conservative government] to explore the possibility of further assistance. However, that is all in the past.[23]

By discarding history, Short was attempting to create a morally unambiguous milieu in Zimbabwe, in which Britain would 'do good' by championing a fight against poverty. Yet, ZANU(PF) saw her communication as reneging on an unwritten financial assurance, made by the Conservative government during the 1979 Lancaster House independence negotiations, to assist in the funding of land reform.[24] According to ZANU(PF), Short's letter laid the ground for the spontaneous violent seizure of white-owned commercial farms in 2000 and Mugabe's resulting demonisation by Britain.[25]

[22]R. Mugabe, *Inside the Third Chimurenga* (Harare, Government Department of Information and Publicity, 2001).
[23] 'Clare Short: One Bad Letter With Long-lasting Consequences', *New African*, 462, London, IC Publications, 20 May 2007, p. 69.
[24] Mugabe, *Inside the Third Chimurenga*.
[25] Interview, Patrick Chinamasa (Cabinet minister and ZANU[PF]'s key negotiator in the Thabo Mbeki-led mediation process), 27 August 2012.

Mugabe argued that his ZANU(PF) government worked well with successive British Conservative governments (1979–97) on a variety of significant issues, such as the implementation of the 1979–80 ceasefire agreement (Operation AGILA) between a colonial Rhodesian army and two rival liberation armies, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA); and the subsequent British military's advisory and training assistance in integrating the Rhodesian force, ZANLA and ZIPRA into a national army.[26] The Conservative government also provided financial support for a successful initial phase of Zimbabwean land reform during the 1980s.[27] In addition, Mugabe was the recipient of a knighthood from the Conservative government in 1994. ZANU(PF)'s view that Blair's New Labour government broke the cordial working relationship between Britain and Zimbabwe was supported by David Hasluck, the Director (1984–2002) of Zimbabwe's white-dominated Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), who asserted that for Short 'to say that there is no history regarding the land? It was not a sensitive, diplomatic way. I believe a Conservative government would never have done that'.[28] Lord Peter Carrington brokered the 1979 Lancaster House agreement. He commented on Short's letter thus: 'surely the Labour government would have known you could not write that. It is absolutely true that we promised Mugabe at Lancaster [House] to help fix the land problem between whites and Africans'.[29] According to Lord Carrington, more financial assistance on land reform was owed to Zimbabwe, but only on the market-led willing-buyer–willing-seller principle.[30] New Labour lacked appreciation of the significance of the history of the Lancaster House negotiations on land. Lord Carrington, for instance, alleged that despite being the broker of the Lancaster House agreement and the person who, Mugabe claimed, made financial assurances to him on behalf of the British government to sponsor land reform, he was never consulted about the history of the 1979 land negotiations by Short or any other relevant New Labour government member.[31] Instead, New Labour took a 'do-good' approach to land reform in Zimbabwe; it couched land reform in terms of its moral crusade against poverty in Africa.

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[26] Mugabe, *Inside the Third Chimurenga*. ZANLA and ZIPRA were the military wings of two rival nationalist parties, Robert Mugabe's ZANU and Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU), respectively.
[27] J. Alexander, *The Unsettled Land: State Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893–2003* (Oxford, James Currey, 2006).
[28] 'Zimbabwe: a Conservative Government Would Never Have Done That', *New African*, London, IC Publications, 31 March 2003, p. 13.
[29] Interview with Lord Peter Carrington (British Foreign Secretary, 1979–1982), 11 June 2012.
[30] *Ibid.* See also A. Selby, 'Commercial Farmers and the State: Interest Group Politics and Land Reform in Zimbabwe' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2006).
[31] Interview with Lord Carrington, 11 June 2012.

Short conceded that her 1997 communication to the ZANU(PF) government caused offence, noting in hindsight, 'I would have left out that colonialism stuff in the letter, it was a mistake'.[32] Nevertheless, she maintained that ZANU(PF)'s 'tale on land [in 2000] is a lie'.[33] Short insisted that ZANU(PF) used her letter to engineer a diplomatic disagreement with Britain. 'Mugabe could have got a new package for a whole new phase of land reform at the land donor conference [in 1998] but he did not want the terms of open and transparent land reform because that would stop him from using land as a political tool [in the 2000 parliamentary election]', Short argued.[34] The fact that farm seizures were accompanied by political violence targeting rural supporters of the newly formed popular opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party lends some credibility to Short's assertion that Mugabe instrumentalised her 1997 letter for political gain. Senior ZANU(PF) member Kumbirai Kangai admitted that it was the party's highest decision-making body, the politburo, which 'mobilised the war veterans [of Zimbabwe's liberation war] and told them to get on the farms'.[35] Indeed the seizure of white-owned commercial farms by war veterans received state sanction soon after a government-sponsored draft constitution was rejected in a national plebiscite in February 2000. This was in sharp contrast to the state's eviction of illegal black squatters from farms since 1980, in the name of orderly and technocratic state-led land reform.[36] Other Labourites, such as Peter Hain, the Africa Minister (1999–2001) in the Foreign Office, felt 'deeply betrayed' by Mugabe because of his persecution and violence against Zimbabweans of 'every colour'.[37] Hain was one of the Anti-Apartheid Movement's leaders in Britain during the 1970s and 1980s, and he supported Mugabe's victory in the 1980 independence election.[38] In Hain's words, 'what particularly angered me as Africa Minister was that Mugabe had prostituted the ideals of the freedom struggle which he had once led with distinction'.[39]

Short's assertion that Mugabe spurned Britain's overtures to agree a new phase of land reform was questioned by Lord Mark Malloch-Brown who, in his capacity as the United Nations (UN) special envoy on Zimbabwe's land crisis, was involved in Mbeki's and UN

[32] Clare Short, quoted in B-M. Tendi, *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe: Politics, Intellectuals and the Media* (Oxford, Peter Lang, 2010), p. 71.
[33] Clare Short's comments at the book launch of Tendi, *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe*, 21 February 2011.
[34] Short, quoted in Tendi, *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe*, p. 71.
[35] Interview with Kumbirai Kangai, 11 August 2005.
[36] Alexander, *The Unsettled Land*.
[37] Interview with Peter Hain, 20 November 2012.
[38] P. Hain, *Outside In* (London, Biteback Publishing, 2012).
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

Secretary General (1997–2006) Kofi Annan's attempts to put together an international financial package for land reform. Lord Malloch-Brown alleged that the British Foreign Secretary (1997–2001), Robin Cook, was in private opposed to him travelling to Zimbabwe to stage talks with Mugabe about an internationally assisted land-reform programme in May 2000.[40] But Annan 'was not having any of it and intervened several times' to get the Blair government onside.[41] Significantly, Lord Malloch-Brown argued that the Blair government was averse to him engaging Mugabe because 'it had begun to demonise and isolate' the Zimbabwean president.[42]

Lord Malloch-Brown observed that it was evident, during his unsuccessful negotiations with Mugabe about the possibility of international financial support for land reform, that the Zimbabwean president could not abide the New Labour government. According to Lord Malloch-Brown, 'Mugabe much preferred the Tories, because they had given him the Lancaster House agreement, and it is also a stylistic thing, since his own self-image is so much of the conservative English gentleman, but Labour was not any of that and particularly after the Clare Short letter, which really stuck in his craw'.[43] Lord Malloch-Brown's observation was supported by Hain, who stated that Tony Lloyd, his predecessor as Africa Minister in the Foreign Office, once mentioned to him that he 'had a bad meeting with Mugabe, who remarked that he preferred Margaret Thatcher's Tories to Labour'.[44] However, to fully appreciate the roots of Mugabe's negative stance towards New Labour, we must reach back to 1965.

In 1965 Rhodesia, which was led by Prime Minister Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front (RF) government, broke off its link to the British crown through the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). Mugabe attempted to dissuade the British Prime minister (1964–70 and 1974–76) Harold Wilson's Labour government from relying solely on sanctions against the RF government as a response to the rebellion. He entreated Wilson to use military means instead and grant black majority rule in 1965. Mugabe contends that Wilson declined to use military force against the rebellious RF government, arguing 'the British public would not stand for' the use of force against its 'kith and kin'.[45] Wilson maintained that sanctions would

[40] Interview with Lord Mark Malloch-Brown (UNDP Director, 1999–2005; British Government Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2007–2009), 4 July 2012.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] *Ibid.*
[44] Hain, *Outside In*, p. 218; Interview with Peter Hain, 20 November 2012.
[45] 'Mugabe vs the "arrogant little fellows"' (transcribed extract from BBC documentary 'Smith, Mugabe and The Union Jack'), BBC World: Africa, 26 June 2000, available at

end UDI within weeks not months.[46] His intransigence incensed Mugabe and other Zimbabwean nationalist leaders, and it forced them to resort to an armed liberation struggle to defeat Rhodesian settler colonialism.[47] Mugabe reasoned that had Wilson's Labour government acted decisively in 1965, the loss of tens of thousands of Zimbabwean lives, and considerable suffering and destruction in a long liberation war, could have been prevented. As Carl Watts's study on British foreign policy on Rhodesia (1964–65) shows, UDI was not inevitable – the Labour government chose not to explore a variety of courses of action that could have prevented it.[48] Crucially, Wilson's declaration before UDI that Britain would never employ force against a rebellious Rhodesia 'undercut Smith's domestic critics and silenced the Rhodesian military commanders who predicted defeat' by the British military, and 'who pledged to honour their commissions from the Crown in the event of a British landing'.[49] Mugabe thus formed a negative perception of Labour in 1965, and the ahistorical 'do-good' approach exhibited in Short's 1997 letter reaffirmed his unfavourable view of the party.[50] This historical explanation is more fundamental than that offered by Lord Malloch-Brown for why Mugabe appeared to prefer the Conservatives over Labour.

Still, Mugabe's alleged comfortable working relationship with the Conservatives is disputed by Tory party stalwarts. Lord Carrington recalled that he

> found Mugabe a very difficult man at Lancaster House because Mugabe knew he was going to win the [liberation] war anyway, so he did not really care whether the conference produced a result. I did not like Mugabe and he did not like me because, as he told me, he found me a tiresome and schoolmasterish Foreign Secretary. And he was certainly not Prime Minister [Margaret] Thatcher's flavour of the month. She thought he was a Communist terrorist.[51]

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, the Conservative government's Africa Minister in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (1983–86) and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1995–97) supported Lord Carrington's account of Thatcher's hardline Conservative position on Mugabe's leadership. Sir Malcolm noted that 'Thatcher was inexperienced in foreign policy

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http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/807061.stm, retrieved 1 May 2014. See also E. Tekere, *A Lifetime of Struggle* (Harare, Sapes Books, 2009).

[46] J.R.T. Wood, *A Matter of Weeks Rather Than Months: The Impasse between Harold Wilson and Ian Smith; Sanctions, Aborted Settlements and War 1965–1969*, (Bloomington, Trafford Publishing, 2012).

[47] Tekere, *A Lifetime of Struggle.*

[48] C. Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence: An International History* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[49] S. Rice, 'The Commonwealth Initiative in Zimbabwe, 1979–1980: Implications for International Peacekeeping' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1991), p. 29.

[50] My comments about Robert Mugabe's thoughts are drawn from extensive conversations with members of his inner circle about the Zimbabwean President's political career.

[51] Interview with Lord Carrington, 11 June 2012.

and was in private very hostile to Mr Mugabe, but she let Carrington, who was pragmatic, take the lead on Zimbabwe and that helped' to move the independence negotiations along.[52] Another Tory grandee, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1989–95), Lord Douglas Hurd, pointed out that the Conservative government under Thatcher and Prime Minister (1990–97) John Major:

> had a civilised relationship with Mugabe but not actually a friendly one, because we always came up against the same wall, which is the wall about land reform. When I was minister, Mugabe always accused us in private meetings of not doing enough to fund land reform. He often quoted assurances Lord Carrington made to him at Lancaster House.[53]

Sir Malcolm and Lord Carrington argued that there were three reasons Mugabe thought there was a golden age of relations between the ZANU(PF) and Conservative governments. First is the Conservative government's respect for Mugabe's victory in the 1980 independence election, despite its known preference for his main rival, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) leader, Joshua Nkomo. Second is the mutual respect and empathy that developed between Mugabe and Lord Christopher Soames, the last governor of Rhodesia. who was appointed by the Conservative government in 1979 to oversee decolonisation. Third is Mugabe's proclamation of reconciliation between whites and blacks in 1980, which built the Conservative government's confidence in the Zimbabwean leader. Sir Malcolm noted, however, that this confidence was undermined by the early 1980s events in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces.[54] There were widespread killings and human rights abuses of civilians in Matabeleland and Midlands in the early 1980s in a campaign called the *Gukurahundi*, which was carried out by a North Korean-trained brigade loyal to ZANU(PF).[55] The ZANU(PF) government argued, however, that the *Gukurahundi* was aimed at quelling the instability caused by ZIPRA deserters from the national army who were operating as dissidents.

Sir Malcolm claimed to have remonstrated with Mugabe in 1983, making clear that the Conservative government was 'deeply concerned' about the *Gukurahundi*:

[52] Interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 June 2012; See also P. Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past: The Memoirs of Lord Carrington*, London, Collins, 1988.
[53] Interview with Lord Douglas Hurd, 11 October 2012.
[54] Interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 June 2012.
[55] See Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking The Silence, Building True Peace: A Report On The Disturbances In Matabeleland And The Midlands, 1980 to 1988* (Harare, CCJP/LRF, 2002).

> We had begun to wonder whether the leopard had changed its spots. That what we always feared about Mr Mugabe was coming true. But he was the legitimately elected government, even if we did not approve of the bad things he was doing in Matabeleland. We had to be pragmatic. We had to do all we could to nudge him back in the right direction, but recognising that we were no longer the colonial power. We were conscious that Mr Mugabe could play the anti-colonial card, and rightly so, because Britain did carry colonial baggage.[56]

According to Sir Malcolm the Conservative government had to see the *Gukurahundi* within 'the big picture' because:

> most of what had happened before Matabeleland was very positive and we did not want to jeopardise that by overreacting. We recognised that there was always going to be an internal tension and hostility between ZAPU and ZANU, between Matabeleland and Mashonaland, and that was a part of the country's dynamic. Perhaps, naively, we hoped that would be a temporary phenomenon.[57]

ZAPU drew its main support from the largely Ndebele-speaking province of Matabeleland, while ZANU's stronghold was primarily the Shona-speaking Mashonaland provinces. The eternal 'tension and hostility' between ZAPU and ZANU, and therefore Matabeleland and Mashonaland, which Sir Malcolm regards as part of Zimbabwe's 'dynamic', rests on the assumption that violence in the country has a purely ethnic character. Yet, the early 1980s violence was not simply ethnic – it was also deeply political and had some of its roots in a decades-old intense nationalist rivalry between ZANU and ZAPU, which involved their respective military wings.[58]

Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Lord Carrington concluded that it was not the change from Conservative to Labour government in 1997 that strained Britain–Zimbabwe relations. They argued instead that the relationship was transformed because Mugabe changed by seizing white-owned commercial farms and collapsing the economy, which caused unprecedented nationwide misery; consequently, the reaction of a Conservative government in 2000 would not have been significantly different from that of the Labour government. Sir Malcolm elaborated the point best:

> In theory you might think the Labour government is more left-wing, more preoccupied with human rights than we are, and so their reaction in 2000. Sometimes that is true. But there are people in my [Conservative] party who are old-fashioned, who grew up when Zimbabwe was still Rhodesia, and

[56] Interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 June 2012.
[57] *Ibid.*
[58] J. Alexander, J. McGregor and T. Ranger, *Violence and Memory. One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland* (Oxford, James Currey, 2000).

> although they knew there was a lot of injustice there, they always felt an affection for white Rhodesians. The kith and kin argument. There was a significant right-wing body in the Conservative party that was sympathetic to white Rhodesians, so when Mr Mugabe started seizing land and persecuting whites they were as hostile, if not more, as human rights Labour on that issue. There was a coming together in opposition to Mr Mugabe.[59]

ZANU(PF)'s alleged golden age (1979–97) of relations with the Conservative government was defined by pragmatism, at best. Mugabe was never the Conservative government's leader of choice in Zimbabwe. The Conservatives responded to Mugabe's legitimate 1980 election victory by adopting a pragmatic stance, as seen in their putting aside of the *Gukurahundi* because ZANU(PF) was rational on the domestic economy and sought reconciliation between different races. Pragmatic Britain–Zimbabwe relations collapsed in the post-1997 period. The reasons for this are vehemently contested. ZANU(PF) insisted that Britain–Zimbabwe relations were broken by the change to a New Labour government that did not respect historical financial assurances. Short's 1997 communication certainly made Britain–Zimbabwe relations difficult early on, particularly in light of Mugabe's negative historical perception of her party, but it was also a propaganda gift to the ZANU(PF) government, which made effective use of the letter. British Conservative and Labour party members maintained that ZANU(PF)'s violent takeover of white-owned commercial land, renouncing of reconciliation, economic mismanagement and human rights violations accounted for the breakdown of Britain–Zimbabwe relations. For them it was Mugabe who changed.

In 2004, the British historian John Tosh commented on New Labour's disposition towards history by writing:

> at present the British government is particularly resistant to any critical perspective derived from the past. The conservative administrations of the 1980s and 1990s had had a vision of the national past, which was variously evoked …. [Margaret Thatcher's] government devoted closer attention to history than to any other subject in the National Curriculum. The advent of Tony Blair in 1997 marked a significant shift. True to its name, New Labour has struck a sense of commitment to novelty, unburdened by the past. The centenary of the Labour Party in 2001 was barely acknowledged, as if a backward glance might stir up memories of its earlier radicalism and thus jeopardise the reinvention of the party.[60]

[59] Interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 June 2012.
[60] J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (London, Longman, 2004), p. xiv.

In the case of Britain–Zimbabwe relations, New Labour's aversion to a 'critical perspective derived from the past' can be seen in the ahistorical 'do-good' approach Short adopted in her 1997 letter to the ZANU(PF) government, and Lord Carrington's assertion that he was never consulted by pertinent New Labour politicians about the history of land negotiations at Lancaster House in 1979. New Labour's retreat from the terrain of problematic histories transmuted British political activity in Zimbabwe into a practice of 'doing good' or carrying out a moral crusade. When foreign relations are perceived in this way, they are reduced to a struggle between forces of good and evil – a discourse that took hold in Britain–Zimbabwe relations, as seen in Lord Malloch-Brown's disclosure that the New Labour government was opposed to his engagement with 'evil' Mugabe in 2000. It is to these demonisation discourses that I now turn.

Generation of Demonisation Discourses

Britain–Zimbabwe relations began to be characterised by demonisation discourses from 2000. This section examines the nature of demonisation discourses, and the motivations of their generators, by elucidating the views of British and Zimbabwean state actors and representations of the conflict by a non-state actor – mass media.

In Britain, the Conservative party's Shadow Foreign Secretary (2001–05), Lord Michael Ancram, attacked Blair for failing to take 'bold action' against Mugabe in terms that demonised the Zimbabwean president.[61] 'We [Conservatives] warned Blair of this evil [Mugabe] and still he just talks', Ancram averred.[62] The New Labour government objected to Mugabe's invitation to a UN World Food Summit by commenting that 'this is like Pol Pot going to a human rights conference'.[63] Mugabe was also frequently presented as evil in sections of British media. The *Telegraph*, traditionally a Conservative Party-aligned newspaper, accused the New Labour government of 'seeing no [Mugabe] evil'.[64] The *Sun*, a pro-New Labour newspaper during Blair's tenure as Prime minister, ran headlines such as 'evil Mugabe stole our farm'.[65] Taken together, these and other British media stories, including, 'Death knell for a despot: Mugabe's evil rule could be up as his own thugs

[61]'We Warned Blair of This Evil and Still He Just Talks; Shadow Foreign Secretary Michael Ancram Condemns The Shameful Inaction Over Mugabe's Murderous Fascism', *Mail on Sunday*, 20 January 2002.
[62]*Ibid.*
[63] Julian Borger, '"This is Like Inviting Pol Pot to a Human Rights Conference"', *Guardian*, 3 June 2008.
[64] See, for instance, 'Mrs Beckett Sees No Evil', *Telegraph*, 15 March 2007.
[65] 'Evil Mugabe Stole Our Farm', *Sun*, 30 July 2007, available at http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/142540/Evil-Mugabe-stole-our-farm.html, retrieved 1 May 2014.

FINALLY turn against him';[66] and 'Hitler Mugabe launches revenge terror attacks',[67] reflected a domestic perception that the Zimbabwean president was 'evil'.

In a retort to British media representations of him as Adolf Hitler, Mugabe in 2003 declared that: 'this Hitler has only one objective, justice for his people, sovereignty for his people, recognition of the independence of his people and their rights over their resources. If that is Hitler then let me be a Hitler tenfold'.[68] Martin Meredith, a British historian on Africa, attempted to perpetuate this construction of Mugabe as Hitler. Writing in Britain's *Guardian* newspaper, Meredith distorted Mugabe's aforementioned reference to Hitler in the following manner: 'in a speech in 2003 [Mugabe] warned he would use even worse violence if necessary, threatening to act like a black Hitler against the opposition. "If that is Hitler, then let me be a Hitler tenfold"'.[69] Hitler is the epitome of an 'evil' political leader in the modern British public's psyche. The import of Meredith's misleading representation of Mugabe as a self-professed Hitler is to associate the Zimbabwean president's rule with what his audience regards as the worst 'evil'. When experts in a field choose to write and speak in the public sphere they become public intellectuals. Increasing 'a society's self-knowledge by making manifest its latent sources of discomfort and discontent' is important to the public intellectual's practice.[70] Meredith's distortion was at variance with this interpretation of public intellectuals' role in society; instead, his work reinforced the shallow perception that Mugabe was Hitler, when it could have introduced 'difficult politics' to British public debate about the Zimbabwean crisis.

On the Zimbabwean side, the ZANU(PF) government and public intellectuals aligned to it, as well as state media, demonised Blair's government by casting declining domestic economic and social conditions as caused by the predatory machinations of 'evil' New Labour.[71] Mugabe, on average, mentioned Blair and Britain 43 times per speech during his

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[66] Peter Oborne, 'Death Knell for a Despot: Mugabe's Evil Rule Could Be Up, As His Own Thugs FINALLY Turn Against Him', Daily Mail, 29 March 2008, available at http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-548571/Death-knell-despot-Mugabes-evil-rule---thugs-FINALLY-turn-him.html, retrieved 1 May 2014.
[67] Peta Thornycroft, 'Hitler Mugabe Launches Revenge Terror Attacks', *Telegraph*, 26 March 2003, available at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatnews/4186630/Hitler-Mugabe-launches-revenge-terror-attacks.html, retrieved 8 June 2014.
[68] 'Robert Mugabe Quotes', Sokwanele, available at http://www.sokwanele.com/quotes?page=9, retrieved 1 May 2014.
[69] M. Meredith, 'Mandela and Mugabe Both Embraced Violence, But One Could Not Give It Up', *Guardian*, 8 April 2008. Meredith is the author of several books on Africa, including a biography of Robert Mugabe titled *Mugabe: Power, Plunder and the Struggle for Zimbabwe* (London, Public Affairs, 2007).
[70] L. Coser, *Men Of Ideas* (New York, The Free Press, 1965), p. 3.
[71] Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe, 'ZBC's Vision 30 Revisited: Towards a National Agenda, February to May 2002' (Harare, Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe, 2002).

2002 presidential election campaign.[72] He cast the election as a struggle between Zimbabwe and an 'evil' former colonial master seeking to effect re-colonisation through a foreign-sponsored MDC party. Furthermore, Mugabe branded Blair morally decadent because his cabinet contained three homosexuals, Peter Mandelson, Chris Smith and Nick Brown.[73] Mugabe described Blair's co-operation with American President (2001–09) George W. Bush in the 2003 military invasion of Iraq as the 'coalition of evil'.[74] In 2008, citing human rights abuses, New Labour stripped Mugabe of the Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath, awarded by a Conservative government in 1994. Mugabe responded to losing the knighthood by declaring: 'we continue to respect the Queen. It is the demons in 10 Downing Street that need to be exorcised'.[75]

The robust nature of these mutual demonisation discourses between Britain and Zimbabwe, which state and non-state actors generated, begs an important question: did politicians and media really believe that the other side in the diplomatic conflict was evil? I put this question to a member of Mugabe's inner circle, his press secretary George Charamba, and to Blair's press secretary (1997–2000) and director of communications and strategy (2000–03), Alastair Campbell. Charamba denied that Mugabe actually saw the British government as inherently evil, insisting that the Zimbabwean president's generation of a demonisation discourse was instrumental; a calculated response to the demonisation of his leadership by the British government and media.[76] Charamba's view was shared by Patrick Chinamasa, a ZANU(PF) cabinet minister and key negotiator in the Mbeki-led mediation process. Chinamasa maintained that 'we [ZANU(PF)] could not just sit by whilst the British demonised us and gave us a very bad name'.[77] Campbell substantiated Charamba and Chinamasa's standpoint by taking the view that 'it was Mugabe who sought to build up the idea that his relationship with Tony [Blair] was some kind of important battleground. Mugabe came out with the most ludicrous and provocative statements'.[78] Campbell's contention that Mugabe is a master of instrumentalisation was shared by Lord Hurd, who recounted an

[72] D. Blair, *Degrees in Violence: Robert Mugabe and the Struggle for Power in Zimbabwe* (London, Continuum, 2002).
[73] John Deans, '"Blair's Cabinet Is Full of Gays", Says Mugabe; Premier Losing Patience at Latest Outburst from Zimbabwe', *Daily Mail*, 13 November 1999, available at http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-109711988.html, retrieved 1 May 2014.
[74] 'Mugabe Attacks US, UK "Coalition of Evil"', newzimbabwe.com, 11 December 1999, available at http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/un19.13154.html, retrieved 1 May 2014.
[75] 'Robert Mugabe Quotes', Sokwanele, http://www.sokwanele.com/quotes?page=9, retrieved on 1 May 2014.
[76] Discussion with George Charamba, 26 December 2012.
[77] Interview with Patrick Chinamasa, 27 August 2012.
[78] E-mail communication with Alastair Campbell, 27 October 2012.

enduring recollection from his many diplomatic engagements with the Zimbabwean president:

> he was one of those people the British Empire created who specialised in knowing how to twist the British government's tail. He was well trained in the art of annoying the British if he needed to. He knew our ways. He understood British domestic politics very well, so could press the right buttons if he wanted a reaction.[79]

For New Labour, however, demonisation had normative roots. Gallagher argues that Blair's perception of British politics in Africa as a matter of 'doing good' partly emanated from religious conviction 'and resonated more widely through parts of the Labour Party that drew on a traditional party belief that politics is a moral crusade'.[80] Campbell questioned Gallagher's contention, asserting that 'Tony's [Blair] religious faith was and is important to him but I do not believe he saw his relationship with Mugabe as a battle between good and evil'.[81] But we must take cognisance of the fact that Campbell is an atheist, and in 2003 he famously declared 'we do not do God' during an interview between Blair and American journalist David Margolick, in order to stop the prime minister discussing his religious faith in public.[82] Blair himself stated that the 'rightness' of his controversial 2003 invasion of Iraq will be judged by God,[83] while Anthony Seldon's biography of Blair adeptly demonstrates – through a range of interviews with key figures in Blair's life and political career – how the prime minister's zest for eradicating poverty and other problems in Africa was an example of his religious faith at work.[84] Blair therefore probably saw the post-2000 economic decline and violence that occurred under Mugabe's presidency as an antithesis to his moral project in Africa. Hain, in similar vein, contended that 'Blair could not stand his [Mugabe's] abuses, seeing Mugabe as a dangerous blot on his Africa focus – the strongest of any modern British Prime Minister'.[85] Field Marshal Lord Charles Guthrie, who served as Chief of the General Staff (1994–97), the professional head of the British army, and Chief of the Defence Staff (1997–2001), had a close relationship with Blair, which earned him the moniker 'Tony's

[79] Interview with Lord Douglas Hurd, 11 October 2012.
[80] Gallagher, 'Healing the Scar?'
[81] E-mail communication with Alastair Campbell, 27 October 2012.
[82] See Nick Assinder, 'Bringing God Into Politics', BBC News, 4 March 2006, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4773852.stm, retrieved 1 May 2014.
[83] *Ibid.*
[84] A. Seldon, *Blair* (London, Free Press, 2005).
[85] Hain, *Outside In*, p. 218.

General' from some commentators.[86] According to Blair, Field Marshal Guthrie 'was someone I really liked, respected and relied on'.[87] In an interview with me, Field Marshal Guthrie spoke of Blair with similar affection, highlighting the close bond they developed between 1997 and 2001.[88] On Blair's foreign policy outlook, Guthrie commented that 'Tony was an interventionist. He did believe if good men do nothing evil will prosper'.[89] In the Conservative party, Lord Carrington professed that 'Mugabe did become a demon because of the misery he brought on innocent people and the lack of justice, even the so-called wicked Conservative government has not started doing that here [in Britain under Prime Minister (2010–) David Cameron]'.[90] According to Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Blair 'had a sense of moral mission to fight global evil. It was onward Christian soldiers, with the soldiers being more important than the Christians'.[91]

The evidence suggests that Mugabe and ZANU(PF) engaged in instrumental demonization to serve domestic agendas, while for Blair and sections of New Labour, and Conservative party politicians such as the Lords Carrington and Ancram, demonisation was normative and appeared to actually shape their perceptions. It was useful for Mugabe to demonise Blair, particularly in so far as ZANU(PF) constructed the MDC as a party formed and controlled by the British government. According to Mugabe, the MDC was 'evil' by association with Britain: 'we cannot discuss with allies of the West. The devil is the devil and we have no idea of supping with the devil'.[92] Associating the MDC with the 'evil' British government was part of wider endeavours to delegitimise domestic opposition and seal off Mbeki's attempts to mediate constructive negotiation between ZANU(PF) and the MDC about the formation of a power-sharing government, which the South African president viewed as a means of resolving part of the Zimbabwean crisis. There is an important lesson here: external normative demonisation runs the risk of being re-appropriated by demonised leaders in the service of internal repression.

With respect to media, Zimbabwean media that demonised the British government was state-controlled, hence it was toeing the official line. The reasons British media generated demonisation discourses are less straightforward. Campbell viewed the British

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[86] See, for example, Cole Moreton, 'Lord Guthrie: "Tony's General" Turns Defence Into An Attack', *The Independent*, 11 November 2007, available at http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/lord-guthrie-tonys-general-turns-defence-into-an-attack-399865.html, retrieved 8 June 2014.
[87] T. Blair, *A Journey* (London, Hutchinson, 2010), p. 238.
[88]Interview with Field Marshal Lord Charles Guthrie, 13 June 2012.
[89]*Ibid.*
[90] Interview with Lord Peter Carrington, 11 June 2012.
[91] Interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 June 2012.
[92] 'Robert Mugabe Quotes', Sokwanele, http://www.sokwanele.com/quotes?page=9, retrieved 1 May 2014.

media's demonisation of Mugabe as symptomatic of 'over the top reporting' that 'all politicians are subject to at times'.[93] The media studies scholar Wendy Willems provides a more nuanced perspective. Willems demonstrates that the presence of a white minority in Zimbabwe, which she refers to as 'remnants of empire', resulted in intense and simplistic British media focus on the country's domestic affairs and Mugabe in particular.[94] British media mainly reported events in Zimbabwe as a matter of evil (ZANU[PF] government) versus good (hapless and productive white farmers). This simplistic evil and good representation of complex politics in a faraway country about which we know nothing was easier for the domestic British population to digest.

Having set out the nature of demonisation discourses and the stimuli for their generation in the Britain–Zimbabwe diplomatic conflict, I now turn to the way in which these discourses influenced politicians' behaviour and Mbeki's attempts to bring Blair and Mugabe to dialogue.

The Influence of Demonisation Discourses

By the end of 2000, high-level diplomatic relations between Britain and Zimbabwe had broken down to the extent that direct communication between Mugabe and Blair was non-existent. Mbeki recounted some of the difficulties he encountered when trying to bring Mugabe and Blair into direct negotiation. Here I reproduce Mbeki's account of one, among many, of his futile attempts to initiate dialogue between Mugabe and Blair:

> I spoke to Bob Mugabe [in 2001] and said to him, I am going to England on a state visit and this matter about Zimbabwe's land problem is bound to arise. I am sure you have not sent a message of congratulations to Tony for winning re-election. Bob Mugabe said he had not. I said to Bob Mugabe, when I meet Tony in 10 Downing Street I will say to him that I am going to telephone you from Number 10 to say that we have discussed Zimbabwe's land problem. When I telephone you I will say to you that I am sitting here with Tony, say hello to him. You should speak to Tony to say 'congratulations on your election victory, goodbye'. That is all you have to say. Bob Mugabe agreed. He gave me two telephone numbers and said he will be sitting by the phone on standby on the day. When I got to Number 10 I told Tony that it would help a great deal if he said hello to Bob Mugabe. Tony was very unwilling. I tried hard to convince him. One of the reasons Tony gave was that if he talked to Bob Mugabe, Bob Mugabe was going to tell the media afterwards that he talked to that

[93] E-mail communication with Alastair Campbell, 27 October 2012.
[94] W. Willems, 'Remnants of Empire? British Media Reporting on Zimbabwe', *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 11 (November 2005), pp. 91–108; see also W. Willems, '"Powerful Centre" versus "Powerless Periphery"? Postcolonial Encounters, Global Media and Nationalism in the Zimbabwe Crisis', in S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and J. Muzondidya, (eds), *Redemptive or Grotesque Nationalism? Rethinking Contemporary Politics in Zimbabwe*, Nationalisms Across the Globe series, Vol. 3 (Oxford, Peter Lang, 2011).

> 'queer' in London. You remember Bob Mugabe had made a statement that Blair's government was a government of gays? I said Tony, come on, just talk to him. We spent time debating the matter and Tony got called away eventually, so the telephone conversation with Bob Mugabe never happened.[95]

As I have already shown, one of the important planks in Mugabe's instrumental demonisation of Blair was the presence of some gay politicians in the British prime minister's cabinet. The fact that Blair highlighted this instrumental demonisation as one of the reasons he was 'unwilling' to engage with Mugabe indicates how demonisation discourses can influence behaviour.

A key outcome of the non-engagement promoted by demonisation discourses is that aggressive measures become the only alternative form of relations. Mbeki alleged, for instance, that Blair sought military intervention in Zimbabwe:

> Tony put maximum pressure on me from 2000 to agree to a military invasion of Zimbabwe, and he was going to base his troops here [in South Africa], and we said no. It is not going to happen. If the Zimbabweans do not like Bob Mugabe they will remove him, not you. Britain had even identified people in the Zimbabwean military who they were going to put in place to succeed Mugabe. In the end they gave up because of our resistance.[96]

Mbeki's claim that South Africa frustrated Blair's military intervention agenda is supported John Kampfner in his book *Blair's Wars*, which records that 'on one trip Blair found himself in the company of Clare Short. They talked for long periods about intervention. Blair confided in her that "if it were down to me, I'd do Zimbabwe as well", – that is, send troops'.[97] Mbeki's allegation that Blair covertly canvassed for military intervention in Zimbabwe was further substantiated by Field Marshal Guthrie, who revealed the following:

> I was asked by Number 10 and the Foreign Office [in 2000], if I could look into invading Zimbabwe. I was absolutely dead set against it because it is a very difficult military operation. Zimbabwe is landlocked. It would be hard to supply and resupply, and some of the kind of people we would have to protect [persecuted white farmers] were spread throughout Zimbabwe. So if you protect one lot here the other lot there will probably be killed. And the other thing was, there was not a single African country that would approve of what we were doing. They would say here goes Britain again. Neo-colonialists all over again. My strong recommendation was do not touch Zimbabwe. And they knew if I

[95] Discussion with Thabo Mbeki and Dr Essop Pahad, 18 February 2011.
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] J. Kampfner, *Blair's Wars* (London, Free Press, 2004), p. 76.

> did not want to do it, and said it could not be done, it was not going to be done. They had not thought it through, honestly. We would have made things much worse by going in there.[98]

Field Marshal Guthrie had publicly revealed in 2007 that he had advised Blair against invading Zimbabwe.[99] Guthrie asserted that this revelation earned him private criticism from figures on:

> the right of British politics who felt that even if we were not going to invade I should not have said publicly that we were not going to do it. And they have a point. You quietly keep the military option on the table and Mugabe is not going to know much about it. My counter to that was you become hostage to fortune if you keep the military option on the table. People keep asking why you are not going to take it. They go on and on at you. The temptation grows. So I felt it should not be on the table.[100]

Despite the military option's removal from the table, alternatives were still limited to antagonistic measures, which now took the form of sanctions against ZANU(PF). According to Mbeki, after the military invasion option was stillborn, Blair began campaigning for the imposition of EU sanctions against Mugabe and key members of the ZANU(PF) government:

> Britain began saying to us that Bob Mugabe had a castle in Scotland, money in British banks, and these were the things they were going to freeze. We said we cannot stop you. We can stop you invading Zimbabwe from here but we cannot do anything about your sanctions. After about three months, Tony's people came to say to us that we have looked high and low. Bob Mugabe has no assets in Britain but we are going to impose sanctions anyway. So they froze assets that did not exist. I am saying to you, Tony cannot talk earnestly about Zimbabwe, because he knows very well that the things we would say about him and his behind-the- scenes activities on Zimbabwe would be exceedingly embarrassing. He is very evil. The whole thing was evil.[101]

Four major conclusions about the influence of demonisation discourses in Britain–Zimbabwe relations, which mirror Normand's findings elsewhere, can be drawn from the foregoing. First, demonisation discourses can partially undermine diplomatic engagement, as I have demonstrated through Mbeki's account of Blair's disinclination to converse with Mugabe, even via telephone. Additional evidence of Blair's unwillingness to interact with 'evil' Mugabe can be found in his autobiography, *A Journey*, in which he writes about a near encounter with the Zimbabwean president during Pope John Paul II's 2005 funeral in Rome:

[98] Interview with Field Marshal Lord Charles Guthrie, 13 June 2012.
[99] Moreton, 'Lord Guthrie: "Tony's General" Turns Defence Into An Attack'.
[100] Interview with Field Marshal Lord Charles Guthrie, 13 June 2012.
[101] Discussion with Thabo Mbeki and Dr Essop Pahad, 18 February 2011.

> The Vatican decided to sit us all by alphabetical order. Unfortunately this put me next to Robert Mugabe, the UK being next to Zimbabwe. I was literally just about to take my seat when, in the nick of time, I spotted Mugabe who was in the next chair, luckily at that moment talking to his neighbour on the other side. He had not seen me. I was on the point of starting an election campaign and this would not have been the ideal launch picture. It was too ghastly to contemplate.… As the service was about to get under way, to my horror I saw Prince Charles enter and of course get ushered to the UK seat. I rushed forward, but it was too late, and he sat down bang next to Mugabe.[102]

Royalty did not shield Prince Charles from being criticised by British politicians and media for interacting with 'evil' Mugabe. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) described Prince Charles's handshake with Mugabe at the Pope's funeral as a 'diplomatic gaffe', and some politicians called it 'frankly stupid', forcing a spokesperson for the royal family to issue a statement that the Prince 'finds the current Zimbabwean regime abhorrent' but 'was not in a position to avoid shaking of hands with Mugabe'.[103] The hysteria in the House of Commons and British media over Prince Charles's handshake with Mugabe is reminiscent of that provoked when British Foreign Secretary (2001–06) Jack Straw 'accidentally' shook hands with the Zimbabwean president at a UN Summit in 2004. Straw was subsequently compelled to release a specious statement, proclaiming: 'I had not expected to see President Mugabe there because it was quite dark in that corner. I was being pushed towards shaking hands with somebody just as a matter of courtesy and then it transpired it was President Mugabe'.[104] This bizarre evidence of British politicians' desperate avoidance of 'evil' Mugabe, and the need to offer some sort of explanation to assuage parliament and local media if interaction occurred, reflects how demonisation discourses can deter engagement.

A second conclusion is that amid non-engagement by protagonists, approaches in strained relations are limited to aggressive ones, as Blair's canvassing for military intervention in Zimbabwe shows. When military action in Zimbabwe proved impossible, the next available option to Blair – imposition of sanctions – was also an aggressive measure. However, Blair's military ambitions in Zimbabwe should also be seen in the context of the British prime minister's interventionism. As Blair writes in *A Journey*: 'a traditional foreign policy view, based on a narrow analysis of national interest and an indifference unless that

[102] Blair, *A Journey*, p. 521.
[103] 'Prince's Mugabe Handshake Gaffe', BBC News, 8 April 2005, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4425385.stm, retrieved 1 May 2014.
[104] Mark Oliver, 'Straw Under Fire over Mugabe Handshake', *Guardian*, 28 September 2004.

interest is directly engaged, is flawed and out of date. I happen to think … that it is immoral'.[105]

The third conclusion is that this adoption of aggressive measures appears devoid of rationality. For example, in Mbeki's account the British government applied a freeze on Mugabe's assets even though it was aware that these assets did not exist. Field Marshal Guthrie's judgement that requests he look into a military invasion of Zimbabwe had not been thought through further underlines the point. In the first place, UN Security Council authorisation for military action in Zimbabwe was unlikely to have been secured, because Zimbabwe did not pose a security threat to international states, and the grounds for humanitarian intervention were spurious. Moreover, as Guthrie warned, a British-led military intervention in Zimbabwe would predictably have seen African states line up in support of Mugabe, making the operation impossible. New Labour's disregard of how Britain's imperial history in Southern Africa militated against military intervention in Zimbabwe harks back to Tosh's prescient observation that the party lacked a critical perspective derived from the past. In the end, fighting 'evil' by way of military intervention was trumped by history.

The final conclusion is that it was not only ZANU(PF)'s appeals to anti-Western imperialism that made Mbeki sympathetic to it, as Phimister and Raftopoulos, for example, argue.[106] Demonisation discourses also influenced Mbeki's perception. Mbeki's description of Blair and his clandestine diplomatic manoeuvers against the ZANU(PF) government as 'very evil' supports this conclusion. As Normand argues, demonisation reduces the likelihood of unbiased third-party mediation because its good–evil distinction shapes a 'with us or against us' disposition in conflicts, increasing the possibility of mediators becoming sympathetic to one of the protagonists.[107]

Demonisation Endgame

This article relies on constructivist insights to shed light on the reasons for and implications of the prevalence of demonisation discourses in post-2000 Britain–Zimbabwe diplomatic relations. Gallagher's study of the New Labour government's pursuit of a simplistic moral project in Nigeria and Sierra Leone between 1997 and 2007 concluded that 'separating the good and the political works relatively well' in these two countries because of the apparent lack of complicated histories and politics.[108] This article explores the outcomes of New

[105] Blair, *A Journey*, p. 225.
[106] Phimister and Raftopoulos, 'Mugabe, Mbeki and the Politics of Anti-Imperialism'.
[107] Normand, 'Demonisation in International Relations'.
[108] Gallagher, *Britain and Africa under Blair*, p. 23.

Labour's moral project in Zimbabwe, a case that is, by contrast, replete with complex topical histories in which Britain's role is highly contentious. As I have demonstrated, the good and the political is not easily separated in such cases; mutual demonisation discourses shaped protracted diplomatic conflict between Britain and Zimbabwe and influenced Mbeki's perception during his mediation. Notably, the article relies on empirical data derived from a range of interviews with key protagonists in the conflict, for the first time in the literature. I will close with a brief discussion about the possible future of Britain–Zimbabwe relations.

In September 2008 Mbeki brokered a power-sharing agreement in Zimbabwe, on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), between Mugabe's ZANU(PF) and two rival MDC parties. The power-sharing settlement resolved a political legitimacy crisis brought about by a contested presidential run-off election in June 2008, in which the challenger, Morgan Tsvangirai, withdrew his candidacy, citing violence and intimidation directed at his MDC supporters by ZANU(PF) in support of Mugabe, the eventual winner. Mugabe retained the powerful executive presidency, while Tsvangirai secured an ill-defined prime minister's post. Frank Chikane, the director general in the South African Presidency (1999–2009), writes that the New Labour government was opposed to the formation of a power-sharing government, wanting 'no outcome other than that of the removal of Mugabe from office'.[109]

However, in 2010 New Labour lost to the Conservative party in a general election. It is fair to say that from 2010 the pragmatism of old between ZANU(PF) and the British Conservative Party began slowly to re-emerge in place of the rigid 'evil' enemy perception that was a hallmark of Britain–Zimbabwe relations during the New Labour years. The New Labour government's Africa Minister in 2010, Lord Malloch-Brown, observed that the transition to a Conservative Party-led coalition government with the Liberal Democrats presented an opportunity for the mending of Britain–Zimbabwe relations:

> I always felt that if the Labour government ever got around to negotiating with Mugabe, it needed to get a Tory to do it. So when the Tories took office in 2010 I saw an opportunity for change in Britain's relationship with Zimbabwe. There were certainly plenty of signals from Mugabe. Just after Labour left government Mugabe came to the World Economic Forum in Tanzania. I was there but did not get a chance to talk to him, but he did say privately to my colleague Richard Dowden, the director of the Royal African Society, which I chair, that it looks like the Tories are going to win and I can do business with Britain again. I was very assiduous in passing this and other signals from Mugabe on to

[109] F. Chikane, *The Things That Could Not Be Said. From A(ids) to Z(imbabwe)* (Johannesburg, Picador, 2013), p. 77.

> William Hague [Conservative Foreign Secretary] and Henry Bellingham [Conservative Africa Minister, 2010–12] to say Britain has got an opportunity to work with Mugabe again.[110]

New Labour's departure from power meant that ZANU(PF)'s negative perception of the party, which had long historical roots, would no longer play a part in undermining Britain–Zimbabwe relations. What is more, the exit from government of British politicians central to Britain–Zimbabwe mutual demonisation since 2000 opened up the possibility of re-engagement. Without question, there was no lively generation of demonisation discourses between Mugabe and the Conservative leader and British Prime Minister David Cameron. Mutual demonisation discourses proved a relic of the New Labour years. Cameron did not share the ideas of good and evil peculiar to the moralising character of New Labour foreign policy. Furthermore, EU sanctions were gradually lifted from 2010, with a view to their complete suspension.

The domestic incentives to instrumentalise demonisation had also diminished for Mugabe and ZANU(PF). The fact that ZANU(PF) entered a power-sharing government with the MDCs in 2009 meant that Mugabe could no longer argue effectively that opposition parties were 'evil' by association with Britain, making it impossible for his party to 'sup with the devil'. In 2013, the 'Friends of Zimbabwe' – an annual meeting of major international donors to the country – staged talks, about Zimbabwean political and economic developments, in London at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. ZANU(PF) was invited to take part in the discussions. The party was represented by Chinamasa, who travelled to London for the first time since 2002, when he was placed under an EU travel ban as part of sanctions on the ZANU(PF) government. The 2013 Friends of Zimbabwe meeting's communiqué hinted at possible re-engagement in the near future.[111] Significantly, Mugabe and ZANU(PF) won the July 2013 election, which brought power-sharing to an end, with a two-thirds majority.[112] Britain cast doubt on the credibility of the result but, tellingly, took no action beyond a public statement.[113] The defeated Zimbabwean opposition was now weak and divided, further diminishing the expediency of instrumental demonisation to

[110] Interview with Lord Mark Malloch-Brown, 4 July 2012.
[111] 'Friends of Zimbabwe, 2013 Communiqué', https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/173020/UNCLA_20130322_Friends_of_Zimbabwe_Communique.pdf, retrieved 1 May 2014.
[112] For an analysis of ZANU(PF)'s campaign, see: B-M. Tendi, 'Robert Mugabe's 2013 Presidential Election Campaign', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 4 (December 2013), pp. 963–70.
[113] 'Foreign Secretary Statement on Zimbabwe Election Results', https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-zimbabwe-election-results, retrieved 1 May 2014.

ZANU(PF).[114] This opposition in-fighting also brought to the fore Tsvangirai's shortcomings as an effective and democratic leader. Tsvangirai's weaknesses in this regard had long been evident,[115] but over the years British media and many New Labour politicians attached little significance to them, perhaps because their perception was that he represented 'good' in a great battle with 'evil' Mugabe.

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[114] For an assessment of the MDC-T's campaign, see P. Zamchiya, 'The MDC-T's (Un)seeing Eye in Zimbabwe's 2013 Harmonised Elections: a Technical Knockout', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 4 (December 2013), pp. 955–62.

[115] See, for example, B. Raftopoulos, 'Reflections on Opposition Politics in Zimbabwe: The Politics of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)', in B. Raftopoulos and K. Alexander (eds), *Reflections on Democratic Politics in Zimbabwe* (Cape Town, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2006).