

PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY AS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF ZIMBABWE’S FOREIGN POLICY

Wenceslaus Mudyanadzo

Lecturer, Department of Politics and Public Management, Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe

Caleb Asher Nkomo

Researcher

ABSTRACT

The paper analyzed the critical role of parliamentary diplomacy in enhancing Zimbabwe’s foreign policy which is exercised through the executive branch of government. The paper argued that Parliamentary diplomacy does not duplicate government diplomacy which is implemented through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but it provides alternative diplomatic channels which are critical to the management of a country’s bilateral and multilateral relations within a unitary system of government. Using a qualitative research methodology, the paper examined why nation states engage in parliamentary diplomacy, the objectives of Zimbabwean parliamentary diplomacy and their relationship with overall governmental diplomacy and it concludes by identifying the challenges associated with parliamentary diplomacy and proffers possible solutions to these challenges.

Key Words: Parliamentary Diplomacy, Foreign policy, Bilateral relations, Multilateral relations

Introduction

Parliamentary Diplomacy according to Malamud and Stavridis (2011; p. 104) is associated with parliamentary cooperation or with parliamentary control. Weisglass and de Boer (2007; p. 93) define it as “the full range of international activities undertaken by Parliamentarians in order to increase mutual understanding between countries, to assist each other in improving

the control of governments and the representation of a people, and to increase the democratic legitimacy of inter-governmental institutions.” Parliamentary diplomacy was also defined as “the means by which two or more parliaments conduct an ongoing dialogue with regard to key international issues”(www.agora-parl.org). These definitions of parliamentary diplomacy accept and recognize the role of Parliaments in state relations. Through parliamentary diplomacy, national parliaments discuss issues on best practices ranging from political, economic, social and cultural aspects.

The 21st century international relations system is governed by multi-track diplomacy involving a plethora of players ranging from state to non-state actors. The prominence of new forms of diplomacy such as parliamentary diplomacy, environmental diplomacy, resource diplomacy, knowledge diplomacy, transition diplomacy and global governance diplomacy among others reflects changes in the international diplomatic landscape which requires the management of state relations by other players other than state players. Traditionally, diplomacy had been an area reserved for the Executive and specialists designated as Diplomats but this has since changed leading to greater involvement by other actors traditionally marginalized by the Executive. The current shifting trends in diplomatic practice have resulted in almost every parliament in the world being actively involved in parliamentary diplomacy. In Zimbabwe, the Executive, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is responsible for the coordination and implementation of foreign policy while Parliament has assumed a key role in the initiation, implementation, defense and evaluation of foreign policy. Generally, parliamentary diplomacy is said to be aimed at developing national parliaments into being more effective and responsive institutions in matters to do with legislative scrutiny, oversight and representative roles which happen to be the key constitutional roles of parliament in a true parliamentary democracy (Parliament of Zimbabwe Baseline Survey, 2011). Through the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Parliament of Zimbabwe is able to monitor, investigate, inquire into and make recommendations relating to any aspect of foreign policy delivery. The Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment No.20 ACT 2013 outlines some of the functions of Parliament as the protection of the Constitution and the promotion of democratic governance in Zimbabwe (section 119[1]). A parliament which allows the executive to abuse or disregard the constitution will be undermining a country’s peace, security, democratic order, and the general image and prestige of the nation’s international standing. Therefore, Parliament is

expected to play a key role in ensuring that “all institutions and agencies of the state and government at every level are accountable to Parliament” (Constitution of Zimbabwe, section 119[3]). In matters relating to foreign affairs like the ratification of international agreements, the approval of Foreign Affairs external mission budgets or the declaration of war, disengagement from war and the making of peace, the constitution requires the President to consult Parliament and parliamentary diplomacy is automatically activated by these constitutional provisions.

Parliamentary diplomacy is also a useful instrument for promoting bilateral and multilateral friendships and co-operation among like-minded national parliaments and parliamentary institutions. Attempts to resolve differences among states can also be pursued through parliamentary diplomacy as a way of testing waters and complementing the efforts of traditional diplomacy by the Executive. Although Zimbabwe’s parliamentary delegations from both the National Assembly and Senate are composed of members from different political backgrounds, they have a common aim which is to advance the interests of Zimbabwe abroad, both on a bilateral and multilateral basis. It is also important to note that national interest is the defining criteria for all foreign policy issues and therefore Parliamentarians, regardless of their political affiliation, are expected to speak with one voice on foreign policy matters concerning their country. Members of Parliament are first and foremost, representatives of their country and secondly representatives of their respective political parties and constituencies.

Although the President is the Commander in Chief of the Zimbabwe Defense Forces, the Parliament of Zimbabwe has the final powers regarding engagement of the state in foreign wars. Section 111(1) of the constitution states that the President has the power to declare war and make peace but should notify Parliament within seven sitting days after such authorization. Section 111(2) goes further to withdraw much power from the President and gives the final powers regarding war to Parliament. The constitution gives Parliament the right to pass a resolution by at least two-thirds to revoke the declaration of war or engagement in war by Zimbabwe. If Parliament, through a resolution, revokes the engagement of Zimbabwe in a war, the President should take all practical steps to withdraw from the war (Section 111[3]). When Zimbabwe engaged in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique wars, the President did not have to consult Parliament since he had

unfettered powers to engage in wars according to the Constitution of Zimbabwe operating at that time. However, taking into consideration the increased importance of Parliamentarians in international relations and foreign policy, the new Zimbabwean constitution withdrew the sweeping powers to engage in war which were vested in the President and entrusted the approval of such deployments in Parliament. In this particular case, executive authority of declaring war and deploying troops abroad is counterbalanced by parliamentary approval as a legitimization formula of parliamentary diplomacy. Parliament is also responsible for the budgetary processes, including war budgets. Therefore, engaging in war without parliamentary consent would create serious political challenges in approving such budgets in the Legislature.

Statement of the Problem

The research sought to investigate the relationship between parliamentary diplomacy and the overall governmental diplomacy as reflected in foreign policy. Parliamentary diplomacy is not yet widely acknowledged as an extension or branch of foreign policy in most countries with some scholars arguing that it is meant to promote best practices of national parliaments.

Research Objectives

The overall objective of the study was to assess the relationship between parliamentary diplomacy and governmental diplomacy and to establish whether parliamentary diplomacy enhances governmental diplomacy with a specific focus on the Parliament of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwean Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The research sought to accomplish the following specific objectives

- ❖ To assess why nation states engage in parliamentary diplomacy;
- ❖ To examine the objectives of Zimbabwe's parliamentary diplomacy
- ❖ To assess the relationship between Zimbabwe's parliamentary diplomacy and the overall governmental diplomacy as reflected in foreign policy; and
- ❖ To identify challenges relating to Zimbabwe's parliamentary diplomacy and to proffer solutions

Research Questions

1. Why do nation states engage in Parliamentary diplomacy?

2. What are the objectives of Zimbabwe's parliamentary diplomacy?
3. Is there any relationship between Zimbabwe's parliamentary diplomacy and the overall governmental diplomacy as reflected in foreign policy?
4. What are the main challenges facing Parliament of Zimbabwe regarding parliamentary diplomacy and what are the possible solutions to the challenges identified?

Research Methodology

In carrying out the research, data was collected mainly using qualitative methods. Qualitative research was used because of its ability to generate deep and valid information for the study through interviews with key informants and secondary sources of data.

Discussion

Why Parliaments engage in Diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy is a useful instrument of promoting bilateral and multilateral co-operation among like-minded national parliaments and parliamentary institutions around the world. Such co-operation which is parallel to government diplomacy as reflected by foreign policy, serves to promote the national interest abroad, through the promotion by parliament of democratic governance, constitutionality and the adoption of laws that promote peace, security, order and stability as the basis of international engagement. The concept of national interest is at the nerve centre of all foreign policy issues and therefore, when it comes to parliamentary diplomacy, parliamentarians are expected to put their political affiliations behind, be a unified front and pursue the national interests of the country first and foremost before they could even think about their constituency.

Malamud and Stavridis (2011) argued that parliaments engage in diplomacy or international affairs mainly through three ways, that is, by influencing foreign policy through national parliaments, conducting parallel diplomatic relations with state and non-state actors and by establishing and empowering parliaments as representative bodies of international and regional organizations. Parliament, as one of the three pillars of a state, is a very important actor in a state's foreign policy, whether it directly engages in international relations issues or not. Since foreign policy is an extension of domestic policies, it is therefore inevitable that parliament is also involved in foreign policy processes through the legislative processes of

enacting policies before they are adopted for implementation. In foreign policy, a game of reciprocity is played where states implement foreign policies towards certain states that are responsive to the foreign policies implemented on them by the same states. This diplomatic practice is in line with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963. Therefore, if for example a parliament from state A, as an arm of government acts in an irresponsible manner, raising the eyebrows of another state (state B), a hostile foreign policy may be implemented on state A and in return state A may also adopt a hostile policy on state B. This has been demonstrated in Zimbabwe for example, where allegations have been leveled on Parliament for ignoring human rights violations in the fast track land reform program especially between 2000 – 2002, leading to the adoption by western countries of a hostile policy towards Zimbabwe through coercive action that included the imposition of punitive measures such as “targeted sanctions” which included travel bans on government elites, trading restrictions and freezing of assets. The Zimbabwean Parliament was also affected by these targeted sanctions. In other words, the Parliament of Zimbabwe was also involved in a diplomatic row between Zimbabwe and Western powers which was being spearheaded by the Zimbabwean government. Parliament fell victim to some of the sanctions since they were, in certain circumstances, denied visas to the Western world. The passing by the Zimbabwean Parliament of the Land Acquisition Act (Chapter 20: 10) had the effect of internationalizing Zimbabwe’s land reform program leading to the direct involvement of parliament in the diplomatic dispute with western powers. Therefore Parliament’s actions within the domestic sphere also influence the direction of foreign policy.

Noulas (2011) noted that the form of government (whether unitary, federal, democratic or dictatorship) determines the nature of parliamentary diplomacy. Implied in this statement is the fact that the nature of parliamentary diplomacy must resonate with the form of government in place to ensure a co-operative, functional system of governance. Parliaments also engage in parliamentary diplomacy to deepen ties with other parliaments and strengthen people to people relations at bilateral and multilateral levels of engagement. Parliamentarians who exercise their representation role abroad are considered to be democratically mandated diplomats and the knowledge and insights they obtain from such tours of duty is considered critical in scrutinizing a national government’s foreign policy processes and improving the management of their constituencies. Although parliamentary diplomacy is a form of parallel

diplomacy to the diplomatic activities of the executive, it serves as a useful instrument which adds value to the foreign policy processes of government. Parliamentary diplomacy helps to scrutinize a country's foreign policy processes as a way of safeguarding the national interest that drives the conception of a country's foreign policy. Therefore, a successful foreign policy is largely dependent on the ability of the Executive and the Legislature to form functional coalitions for mutual benefit as the foundation of a country's diplomacy. The Executive and the Legislature require the institutional diplomatic competencies of both parties to effectively implement a successful foreign policy agenda.

Parliamentary diplomacy also promotes efficient and effective good governance, transparency and the rule of law worldwide in general and Zimbabwe in particular. It should be noted that in Zimbabwe, Parliament is a critical pillar of the government and like other agencies of the government that engage in diplomacy, it is expected to follow government foreign policy which is formulated mainly by the ruling party, ZANU-PF and Cabinet and implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs following the legitimization processes of the legislature in many instances. In Zimbabwe, parliamentary diplomacy has emerged as an off spring of the state's foreign policy since the two work hand in glove.

The Parliament of Zimbabwe (POZ) participates in diplomacy at bilateral and multilateral levels, thanks to the several co-operative national parliament frameworks which make this possible in addition to the various International Parliamentary Institutions (IPIs) which provide a platform for the co-operation. POZ is affiliated to seven IPIs, that is the Pan African Parliament (PAP); Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF); Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU); African Parliamentary Union (APU); Association of Senates and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECAA); African Caribbean Pacific and European Union (ACP – EU) and the Southern African Development Community Organization of Public Accounts Committees (SADCOPAC).

International Parliamentary Institutions' (IPI) co-operation is either on voluntary basis or following an invitation. However, the Parliament of Zimbabwe, as an important arm of government, does not just haphazardly join IPIs since this can have detrimental effects to the state at large. According to POZ (2015), there are certain procedures to follow before Parliament becomes an active member of an IPI. The two houses of Parliament, the National Assembly (lower chamber) and Senate (upper chamber) have to adopt a resolution for

parliament to join an IPI. After the passing of a resolution, Parliament consults the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for advice on their decision and justification on whether to join the IPI or not. This arrangement is meant to ensure that there is co-operation and not conflict between the objectives of Parliament and the Executive branches of government.

Zimbabwe's Parliamentary diplomacy is mainly driven by Parliament's two presiding officers, the Speaker of the House of Assembly and the Senate President. The two presiding officers play a key representational role abroad on behalf of parliament and they are usually consulted on various issues concerning the country. Members of the diplomatic corps accredited to Zimbabwe and visiting dignitaries may also pay courtesy calls on these officials if they want updates on the operations of Parliament. The Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs is responsible for spearheading Zimbabwe's parliamentary diplomacy with other countries. On the domestic level, this committee has the main task of monitoring and evaluating the activities and policies implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a support role in determining the country's foreign policy direction. Another critical structure of Zimbabwe's parliamentary diplomacy is the External Relations Directorate which co-ordinates parliamentary diplomacy at regional, continental and global levels. The External Directorate provides technical advice and direction to legislators on all matters to do with parliamentary diplomacy. The setting up of the directorate which is presided over by a Principal Director is ample testimony to the importance Parliament attaches to parliamentary diplomacy.

Methods of Engagement in Parliamentary Diplomacy

Bilateral diplomacy

The Parliament of Zimbabwe engages in parliamentary diplomacy through Parliamentary Exchange Visits. Parliament tries to co-operate with parliaments from all over the world regardless of the nature of relations that may exist between Zimbabwe and some states although in most cases, it engages with parliaments from states that have cordial relations with Zimbabwe. The Parliament of Zimbabwe engages in bilateral visits with other states at regional and international level. These bilateral visits are usually conducted to enhance ties between countries as a way of complementing the foreign policy agenda of a country. Parliamentary visits also serve to reinforce cordial diplomatic relations between two countries and their parliaments or to 'mend fences' following a period of tension between states and

their parliaments as a way of signaling an important shift in diplomatic relations. Visits also serve as a platform to exchange views or co-ordinate policy prior to a regional and international parliamentary forum. During such visits, parliamentarians take the opportunity to engage in side diplomacy by holding short meetings with their counterparts on the sidelines of regional, multilateral meetings or other events. The delegations usually attempt to meet the criteria of political and gender balance in terms of representation. The Parliament of Zimbabwe has received several delegations on a bilateral basis from other National Parliaments and this has been increasing over the years. Such visits include the Namibian Parliament, Ugandan Parliament and European Parliament, all in 2013. The Parliament of Zimbabwe has undertaken bilateral visits to countries such as Italy in 2012 and Zambia in 2013. Bilateral visits do not only comprise parliamentarians but can also involve Parliamentary support staff with the objective of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of parliamentary operations. In 2013, the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA) funded several delegations of Parliamentary staff in charge of Zimbabwean Portfolio and Thematic Committees to Parliaments of Uganda, South Africa and Zambia. Through such visits, parliamentary staff, who are the secretariat of parliament, get valuable information on the operations of the parliaments visited and such information may include how they engage in international relations and support foreign policy.

POZ is also included in the programs of some official delegations visiting the country. Such delegations are not necessarily parliamentary delegations but may be state delegations. This creates an opportunity for *tete-a-tete* meetings thereby creating a platform for parliamentarians to advance foreign policy objectives. In 2012, the Zimbabwean government hosted then United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay and she paid courtesy calls on the Presiding Officers of Parliament giving them the opportunity to defend Zimbabwe's image on human rights issues and to portray a good image of the country abroad.

Multilateral diplomacy

The Parliament of Zimbabwe also engages in multilateral parliamentary diplomacy through IPIs both at regional and international levels.

Although the activities and objectives of these organizations may differ, they have similar characteristics since they all advocate for parliamentary diplomacy as an instrument of enhancing effective participation of parliaments in diplomacy. Parliamentary conferences are

an important mechanism in parliamentary diplomacy since they create a platform for a large number of Parliamentarians to meet, exchange ideas and discuss issues of mutual interest. The Parliament of Zimbabwe (POZ) participates in such conferences. In 2010, then Speaker of the Parliament of Zimbabwe, Lovemore Moyo assumed Chairmanship of SADC PF, in November 2011, POZ hosted the Southern African Development Community Organization of Public Accounts Committees (SADCOPAC), in April 2013, it hosted the SADC PF Southern African Barometer Workshop and in conjunction with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) hosted the SADC PF Election Observation Mission in July of the same year. In November 2014, POZ also hosted the 36th Plenary Assembly Session of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) in Victoria Falls. It ought to be noted that POZ requires a Cabinet Authority from the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) to host such delegations and conferences. However POZ has never been given an opportunity to host big IPIs such as IPU and ACP-EU.

One of the major priorities of POZ is to closely work with regional parliaments in strengthening regional parliamentary institutions such as SADC PF and Pan-African Parliament (PAP). A recent important development of parliamentary conferences is the pre-conference meetings through Bloc diplomacy which has turned to be a key feature of parliamentary conferences. Regional and sub-regional blocs meet prior to the main conference so as to come up with more consolidated positions on issues of interest to them, for example, the Africa group meets a day or two before the ACP-EU Assembly to discuss on how best the African bloc can approach the international system to address issues of mutual concern which are in line with their national interests.

Objectives of Zimbabwe's Parliamentary Diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy does not operate in a vacuum. It takes into account that Zimbabwe is a unitary, democratic and sovereign republic (section 1 of the constitution). Parliamentary diplomacy complements the foreign policy objectives of government. As a way of reinforcing governmental diplomacy, Parliament is expected to follow the principles of foreign policy that guide Zimbabwe in accordance with section 12 of the Constitution. Section 12 (1) (a) of the constitution states that Zimbabwe's foreign policy is based on the promotion and protection of the national interests of Zimbabwe. Although Parliament consists of people from different political backgrounds and political parties with different political interests,

national interest is expected to take precedence over these party interests. Zimbabwean parliamentary diplomacy is parallel to governmental diplomacy but it is an extension of the Republic's foreign policy and its main thrust is to implement the country's national interests, marketing Zimbabwe's development agendas such as the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET), resuscitating the economy and normalizing relations particularly with the west. Therefore, in conducting its diplomacy, Parliament is expected to follow Zimbabwe's foreign policy principle of 'promotion and protection of the national interests of Zimbabwe'. Therefore, Zimbabwe's first parliamentary diplomacy objective is guided by the need to **'promote and protect the national interests of Zimbabwe'** in line with the constitutional provisions.

Section 12 (1)(b) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe states that Zimbabwe's foreign policy is based on 'respect for international law'. Also Section 117 (2)(b) confers Parliament with the legislative authority to make laws for 'the peace, order and good governance of Zimbabwe'. Since Parliament is responsible for the making of laws, it is also responsible for the domestication of international agreements in line with section 34 of the Constitution which states that 'the state must ensure that all conventions, treaties and agreements to which Zimbabwe is a party are incorporated into domestic law'. Section 327 (2)(b) which states that 'an international treaty which has been concluded or executed by the President or under the President's authority.....does not form part of the law of Zimbabwe unless it has been incorporated into the law through an Act of Parliament' also gives Parliament the final powers on the adoption of international agreements into Zimbabwean law. The Zimbabwean constitution further gives Parliament the powers to initiate, prepare, consider or reject any legislation (section 130 [1]). The constitution also requires parliament to protect the constitution and promote democratic governance in Zimbabwe. Therefore, if a government acts in a contradictory manner to international law principles and its Parliament does nothing to hold it accountable, relations with the international community may be strained as was the case with Zimbabwe following the implementation of the fast track land reform program which was regarded by the international community as against property rights and the rule of international law. In the context of the land reform program, Parliament also worked hand in glove with the executive on September 12, 2002 to pass a constitutional amendment that deprived white land owners of the right to challenge in court the Zimbabwe government's decision to expropriate their land. The Supreme Court also ruled against legal challenges to

this constitutional amendment. The Parliament of Zimbabwe, together with the Executive arm of government, refused to support any international law practice or custom which was inconsistent with the Constitution of Zimbabwe on matters to do with the land reform program. In a situation where international law clashes with domestic law as was the case with the Land Acquisition Act (chapter 20:10) and the violation of several Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreements (BIPPAs) by Zimbabwe, domestic law takes precedence because it drives the supreme national interest of state which promotes and protects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Zimbabwe. Consequently, some Parliamentarians have been denied travel visas to attend Parliamentary diplomatic activities due to their failure to promote the values of international law in the eyes of other states. Taking a microscopic view, although Parliament engages in international relations, it does not need to necessarily do so for it to contribute to a states' foreign policy, its actions within the domestic spheres are an important contribution to foreign policy as well as its direction. The enactment of the Land Acquisition Act (chapter 20:10) by the Legislature was a defining landmark in Zimbabwe's foreign policy input. Therefore, while the second objective of Zimbabwe parliamentary diplomacy is **to respect the rule of international law**, such practice is only permissible to the extent of such law being consistent with the Constitution of the Republic and does not violate the national interests of Zimbabwe.

POZ is also entrusted to promote the existence of cordial relations between Zimbabwe and other states in accordance with the foreign policy principle of Zimbabwe in section 12 (1) (c) of the Constitution which calls for the peaceful co-existence with other states. Therefore, the third objective of parliamentary diplomacy is to **'promote peaceful co-existence with other nations'** in line with the constitution of Zimbabwe. This principle is central to Parliament's involvement in international affairs and foreign policy. Parliament undertakes some secret or "quiet" initiatives to promote peaceful co-existence among states. The Zimbabwe Parliament may, therefore, associate with most parliaments in the world despite bitter relations that may exist with some governments. Where sour relations exist among states, parliamentary diplomacy is used to break deadlocks. Since the start of the new millennium, relations between Zimbabwe and western countries were frosty. However, although POZ withdrew its membership from some IPIs dominated by the west such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), it still engages with some western parliaments. On several occasions, the Presiding Officers of parliament have been paid courtesy calls by

Ambassadors from western countries and POZ also hosted the European Parliament delegation in April 2013. The Parliament of Zimbabwe also embarked on bilateral visits to countries such as Italy in 2012 to try and restore cordial relations between Zimbabwe and the west. Therefore, parliamentary diplomacy acts as a bridge where there is the existence of sour relations amongst states.

Zimbabwean foreign policy is also aimed at promoting the settlement of disputes through peaceful means in line with section 12 (1) (d) of the constitution. Although this is a role of foreign policy, Parliament reinforces it. POZ sends representatives to observe elections. Election observation is a very important mechanism in post conflict countries. POZ itself has been actively observing elections of fellow SADC countries such as in 2014 when the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Jacob Mudenda, led the SADC PF mission to observe the Namibian elections. As part of the SADC PF delegation, Zimbabwe had also observed elections in Angola (August 2012) and Swaziland (September 2013). Zimbabwe prioritizes parliamentary diplomacy as a means of safeguarding the existence of peace especially within the African continent and the SADC region. During Zimbabwe's 2013 harmonized elections, POZ hosted observer missions from SADC countries which enjoys cordial relations with Zimbabwe as a strategy of endorsing the elections as 'free and fair', thereby giving legitimacy to the government which was formed thereafter. POZ did not invite IPIs such as IPU and ACP-EU because such institutions also consist of Parliaments from the Western countries who were hostile to the country. Parliamentary diplomacy acknowledged the potential for such delegations to come up with reports that might inflame and destabilize the political situation in Zimbabwe leading to political instability. Zimbabwe has only hosted conferences for IPIs which share the same Pan-African ideologies with it and this demonstrates that the Executive and Legislative branches of government work hand in glove in hosting such conferences. It can therefore be observed that the fourth objective of Zimbabwe's parliamentary diplomacy which is in line with foreign policy and the constitution is to **'promote the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.**

Zimbabwean parliamentary diplomacy is also aimed at promoting Pan-African ideology in accordance with section 12 (2) of the Constitution which states that "the state must promote regional and Pan-African cultural, economic and political cooperation and integration and must participate in international and regional organizations that stand for peace and the well-being and progress of the region, the continent and humanity". It is pertinent to point out that

independent Zimbabwe is a product of the liberation struggle which successfully dislodged colonial rule and as a result it believes in Pan- African ideology as the ideology which should guide Zimbabwe's development agenda and more importantly as the platform to safeguard Zimbabwe's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to promote African unity and solidarity through African Union institutions and processes which are free from outside interference. This can be derived from the speeches presented by Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe at international summits where he often condemned western governments for interference in the internal affairs of the country and encouraged African states to join hands and cooperate for their development. Parliament of Zimbabwe engages more in bilateral visits with other African Parliaments with which it shares common visions such as Pan-African ideology. POZ co-operates fully in the activities of SADC PF, PAP and APU due to the fact that they have more in common, especially aspects such as Pan-African ideology, similar levels of development and colonial history. Zimbabwe's approach to parliamentary diplomacy even in global IPIs is driven by the desire to uphold and promote Pan-Africanism. Most of the diplomatic positions adopted by POZ are in support of this ideology. Therefore, it can be argued that the fifth objective of Zimbabwe's parliamentary diplomacy is to **uphold and promote the Pan-African ideology**, which emanates from the values of the liberation struggle, as the basis for pursuing co-operation frameworks on the regional and international stage for the purpose of addressing its development agenda and defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state.

It is important to note that Parliament as one of the three pillars of state is a branch of government although it should be independent in the exercise of its duties. The dominance of the ruling ZANU-PF party MPs and Senators in the two chambers of parliament ensures that the ZANU-PF policies and ideology dominates in parliament. Therefore, parliamentary diplomacy automatically follows the direction of the country's foreign policy and ideology. As a branch of government, Parliament is expected to follow government policy in all its external engagements. According to the constitution, the legislature consists of the President and Parliament (section 116). The President is also the chief diplomat of the country and is responsible for the formulation and authorization of foreign policy. Therefore, the relationship between the President and Parliament which emanates from the constitution makes it imperative that parliamentary diplomacy complements overall governmental diplomacy.

It ought to be understood that although parliaments consist members of different political affiliation, when it comes to parliamentary diplomacy, just like in foreign policy, it is difficult to separate it from the country's history, position in the international relations arena, policy of the ruling party, and the character and nature of the State President. The fact that the ruling party elites are under punitive measures since the turn of the new millennium has been a heavy blow on the effectiveness and development of Zimbabwean parliamentary diplomacy because the engagement of parliament has been limited with some parliaments being hostile to it. However things are starting to show up with some parliaments, Ambassadors and Heads of Missions accredited to Zimbabwe from the western bloc starting to engage in bilateral relations with the Parliament of Zimbabwe.

Parliamentary diplomacy and foreign policy in Zimbabwe cannot be separated because there is no clear separation of powers between the Executive branch and the Legislature in Zimbabwe. The independence of Parliament from the executive branch of government is questionable. Section 116 of the constitution of Zimbabwe amendment No. 20 articulates that the Legislature shall consist of the President and Parliament. Moreover, the Executive branch is composed of the Presidency and Cabinet and this cabinet is formed mostly by Members of Parliament appointed to ministerial posts by the President except for a maximum of five who can be selected outside Parliament in line with section 104(3) of Zimbabwe's current constitution. The Executive branch is the main implementer of foreign policy. Taking into account the fact that since independence, Parliament's presiding officers have always been from the ruling party except for the Speaker of the National Assembly and his Deputy during the seventh Parliament, parliamentary diplomacy has always followed foreign policy implemented by the government because the Presiding Officers spearhead parliamentary diplomacy. Presiding Officers are political actors who also have political affiliation and are likely to be supportive of the policies that are implemented by the Executive especially if they belong to the ruling party.

Challenges affecting Zimbabwean Parliamentary Diplomacy

Since parliamentary diplomacy is anchored on the principles of Zimbabwe's foreign policy which are contained in the constitution, it is difficult for the Parliament of Zimbabwe to work at cross purposes with the government in diplomatic matters. POZ can also not actively participate in parliamentary assemblies or host any delegation without the approval of

government, for example, in 2003 POZ faced some membership challenges in one of the biggest IPIs, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) following Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth Group of nations on allegations of human rights abuses and lack of the rule of international law. POZ later withdrew its membership from the organization following the subsequent withdrawal of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth group of nations in 2003. Zimbabwe's parliamentary diplomacy could therefore be relied upon to complement government in its re-engagement agenda with the west because it is critical to occupy every diplomatic space which could potentially be occupied by your enemies to your detriment.

The Parliament of Zimbabwe lacks sufficient funds to actively participate in parliamentary diplomatic activities. The budget allocated to parliament by Treasury falls short of parliament's budgeted activities and this is in line with the difficulties facing the economy. Donor funding can also not be relied on to plan parliamentary diplomatic activities since they may come with unacceptable strings attached to them. These operational shortcomings limit the participation of parliament in parliamentary diplomacy. It is a major challenge since some donors may directly interfere with the work of parliament, for example, by nominating delegation participants regardless of the Parliament of Zimbabwe's policy on delegation composition. Such interference serves to promote the foreign interests of the donors concerned and undermines the development policies, plans, projects and programs of Parliament. Treasury needs to fund Parliament adequately so that it is immune from being compromised by co-operating partners and this will also bolster its independence from political manipulation by political parties.

The other challenge has to do with the lack of a functional reporting structure and strategy for close coordination between Parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These two Government entities operate as if they are not linked and yet they have one common task which is to uphold the country's foreign policy and national interests. Consequently, the Parliament of Zimbabwe is left out in most official state visits yet it should be represented to try and advance the interests of the country through parliamentary diplomatic engagement at that level. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is at the centre of state diplomacy should regularly offer Parliamentarians diplomatic training, on a structured basis, to ensure that parliamentary diplomacy compliments Zimbabwean foreign policy for mutual benefit. Efforts could also be directed at holding strategic workshops with both parties to chart the way

forward on some difficult issues affecting the well-being of Zimbabwean parliamentary diplomacy and state diplomacy.

Also of great concern is the issue of unity among Parliamentarians in Zimbabwe. Some MPs from the opposition party have been attending parliamentary diplomatic activities behind POZ's back after some Parliamentarians mainly from the ruling party had been denied travel visas to western countries. POZ had officially withdrawn from participation in such fora in protest due to the denial of visas to some members but some MPs went on to visit the countries against the wish of parliament. Therefore, diplomatic training workshops may also provide a solution to these challenges as a way of nurturing the national interest through parliamentary diplomacy.

The current constitution of Zimbabwe does not stipulate educational qualifications as a requirement to become a Senator or a Member of the National Assembly in sections 121 and 125. Instead, one becomes a Member of Parliament basing on popularity and other requirements like being a registered voter and being at least 21 years of age (section 125[a] and [b]). Due to these criteria which are not grounded in academic studies and relevant experience, some Parliamentarians are not sufficiently equipped to defend their national roles especially if they are required to serve in those committees that require monitoring and control of state agencies that implement foreign policy. Consequently, members of Parliament without the requisite qualifications and experience compromise parliamentary diplomacy's thrust of achieving foreign policy objectives in line with the requirements of the constitution. Future constitutional amendments may want to explore how parliamentary diplomacy could be enhanced by attracting appropriate candidates with academic skills and practical experience to serve Parliament in line with the national interest and parliamentary diplomacy objectives.

The development of parliamentary diplomacy in Zimbabwe has been slow due to Government's under estimation of the positive role of parliament in the international arena. In other jurisdictions, parliamentary diplomacy plays a pivotal role in diplomacy. According to the IPU (2005) some Parliamentarians are part of national delegations to international negotiations, intergovernmental meetings and international dialogue on behalf of the Government. Zimbabwe may want to take a leaf from these international best practices.

There is also a shortfall of staff at Parliament to provide valuable insight on parliamentary diplomacy through knowledge generation, application and dissemination of diplomatic knowledge for the present and future generations. The External Relations Directorate of Parliament should come up with a mechanism and strategy to strengthen the department in preparation for its expanding mandate in diplomacy.

Conclusion and recommendations

Recommendations

- State and parliamentary diplomacy should as much as possible, move away from political and economic polarization and focus on the middle ground as a strategy to build bridges with political opponents and accelerate the normalization of relations with western countries. Zimbabwe is too small a world player to pursue a policy of confrontation. The world has moved towards greater interconnectedness in all spheres of life and therefore the pursuit of global partnerships is the surest way to defend the national interests of the state. Parliamentary diplomacy should therefore not be seen as duplicating but complimenting government diplomacy as a way of enhancing international and domestic democratic and legal order, and the prestige and perception of the country's image.
- Parliament should be adequately resourced so that it can implement its policies, plans, projects and programs without manipulation either by agencies of government for their own selfish ends or by donors and other foreign agencies bent on advancing their foreign interests. Adequate funding will bolster Parliament's roles of representation, the promotion of democratic governance in Zimbabwe and to ensure that all institutions and agencies of government at every level are accountable to Parliament.
- Diplomatic training workshops should continue to be carried out especially during the induction of new Members of Parliament. Although diplomatic training workshops have been conducted, there is need for improvement on how they are conducted and the timing as well. This helps in equipping Parliamentarians with adequate diplomatic skills, bilateral and conference diplomacy negotiating skills and etiquette so as to portray a positive image of the country. MPs should be equipped with skills on political, economic and social aspects of their country to enable them to articulate national foreign policy objectives and the national interest. The involvement of the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other strategic stakeholders in such training programs will facilitate mutual understanding between parliament and the executive and facilitate the co-ordination of foreign policy in the interest of the country.

- Parliamentarians should also be part of official visit programs such as those of incoming heads of states or government officials as well as outgoing delegations led by the President or other senior government officials which may have something to do with the work of Parliamentary Portfolio Committees. This will avail Parliamentarians the opportunity to discuss issues of mutual concern thus playing an important role in foreign policy. Therefore, to enhance this, in most important official visits by the head of state, efforts should be made to include key representatives of Parliament of Zimbabwe who will engage in bilateral talks with their counterparts. Although the Parliament of Zimbabwe may have been involved in some official programs during official visits by heads of states and other senior governmental officials, there is need for improvement by making this arrangement a permanent feature of parliamentary diplomacy.
- Another issue of paramount importance is the lack of the existence of a functional reporting and coordination system between Parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Parliament should report and liaise with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on all activities it undertakes in parliamentary diplomacy. Therefore, delegations attending a summit, conference or a bilateral visit, whether sponsored by Parliament or not should be accompanied by a secretary who would be tasked to compile and produce a report to be submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides parliamentary delegations background papers on state relations on request, there is also need for parliamentary delegations and Foreign Affairs authorities to hold meetings before the delegations embark on bilateral or multilateral visits, seminars or conferences. This approach helps to refine the approach to be taken by the delegations abroad and how best the national interest could be defended.
- Authorities may also want to consider amending the Zimbabwe constitution in sections 121 and 125 which outline the qualifications of being a Member of the Senate and Member of the National Assembly respectively. The constitution ignores the value of education and experience in conducting effective parliamentary business in general and parliamentary diplomacy in particular. Instead, value had been placed on voting rights, age and whether a candidate has previous conviction on criminal

matters. The criteria stipulated in the constitution does not guarantee that a sufficient pool of educated and experienced people will be attracted to join parliament. Although nominations to join portfolio and thematic committees is based on academic and work experience in that field, every member is obliged to be a member of a committee hence some members may lack the relevant qualifications and experience. Discussions in committee meetings are very important because they contribute to policy which would be adopted by MPs selected to represent national interests in the international fora. Therefore, some committee members may lack the requisite qualifications and experience to articulate and spearhead solutions which are in line with the national interests in such committees.

- There is also need to develop an efficient and comprehensive parliamentary strategic framework which guides parliamentary diplomacy and its linkage to governmental diplomacy. The framework will guide the approaches to be used, the issues involved, training and development programs and the overall objectives of parliamentary diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

Parliamentary diplomacy is a viable instrument in modern diplomacy where diplomacy has transformed from the traditional form which involved the executive agencies dealing with foreign policy formulation, implementation and evaluation, to involve almost all government agencies and non-state actors. There are many resolutions adopted in parliamentary diplomacy which are aimed at developing the world in one way or the other in areas like climate change, trade, science and technology, peace and security, human rights or sustainable development as a way of improving relations between states. Parliamentary diplomacy has played a key role in resolving some of these challenges working with state and non-state actors. Some critics of parliamentary diplomacy have argued that it is irrelevant and worthless in the modern world to the extent of labelling it “parliamentary tourism”. This negative view of parliamentary diplomacy ignores the positive, complementary role it plays in enhancing a country’s foreign policy processes and programs, promotion of international democratic and legal order, and the management of a country’s prestige and image abroad.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barston, R.P.(2006) *Modern Diplomacy*, Third Edition, Essex, Pearson Education Ltd.

Baseline Survey on the Capacity of Parliamentarians in Legislation Analysis (2011), Harare,Parliament of Zimbabwe..

Beitz C. R (1979) *Political Theory and International Relations*, New Jersey,Princeton University Press.

Chigora, P (2006), *On Crossroads: Reflections on Zimbabwe's Relations With Britain at the New Millennium*, *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5, No.3, Fall 2006.

Constitution of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Amendment No. 20, ACT 2013.

Cutler, R (2006), "The OSCE's Parliamentary Diplomacy in Central Asia and The South Caucasus" in *Comparative Perspective*, *Studia Diplomatica* Vol LIX 2006 No. 2.

Fiott, D (2011), *On the Value of Parliamentary Diplomacy*, *Madariaga Paper* Vol. 4, No. 7, Brussels.

Malamud, A and Stavridis, S (2011), *Parliaments and Parliamentarians as International Actors*, Farnham, Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Malamud, A and Stavridis,S (2015) *The Diplomatic Role of the European Parliaments*. (Available at [www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/2005-3epa%20eng%20A4%](http://www.sieps.se/sites/default/files/2005-3epa%20eng%20A4%20.pdf), last accessed January5, 2016).

Mudyadzo, W (2011) *Zimbabwe's Diplomacy 1980-2008*,Gweru,Booklove Publishers.

Noulas, G (2011), *The role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Policy Journal*, Michigan, Cross Village.

"Parliamentary Involvement in International Affairs" (2005). A report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to the Second WorldConference of Speakers of Parliaments, New York, 7-9 September 2005 (Available at www.ipu.org/splz-e/sp-conf05/involvement-rpt.pdf, last accessed January 10, 2016).

Parliament of Zimbabwe (2012), A Guide To Parliament, Harare, Public Relations Department of Parliament of Zimbabwe.

Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961.

Weisglas, F.W and de Boer, G (2007), Parliamentary Diplomacy; The Hague Journal of Diplomacy, Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Internet Sources

www.agora-parl.org/resources/aoe/parliamentaryinstitution/parliamentary-diplomacy;
accessed January 2, 2016.

www.parlzim.gov.zw; accessed December 15, 2015.

www.pan-africanparliament.org; accessed December 19, 2015.

www.sadcpf.org; accessed December 19, 2015.

www.ipu.org; accessed December 16, 2015.

www.kbc.co.ke/news.asp?nid70351; accessed December 23, 2015.