



# **IMPLICATIONS OF ZIMBABWE'S RE-ENGAGEMENT POLICY ON ITS BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH CHINA**

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# Objectives

- The study sought to:

- *provide a historical overview of Zimbabwe - China relations*
- *analyse Zimbabwe's Re - engagement Policy*
- *assess facilitating and inhibiting factors towards Re-engagement?*
- *examine the implications of Zimbabwe's Re - engagement policy on its bilateral relations with China*
- *recommend strategies to promote Re-engagement & Sino Zimbabwe Co operation?*

# Main Research Question

- *Will China remain Zimbabwe's strategic economic, military and political ally?*

# History of Zimbabwe - China relations

- Zimbabwe - China relations can be traced back to the **Ming and Qing dynasty** when the Chinese established ties with the **Munhumutapa Empire** based on trade and cultural exchange over 600 years ago
- The relations were strengthened during the **liberation struggle**, in the 1960s, when China offered strategic and unconditional military support to the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU).

# History of Zimbabwe - China relations

- Formal diplomatic relations between the two states were established on 18 April 1980.
- In 1992, Zimbabwe began to strategically realign her foreign policy to focus on **solidifying relations** with China as she anticipated that the global power shift in economic relations would lead to future trade, investments, joint ventures and tourists coming from the East.
- The official **Look East policy** was formally adopted by Zimbabwe in 2003 after the deterioration of her relations with the West over the implementation of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP).

# Interpretations of the Relationship between China and Zimbabwe

- Anshan (2007) notes that China placed itself on the frontline of the struggle against imperialism and colonialism in the Third world thus linking its ideological stand with its foreign policy.
- Zimbabwe is often viewed as a microcosm of China-Africa relations due to its economic and resource elements
- Engagements between China and Zimbabwe are unique in that they are a momentum driven by the sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by the West. (Chun, 2014).

# Interpretations of the Relationship between China and Zimbabwe

## *In-depth Interviews*

### ■ Five conspiracy theories

- i. the Chinese presence is invasive and this might be leading to a second colonization of Zimbabwe and Africa.*
- ii. the Chinese are colluding with political leaders to loot Africa and siphon resources in a neo-colonial arrangement.*
- iii. the Chinese are involved in illegal activities in Zimbabwe and generally lie beyond the hand of the law as political leaders protect them.*

# Interpretations of the Relationship between China and Zimbabwe

## *In-depth Interviews*

- Five conspiracy theories

- iv. the Chinese have kept the ruling party in power through clandestine international financial support.*

- v. The fifth theory is that of Chinese-phobia.*

- some respondents felt that there is a link between desperation and friendship in China-Zimbabwe relations.

# Deterioration of Zimbabwe- West Relations

## Causal Factors - Zimbabwe's View Point

- Unilateral abrogation in 1997 of the UK's historical responsibility regarding the 'land question
- The Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) (2000)
- Western targeted and general sanctions (EU, ZDERA, ZDERAA, Canada)
- Personalisation and Demonization Discourse

( Patel in Chan & Patel, 2006)

# Deterioration of Zimbabwe- West Relations

## Causal Factors - Western Viewpoint

- These factors are outlined in Section 4 of ZIDERA (2001)
  - *economic mismanagement,*
  - *undemocratic practices,*
  - *and the costly deployment of troops to the Democratic Republic of the Congo,*
  
- Causal Factors - Section 2 of ZIDERAA (2018)
  - *‘private appropriation of public assets’*

# Zimbabwe's Goals for Re-engagement



Zimbabwe's Foreign Affairs and International Trade Minister Lieutenant-General Dr Sibusiso B. Moyo (Rtd) and British Foreign Secretary Sir Malcolm Rifkind at Chatham House, April 2018.

# Zimbabwe's Goals for Re-engagement

Zimbabwe seeks:

- To end isolationism
- Re-engagement with friends from which it had become estranged.
- Urgent economic recovery opening up Zimbabwe to international investment that is protected through binding international agreements such as the BIPPAS
- Civil and political reforms to transform the political landscape

# Zimbabwe's Goals for Re-engagement

Zimbabwe seeks:

- **Transparency** in Government process such as in justice delivery, the tendering process and the fight against corruption
- **National unity** which is blind to race, colour, ethnic origin, creed etc.
- To develop a **disciplined public service**, including in the uniformed services.
- **Re -engagement** with IFIs (IMF, WB).
- **Compensation of Former Farm Owners**
- **Readmission into the Commonwealth**

# Demands for Re-engagement

- Some of the conditions set out by the **US Senate committee** (ZIDERAA, 2018) for re-engagement with Zimbabwe include,
  - • None involvement of the Defences Forces in elections.
  - • Release of provisional and final voters' roll.
  - • International observers (US, AU,SADC,EU).
  - • Impartial Media access for all parties.
  - • Compensation for white farmers for land.
  - • Currency reform, including reform of RBZ.
  - • Genuine reconciliation efforts.

# **Demands for Re-engagement**

- **Some of the conditions set out by the US Senate committee in section 2 and 6 of (ZIDERAA, 2018) for re-engagement with Zimbabwe include,**
  - *Restore the rule of law and reconstruct Zimbabwe*
  - *Updating statutes*
  - *Upholding the constitution*
  - *Economic reforms*
  - *Accounting for all diamond revenue*
  - *order an immediate inquiry into the disappearance of prominent human rights activists.*
  
  - *SADC and Zimbabwe should enforce the SADC tribunal rulings from 2007 to 2010, including 18 disputes involving employment, commercial, and human rights cases surrounding dispossessed Zimbabwean commercial farmers and agricultural companies.*

# Demands for Re-engagement

## ■ EU Demands,

- electoral law and security sector reforms
- creation of **conducive environment** for undisputed polls.
- An end to the **State's heavy-handedness** in dealing with demonstrations.
- **Investigations** into human rights violations (Jan 2019 protests) and bring the culprits to book.

# Facilitating Factors Towards Re-engagement



Germany's Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Gerd Müller, President Mnangagwa, August 2018

# Facilitating Factors Towards for Re-engagement

- Prospects are high

- land valuations to be complete by the end of May 2019 to compensate former white commercial farmers
- RTGS\$53 million (US\$12 million) has been **budgeted** for 2019 as interim compensation.
- The **Ad Hoc Compensation Working Group** comprising government officials and representatives of former farm owners has been created to establish the Compensation Quantum figure.

# Inhibiting Factors to Re-engagement

- Zimbabwe has not met the requirements for new lending with IFIs.
- It is grappling with with access to foreign exchange, rule of law and ease of doing business.
- *The estimated cost in paying for the compensation of white farmers by the several farmer's unions in Zimbabwe is US\$30 billion (PanaPress, 2019).*

# Inhibiting Factors to Re-engagement

- impunity for human rights abuses (August 2018 and Jan 2019 protests)
- Interpretation of sanctions
  - *The US denies that it imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe, preferring to call them targeted measures affecting only 141 individuals and organisations, including Mnangagwa and Mugabe.*

# Inhibiting Factors to Re-engagement

- Legitimacy challenges in the wake of disputed elections
- Negative perceptions from the international community
  - *Military involvement in governance*
  - *Violent crackdown on dissenting voices*
- Renewed Sanctions from the US

# Implications on Zimbabwe - China Bilateral Relations



# Implications on Zimbabwe - China Bilateral Relations

1. Elevation of Relations from a party to party comradeship level to a comprehensive strategic co-operative partnership
  - ✓ *Trade between Zimbabwe and China has grown to over US\$1,2 billion annually with Zimbabwe exporting tobacco, cotton and various minerals.*

# Implications on Zimbabwe - China Bilateral Relations

## 2. Continued Engagement

- Zimbabwe received a grant from the Chinese government to construct a new bicarmel legislature in Mt. Hampden.
  - *“What kind of friend would you want other than China, they will built the most beautiful parliament in Africa for us?”*, President Mnangagwa.
- The Chinese government has offered 1.2 billion to Zimbabwe to finance;
  - *Rehabilitation of Robert Mugabe International Airport*
  - *Net One Phase 3*

# Implications on Zimbabwe - China Bilateral Relations

## 2. Continued Engagement

- Other notable projects include;
  - the **Golden Peacock Villa Hotel** in Mutare built by Anjin Investments
  
  - and the **National Defence College** in Mazowe.
  
  - In agriculture, the Chinese market is the largest consumer of Zimbabwe's flue-cured tobacco with over **US\$200 million worth of trade** in the golden leaf in 2017

# Implications on Zimbabwe - China Bilateral Relations

## 2. Continued Engagement

- The then acting Ambassador of China to Zimbabwe, Mr. Baogang noted that,
  - *“My country has done all these things to facilitate different projects in Zimbabwe because Zimbabweans are our dear friends, our fellow brothers and sisters”.*
  - *The ease of doing business has greatly improved under the new dispensation and that Zimbabwe should continue to visit China for more business deals*

# Implications on Zimbabwe - China Bilateral Relations

## 2. Continued Engagement

- *Kariba South, Victoria Falls Airport construction,*
- *the 1.5. billion Hwange Power Station expansion*

3. The Chinese have gradually grown to be Zimbabwe's go-to friend on funding

# Criticism of Sino - Zimbabwe

## Relations

- China's support for a 'pariah regime' without any consideration of human rights and good governance.
- reports of unfair labour practices, corruption, product dumping and counterfeiting, natural resource exploitation, tax evasion, externalisation of foreign currency and fabrication of work permits for Chinese nationals have been reported in the local media.
- Low quality cheap products (Zhing Zhong).
- In 2014, Anjin Investments and Jinan were caught in a storm over allegations of smuggling diamonds worth billions of dollars from Chiadzwa

# Recommendations: Sino - Zimbabwe Bilateral Relations

- Zimbabwe must learn from the past and honour its debts to China.
- China needs to demonstrate that it is a strategic player that is interested in promoting win - win partnerships that Zimbabwe desperately needs.
- border control for anti-smuggling of minerals and externalisation of proceeds to China through informal corridors.

# Recommendations Sino - Zimbabwe Bilateral Relations

- **tax collection systems** by the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) need to be watertight to **ensure compliance** with local regulations by Chinese businesses.
- commercial contracts should incorporate sufficient due diligence by parliament to ensure **transparency**.

# Recommendations Sino - Zimbabwe Bilateral Relations

- Zimbabwe must develop a clear strategy for its bilateral relations with China
  - *without a clear strategy, Chinese investments may bring negative implications of geopolitical influence and unwarranted foreign debt to Zimbabwe as it has done in other parts of Africa such as Zambia, Djibouti and Kenya.*

# Recommendations Sino - Zimbabwe Bilateral Relations

- Investment must be channelled projects that are **self-sustaining** or are of economic interest
- it is the duty of the government and parliament to ensure that **control measures that safeguard national interests** such as local employment, fair labour practices, local industry protection are adhered to.

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