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A critical analysis of whether Zimbabwe can achieve economic development through its 'Look East Policy'

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The aim of the paper is to critically analyse the potential of Zimbabwe's foreign policy, specifically the *Look East Policy* at stimulating economic development and growth. This analysis is based solely on selected secondary material. In response to external and internal pressure, the government of Zimbabwe redesigned its foreign policy outlook with the aim of establishing relations with countries in the East like China as an alternative to the fragmented links with the West. Zimbabwe's target is to create and sustain relations with states that it supposedly shares common goals with. China, regardless of its famous proclamation that it is driven by a desire to help the oppressed, pursues foreign policies that promote its own national interests. China is seeking opportunities to boost its economic and political status in the international system. Zimbabwe, while seeking similar goals, lacks proper guiding structures and appears to be closely associated with ZANU-PF to an extent that one is tempted to conclude that it is more of a political slogan rather than a proper foreign policy. Zimbabwe has turned into a predatory state which is on the verge of total collapse. The ruling elite are concerning themselves with security political posts as a means to accessing personal wealthy at the expense of national development. The potential of the LEP can only be realised when Zimbabwe policy makers put the needs of electorates ahead of personal gains and develop a strategic approach to its relationship with Beijing. The government of Zimbabwe needs to realise that if China does indeed become a super power it is likely going to impose its will on its weaker associates. Before positive economic development outcomes can be produced by the LEP, Zimbabwe has to change its position in this partnership.

Key words: *Look East Policy*, economic development, failed state, sovereignty, state.

INTRODUCTION

The Look East Policy (LEP) is basically a country's relationship with states in the East such as China, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, and India just to mention a few. For Zimbabwe the policy was created as a response to the effects of the sanctions that were imposed on Zimbabwe

by the Western states. These sanctions are viewed differently by various groups. The government of Zimbabwe views the sanctions as a way to force Mugabe and African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) out of office, and those who support sanctions see it as a

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way to encourage democratisation and respect of human rights. Zimbabwe has not been able to trade and sustain its relations with most states and organisations in the West because of the sanctions and continues to face economic, social and political challenges.

In order to understand the kind of foreign policies present in Africa, one has to first of all understand the kind of states that exist in the Third world. A state by definition is a political entity which has sovereignty. The four legal criteria of statehood are permanent population, defined territory over which a country exercises authority, a central government and the capacity to enter into relations with other entities (Clapham, 1996). A sovereign state should be able to establish order, ensure protection and provide for its population. In the strictest sense of the term, most of the entities in Africa fail to meet the four requirements for statehood and hence they are often referred to as quasi-states. Given the artificiality of African states, their sovereignty, borders and ability in a classic realist sense has been ambiguous (Wright, 1999).

'Quasi-states' can be categorised as dysfunctional, failing, failed and collapsed. An example of a collapsed state would be Somalia (Nkiwane, 2001). On the ninth annual Failed States Index (2013), Somalia is ranked 1 and Zimbabwe is ranked 10. The definition of a failed state entails not only poor economic performance but the breakdown of the viability and legitimacy of states (Kovacs, 2012). Rotberg (2002) classifies a failed state as one that is performing badly in its security ability, political participation, social service provision and ability to solve conflict. Using Rotberg's (2002) indicators of state failure, Zimbabwe is definitely a failed state. Zimbabwe is guilty of turning the security apparatus against its own populace, it has suppressed freedom of political participation and democracy. Zimbabwe is failing to adequately provide social services. In addition to being a failed state, Zimbabwe has also become a predatory state (Maundeni, 2002).

Evans (1995) defines predatory states as those that have elites who take large amounts of wealth and resources for their own personal gain, such that they impede economic, social and political transformation. Those in power plunder with disregard to the welfare of the masses. In predatory states wealth comes from political power. Hence those in power are rich and influential. In addition to wealth the ruling elite has monopoly over the state's security apparatus resources, and use violence and suppression as tools to secure political power (Rivero, 2008). A close look at the political scenario in Zimbabwe suggests that the fastest way to acquire wealth is through a political seat. Such a scenario has led those in power to clinging onto state power through enacting laws and acts that protect them and ensure their survival. Bratton and Masunungure (2011) argue that in Zimbabwe state officials have been allowed to secure enormous personal profits without any repercussions. The ruling elite remain indifferent to the country's economic downfall and

perceive economic growth and democracy as obstacles that would decrease their relative power. The policies being implemented by ZANU-PF are intended to cement their rule internally. Examples of such policies are the LEP, Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order) Indigenisation and Empowerment act and the recent Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIM ASSET). These are just a few of the many misguided policies aimed at restoring political hegemony out of fear of the opposition (Kovacs, 2012). Understanding the nature of African states helps shed light on the kind of the foreign policies being produced (Clapham, 1996). Literature on the kind of states that exist in Africa characterises Zimbabwe as a predatory state (Evans, 1995), and a failed state (Nkiwane, 2001; Rotberg, 2002; Kovacs, 2012).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study of international relations is informed by many diverse theories. For purposes of this discussion only three theories are examined namely; (neo)-realism, liberalism and constructivism. The main assumptions of each theory are examined briefly and illustrated using examples from Zimbabwe and China. The main aim is to see the extent to which relationship between Zimbabwe and China can be explained using these theories.

Realism is the main theoretical framework in International Relations. Realists believe the principal aim of a state is survival, states are rational actors, each state has military capacity, and great powers have the most economic and military capacity. Realism is based on the assumption that states are the main actors and legitimate representatives of their citizens and therefore the fundamental unit of analysis in international relations. States pursue self-interests of which the main interest is to acquire power defined in military capabilities (Baylis and Smith, 2006). For realists the international community is defined by anarchy, that is, they operate in a system with no central authority to enforce agreements and cooperation.

This then means that each state is responsible for its own survival and well-being (Smith et al., 2008). In light of realism China and Zimbabwe are states that engage in foreign policies that seek self-driven goals and survival in an anarchic world system. The international system is unipolar – the United States is the strongest superpower and its influence in the international community is unmatched. However there are now great nations with emerging powers, with growing political and economic abilities for example China. Zimbabwe as a dysfunctional state (Kovacs, 2012; Rivero, 2008) seeks to establish alliances with China which is an emerging power in the international system. Through this alliance, Zimbabwe is attempting to strengthen itself and ensuring its survival amidst economic and political turmoil. However, the extent to which Zimbabwe is able to successfully pursue

its own interests when tied to China is questionable.

China in turn has ventured into Africa so as to strengthen its own economy and increase the area over which it influences. China's foreign policy is shaped by its own interests regardless of claiming that it is in Africa purely for the benefit of the continent. China being a growing economic power aspires to outgrow America and eventually be 'the' superpower.

From the perspective of realism a basic set of questions constantly recurs in foreign policy analysis. Realism seeks to uncover the extent to which a state's foreign policy is a response to external pressure and incentives as opposed to internal pressures. Realists go on to look at the extent to which the policy is likely to change if a new party came into power. Realists are also concerned about how a state responds to incentives or threats (Smith et al., 2008). To put these ideas into perspective, realists in the case of Zimbabwe will be concerned with the extent to which the LEP is a result of external pressures in the form of sanctions. A closer analysis of Zimbabwe's foreign policy making process reveals that Mugabe has always stifled the voice of the public when it comes to drafting foreign policies. It seems external pressures played a minimal role in the drafting of the LEP. Instead internal needs greatly influenced the need to look east. Regardless of what the people of Zimbabwe wanted, Mugabe decided to 'Look East' as a way of showing the West that he, Zimbabwe can establish relations outside the West.

Contrary to realism, the basic tenet of liberalism is that the national characteristics of an individual states matter for their international relations. Liberalism help analysts to understand how individuals and their ideas, social forces and political institutions can have direct effects on foreign relations. Liberalism places great importance on the freedom of individual rights such as human and political rights. The four features of liberal foreign relations are "private market-based economies, existence of sovereignty, a citizenry with juridical rights, and republican representative governments" (Doyle, 1995 cited in Nkiwane, 2001, 283).

States, in the view of liberalism, are configurations of individual and group interests who then project those interests into the international system through a particular government. Before taking a plunge into liberalism one needs to understand that sovereignty and statehood are concepts used to fulfil different agendas by political leaders.

The problem with applying liberal principles to Zimbabwe and China is that international law has few mechanisms for taking the nature of domestic preferences into account. These two states may have bad human rights record (Srivma and Brown, 2007) however taking them to say the International Criminal Court (ICC) is problematic at times. Zimbabwe has yet to fully recover from the effects of the land reform programme which saw many white farmers' property and human rights severely

violated by the state. Even up today some white farmers have a tough time trying to get compensation from the government for the damages and losses they incurred. To make matters worse local Zimbabweans suffered as a result of the Operation Murambastvina (Operation Remove the rubbish). This operation saw the destruction of illegal housing and business structures at the command of the government and left many homeless and penniless as they were not given alternative housing (Youde, 2007). In 2008, the political violence in Zimbabwe further tainted its human rights record. Many people were beaten for supporting the supposedly 'wrong' party. The government has gone as far as restricting Zimbabweans from hearing or viewing foreign broadcasts. Zimbabwe acquired equipment from China to monitor mobile phone and internet communications as an attempt to resist regime change (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004). Even though Zimbabwe may not be the only country monitoring the activities of its own people, its actions tend to raise a lot of suspicion given its close association with China who has bad human rights records. China's human rights recorded suffered a major blow in 1989, because of the Tiananmen Square massacre (Engel, 1994). This is an event that gave the world insight into the repression going on in China. In the past recent years China has found itself under international scrutiny as a result of human rights allegations. China has also been heavily criticised for restricting content accessible to the people of China on Google. Just before the 2008 world Olympics, China is said to have stifled protests in its country. Both states have strongly resisted political opposition. With such a human rights record it is difficult to see how Zimbabwe and China can produce liberal foreign policies. Violation of human rights usually goes hand and hand with an undemocratic and repressive political system. The ruling elite violate human rights in an attempt to remain in power and maintain the status quo.

Constructivism is an ontology about the world and human motivation and agency based on the idea that the world is socially constructed through the interaction between agents and the environment. The focus of constructivism is social context. There are two variants; one is the North American version which emphasises the dominance of social norms and identity in shaping foreign policy outcomes. The European constructivism explores the role of language in mediating and constructing social reality (Checkel in Smith et al., 2008). Using the European perspective more attention needs to be paid to the prevailing discourse in Zimbabwe to be able to understand the kind of foreign policy being pursued (Halliday, 1994). A strong understanding of how Mugabe defines himself and the kind of ideas he strongly lives by, helps identify the rationale behind the LEP. Mugabe sees himself as the legitimate leader of Zimbabwe and hence strongly believes that his ideas should therefore guide Zimbabwe's foreign policy. Mugabe is strongly influenced by ideas emerging out of the liberation struggle hence he

is constantly asserting Zimbabwe's sovereignty and accusing the West in particular Britain of attempting to recolonize his country (Nkiwane, 2001).

As mentioned above the relationship with China played a huge role in helping ZANU-PF lead the way to national freedom. Mugabe and his close associates are forever mentioning their gratitude for China's assistance and have pledged to continue to maintain their relationship. It is from this kind of discourse that Zimbabwe draws upon to justify its decision to 'Look East'. China however seems to have a different view of the international system. It has a history of seeing foreigners as being of a lower status than them. Such a perspective has seen China being bold and refusing to allow external pressure to influence its foreign policy making process (Roy, 1998). However, Zimbabwe is yet to achieve this strong stance when it comes to international system.

Many theories of international relations are contested, and in their singularity are not adequate to explain foreign relations. However this study is inclined towards constructivism, arguing that foreign relations are shaped to a greater extent by the different levels of interaction between states and how these states perceive that kind of interaction.

States construct their reality based on their own interests. In the next section a brief description of the methodology, data collection and analysis method used are presented.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative study is interpretive, and based on social constructionism. It mainly employs document analysis and to a limited extent content analysis. Documents, which formed the main data sources, included Zimbabwean Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (2010), Chigora and Chisi (2009), Chigora and Dewa (2009), Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2004), Matahwa (2007) and Youde (2007). Papers were selected on the basis of access and availability on Internet at the time of the study. Document analysis involves reading lots of written material like public records, media, private papers and academic publications in order to evaluate and interpret the texts. The ultimate goal is to determine authenticity (reliability), credibility (free from distortion), representativeness and meaning (surface and deeper meaning). Content analysis is useful for examining patterns and trends in documents and to monitor shifts in public opinion of LEP. It is argued here that LEP is a social construct and has been shaped by Zimbabwe's history (Nkiwane, 2001).

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Document analysis was used to examine the five main data sources. The aim was to interpret authors' understanding of the LEP and to highlight components of the policy considered crucial in achieving economic and political development.

What is the Look East Policy?

The Look East Policy (LEP) is Zimbabwe's relationship

with states in the East such as China, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, and India just to mention a few. In this paper the focus is on relationship with China. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Zimbabwe "has never released any formal document outlining the tenets of the 'Look East Policy', but its basic thrust is clear in government pronouncements and the international travel patterns of Zimbabwean officials" (Youde, 2013, p. 4). This however does not mean that MFA's ideas do not play a big role in guiding Zimbabwe's policy decisions. The implementation of the policy is seen through the cultivation of closer ties with Asian states. Asia is seen as a model of economic development which African states can emulate in search of the kind of success being experienced in Asia.

The Zimbabwean Ministry of Foreign Affairs sees foreign policy as a set of goals that seek to outline how a country will interact with other countries in the international system as it pursues its national economic, political, social and cultural interests. The objectives of any foreign policy, Zimbabwe included, are to protect and promote sovereignty, territorial integrity, national image, improve living standards of the country, establish and sustain a conducive international environment to achieve the above goals. Officially the LEP was adopted in 2003 in response to growing challenges stemming from sanctions imposed on the country by the West (Zimbabwe Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010).

The implementation of the LEP is guided by the Government's Policy, Vision and Strategy documents, which are designed to increase cooperation on projects that seek to promote exports and assist in the recapitalization of Zimbabwe's distressed public enterprises (Zimbabwe Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010). Zimbabwe is aware that in international relations there are no permanent friends or enemies just permanent interests therefore, through its foreign policy. Zimbabwe seeks to foster long standing international relationships of mutual co-operation and trust (Chigora and Dewa, 2009).

Youde's (2007) article, *Why Look East? Zimbabwean foreign policy and China* sees the LEP as an attempt by Mugabe and his government to renegotiate its identity and legitimacy in the international and domestic sphere. This article is quite good as it draws upon a wide range of publications. Youde (2007) appears to have a deeper understanding of the reasoning behind Mugabe's decision to Look East. He is however less optimistic about Zimbabwe reaping tangible benefits from the LEP (Youde, 2007). The article titled, *The Look East Policy of Zimbabwe now focuses on China* by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is a briefing document published in 2004, presumably a year after the official declaration of the policy. The document manages to highlight the different dimensions of the relationship between China and Zimbabwe. It provides an overview of how the different sectors of Zimbabwe have been positively or negatively affected by the LEP (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004). The Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) seeks to promote political and societal education of all people and work

towards international understanding and cooperation. Overall, this article is in support of the LEP because of the way it goes to length to show what Zimbabwe benefited. The major weakness of this article is that most of the data provided were drawn from the state owned Zimbabwean Herad Newspaper. The probability of biasness in the information provided is high because as a state owned paper it was unlikely to publish any negative things about the policy in an attempt to present LEP as a positive policy.

Chigora and Chisi's (2009) article, '*The eight years of interaction: Lessons from Zimbabwe's Look East Policy and the future of African countries and Asia-Pacific Region*' aims to assess the progress that has been achieved through the policy. These two authors are academics affiliated to a state university in Zimbabwe. The authors of this article provide a more sympathetic assessment of the LEP. It is difficult to assess whether their sympathy emerges out of genuine belief in the potential of the LEP or in that they want to be seen as opposing the sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by the West. In fact at that time Zimbabwe was classed as a failed state (Kovacs, 2012; Rivero, 2008). The authors cite evidence of economic progress in the different sectors of Zimbabwe's economy. Chigora and Chisi (2009) argue that LEP represents an example of an African state pursuing an independently developed foreign policy. They want African countries to be given the freedom to choose their own development plan regardless of what the West might recommend as the proper way of development. Surely Zimbabwe needs a policy orientation that will emphasize its independence but at the same time push it forward onto the road of economic and political progress. However, this is unlikely as long as Mugabe and his associates continue to make more enemies in the name of asserting national sovereignty.

Chigora and Dewa (2009) article titled, '*Surviving in a hostile environmet: An analysis of Zimbabwe's foreign relations in the 21st century International Relations*', is a more sympathetic discussion of the efforts by the government. The two authors believe that African countries should be given the freedom to make and pursue their own policies without influence from outside (West). They claim that given time Zimbabwe can reap positive results from policies such as LEP. Just like the previous document it is difficult to pin point where their sympathy emerges from. If it is because the authors truly believe that Zimbabwe can actually turn around its economy through LEP, they do not provide sufficient evidence to support this assumption.

The article by Matahwa (2007) titled, '*China and Zimbabwe: Is there a future?*', is a critical analysis of the policy. The author doubts the ability of the government of Zimbabwe to fulfil its economic agenda because it has locked itself in self destructive deals with China. The article provides a better insight into the relationship which

the other articles have failed to provide. Matahwa (2007) has been able to provide more details into the trade relations and deals between Zimbabwe and China than the article by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2004) that simply tells us what Zimbabwe received through the LEP. The later does not say what the agreements entailed and what China got in return. Matahwa (2007) is less optimistic about the potential of the LEP as he is against the idea of mortgaging off national resources in exchange for a few Chinese products. Chigora and Chisi (2009) question the practicability of the Look East Policy. Their main argument is that there is no way that the government of Zimbabwe can sustain its economy by limiting trade and opportunities with the East. Some critics maintain that it is no use trying to persist with a dreadful charade in the hope that the reality will vanish and would be replaced by wishful thinking which is what Zimbabwe is doing at the moment by refusing to realign itself with the West because of some emotional ideologies drawn from three decades ago. Zimbabwean officials need to prioritise foreign policies be it with the East or West that will enable national development and survival. If the government fails to address the immediate needs of its population, it risks becoming a non-governable chaotic entity rife with conflict and instability (Chigora and Chisi, 2009). While Chigora and Chisi (2009, p. 158) may be right to indicate that Zimbabwe should "mend its relations with the International Monetary Fund" however, as long as Zimbabwe has a weak foreign policy structure it will not be able to fully benefit from any form of international cooperation. Zimbabwe may well reap benefits from China but these will not be as much as could be if her foreign policy making system is well coordinated and well thought-out.

What has Zimbabwe benefited from the Look East Policy?

This section summarises the benefits of the various sectors in Zimbabwe's economy emerging from the main data sources. Trade relations between China and Zimbabwe are "characterised by a classical pattern of trade between 'developing' and 'developed' economies" (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004, p. 3). Zimbabwe as a 'developing' economy has increased its imports of machinery, electrical items, engine, motor parts and telecommunication products from China and is exporting mainly agricultural products. Such trade relations make it impossible for Zimbabwe to diversify its own economy as it heavily relies on the limited income from the sale of "raw materials needed by China" (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004, p. 5).

The tourism sector has seen a huge influx of visitors from China into the country and Zimbabwean visitors into China have also increased (Chigora and Chisi, 2009).

The two countries have signed an agreement which

makes it easier to travel between Harare and Beijing. China granted Zimbabwe an Approved Destination Status, which simply means that China is committed to actively “encourage people to travel to Zimbabwe by simplifying visa requirements” (Alden, 2007, p. 153-155). Zimbabwe has responded to this influx by introducing direct flights. However, despite the agreement Zimbabwe has yet to be ranked as one of the most favoured destination by Chinese. There is evidence that “some people interviewed in the tourism sector raised doubts in the estimation of Zimbabwean authorities of Chinese tourists arrivals” (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004, p. 4). Bad international publicity has not made it easier for Zimbabwe to portray itself as a safe destination and she is still seen as having little tourist attractions. A lot of effort has to go towards international publicity to portray Zimbabwe as a safe and good place to visit (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004). Overall, one can conclude that the increase has remained largely marginal.

According to Musarurwa and Moyo (2014), there has been a 25% increase of Chinese tourists into America and Europe between October 2013 and March 2014. The growing relatively rich middle class in China are spending and travelling more. An estimated 97.3 million outbound Chinese tourist spend approximately US\$129 billion during their travels. However, of the 80000 Chinese tourists who visited Southern Africa, only 5000 visited Zimbabwe. These figures are disappointing given that Zimbabwe is targeting to draw at least 5% (5 million tourists) of the 100 million tourist leaving China every year. The talks and suggestions by different ministers to relax visa requirements for Chinese nationals and citizens so as to facilitate an increased flow of tourists have not significantly made a difference.

Retail shops seem to be enjoying thriving business as there has been increased sale of Chinese made products which are more affordable to the ordinary Zimbabwean. However, products are being sold “well below the prices of local products” (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004, p. 4). It is important to note that there is nothing new about Chinese products in Zimbabwe as crossborder traders have been going to Botswana, South Africa and Zambia to purchase cheap Chinese products for resale way before the Chinese flooded in the country (Chigora and Chisi, 2009, p. 154). The only difference is that cross border traders brought in fewer products as compared to what is happening today. Further, the local textile and leather industry have suffered greatly and are finding it hard to keep afloat. They are not able to produce goods cheaply and in huge quantities. Chinese companies are able to meet the demands of the markets and therefore there has been a sprawling out of ‘China town’ places in Africa. Retail trade has remained one-sided as China has made it difficult for Africans to establish African markets or businesses in their country.

China is interested in raw materials, for example, iron, steel, chrome, diamonds and platinum in the mining

sector. By “signing several cooperation and trade agreements” (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004, p. 5), Chinese companies have been granted access to mining exploration rights in most of the Zimbabwe mining industry. Closely linked to this, is the agricultural sector which has received equipment for the land reform programme (Srivam and Brown, 2007). In June 2006, China announced energy and mining deals worth US\$700 million, including building 3 coal fired thermal power stations, repayment was not spelt out but China was set to get access to several minerals notably chrome (Ingram, 2006). The major problem with Chinese presence is that there seems to be little benefit for Zimbabwe.

According to Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (2004), the construction sector has received significant investments in cement, tile and brick production and China has also been given tenders to construct roads along Harare-Mutare highway. Despite the general economic crisis the construction sector especially private housing is not suffering (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004). The economy cannot however be sustained and made better by private construction; it requires the construction of large projects such as roads, schools, hospitals, business towers, dams, stadiums and the like which will add to national wealth and its ability to generate income (Chimakure, 2010a, b). However, where China has done construction the buildings are substandard and hence have a short life span.

The transport sector has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the LEP. First, “Air Zimbabwe, bought two long haul MA60 bringing the total number of its fleet to 8 and Air Zimbabwe was therefore able to briefly expand its domestic, regional and international routes (Chigora and Chisi, 2009, p. 154). Second, “in November 2004, an agreement was signed between National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ) and China Northern Locomotive and Railway Stock Industry (CNR)” (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004, p. 6). The agreement helped put back the once dysfunctional railway system back into business, though not at full capacity. NRZ was able to acquire cheaper parts to replace the ones that had been worn out. Third, “Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) acquired 135 conventional buses and 41 mini buses from China” (Chigora and Chisi, 2009, p. 154), cars and heavy machinery for agricultural and construction purposes (Srivam and Brown, 2007). These vehicles helped deal with the huge transport woes once a common feature in Zimbabwe. The problem was that this was short lived as soon things returned to the usual transport woes, when the vehicles especially buses started developing faults and the government could not acquire more loans to keep them running.

Most of Zimbabwe’s military equipment such as fire-arms, fighter jet and and military vehicle have been sourced from China (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004). Further, “in 2008, Zimbabwe acquired 8 Karakorum trainer jets, to boost internal security apparatus and also got

water cannons to subdue protesters and bugging equipment to monitor cell phone networks" (Chigora and Chisi, 2009, p. 156) and radio jamming equipment to put public communication under government surveillance (Brown, 2007). It is argued in this paper that improvement in the Information and Technology sector was not realised yet the ruling elite was able to maintain a stronghold onto power. The government of Zimbabwe feared regime change and hence sought to enhance its political power through repressive measures.

In addition it can prove to be dangerous to choose friends and make enemies based on an emotional commitment to some ideology. Zimbabwe therefore needs to learn from other countries. China has realised that isolation will not help it achieve the kind of economic and political success it needs, therefore has sought to establish relations that will advance its interests. Zimbabwe needs to do the same and develop relations that will ensure that it achieves its own interests to a greater extent (Nkiwane in Wright, 1999). It is for this reason that shunning the West over ideological differences will not do Zimbabwe any good. If possible Zimbabwe should seek to reconnect with the West so that it can meet its own goals and targets.

The norms and practices of China as a donor remain unclear, which hints at the possibility of conditions being actually attached on aid and business arrangements. In the world we live in there is nothing for free and therefore aid usually comes with strings attached. The government of Zimbabwe seems to be not telling the truth about its relationship with the East in particular China, hence the notion of "political slogan" (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2004, p. 1). The government hardly state what the Chinese are getting in return for their presence in the country. At face value China offers package deals that include infrastructure development or long term low interest loans that Western countries can rarely compete with and which African states are blindly accepting as manna from heaven (Sautman and Hairong, 2007). Unlike the West and Japan, China is willing to invest in a risky emerging African market. Chinese believe that conflict in Africa is drawing to a close and Africa is ripe for an economic take-off; which China wants to lead. China's need and search for natural resources is part of Beijing's strategy of increasing its diplomatic and economic profile as it asserts itself as an emerging superpower (Vines, 2007). China will not leave its own continent to be a hero in Zimbabwe or even in Africa for no gains.

Conclusion

In summary, China's activities, like other developed states are motivated by its own economic, security, diplomatic and political interests. Just like Western capitalist economies, China seeks markets for its goods and a return on its investments; in this way China's self interested

relationship with Africa is not significantly different from that of the West and Africa. Given such a stance it is naive for Zimbabwean leaders to assume that China acts purely out of anti-colonial solidarity in the 21st century. Zimbabwe needs to fully understand China and general dynamics of international relations and rethink its foreign policy structures so that even as a small landlocked country it will be able to negotiate for relationships that will enable it to pursue its own national goals and at the same time be an active participant in the global system. Zimbabwe is locking itself into self-destructive deals by mortgaging off its national resources and engaging in barter trade whereby it forgore earning foreign currency. The other problem with the LEP is that it is strongly linked with Mugabe and ZANU-PF and hence appears to be nothing more than a political slogan. It is difficult to see the current opposition party leader or any other continuing with the same policy. Political backing has not always translated into hard economic benefits for Zimbabwe, for example, a raft of deals totalling \$US13 billion for the construction of new coal mines and 3 thermal station in 2000 have not yet been started. Zimbabwe is a sleeping giant; as soon as it emerges from the politics of autocracy, repression and kleptocracy it will be possible to resuscitate its economy. It needs to stop entering into fragmented and uncoordinated bilateral contracts with China. Instead of just looking East, Zimbabwe should look West, North and South; by so doing will realise that East and West are different sides of the same coin.

The main driving goals of African foreign policies should be security and economic development. However, states use their foreign policies to assert or redefine their identity, values, interests and ideologies (Clapham, 1998). In Zimbabwe policies such as the LEP are being used to push forwards the ideas and needs of the ruling elite. The process of foreign policy making involves the negotiation between domestic and international relations. There is no one size fits all theory or way of analysing foreign policies of different states. The foreign policy orientation of many states is influenced by levels of vulnerability, political and economic development in different ways (Hill, 2003). A foreign policy is more reliable and effective when it has the backing of domestic support. In Zimbabwe, the case is different. A lot of dissatisfactions over the LEP have been raised by the people but their concerns have fallen on deaf ears.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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