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Evaluating ZIMASSET: The need for Foreign Policy Reorientation and (Re) engagement of International Partners

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Abstract*: This paper analyses the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET 2013-2018), a five-year economic development blueprint adopted by the Zimbabwe government under the then President of Zimbabwe R.G Mugabe in 2013. ZIMASSET is premised on four strategic cluster areas prioritised for the resuscitation of Zimbabwe's ailing economy following more than a decade of economic regression. The major factors that militated against the achievement of ZIMASSET's objectives in the last four years include lack of requisite political and economic reforms as well as lack of diverse foreign policy options. Consequently, unemployment levels have skyrocketed, investments have not been forthcoming. However, the main thrust of this paper is that the Mugabe foreign policy was too narrowly focused on China and did not put significant emphasis on the possibilities of deeper engagements with other emerging economies such as Brazil and India. Further, although reengagement of the West was mentioned in the ZIMASSET document, this was not prioritised as noted by the lack of political support for the Minister of Finance's Lima Plan where he sought to implement a plan for Zimbabwe's clearance of its debt arrears with International Financial Institutions (IFIs). Continued use of inflammatory rhetoric by the former President Mugabe when addressing Western state leaders did not help the reengagement cause. The methodology employed is a thorough analysis of relevant documentary sources on Zimbabwe's foreign policy engagements as well as on local political and economic issues. This paper recommends that since ZIMASSET has already failed to achieve economic development for the country, the new government led by President Mnangagwa has to institute a more pragmatic foreign policy orientation, embark on political and economic reforms and stamp out corruption. This would attract much needed Foreign Direct investment (FDI), technology and diverse financial options.

***Keywords*: Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation; foreign policy; economic development; International Financial Institutions; Look East policy.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio- Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) is an ambitious five-year (October 2013-December 2018) economic development blueprint championed by the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) under the former President R.G Mugabe. Through ZIMASSET, the government hopes to reverse the decade old tide of economic regression brought about by the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1990s, economic sanctions, corruption as well food security problems brought about by the Land Reform Programme (ZIMASSET 2013: 12). Although the programme lays an elaborate plan for the achievement of its set goals, this paper identifies a glaring omission that has derailed the successful implementation of the programme. The blue print lacks a broad foreign policy strategy promoting a more active engagement with the other emerging economic powers and re-engagement with the West and IFIs.

The economic blueprint identifies four broad clusters (although they are actually six), that are crucial for the implementation of the five-year plan. These broad clusters are Food Security and Nutrition, Social Services and Poverty Eradication, Infrastructure and Utilities as well as Value Addition and Beneficiation. Two additional sub clusters were added which are Fiscal Reform Measures and Public Administration, Governance and Performance (ZIMASSET 2013: 9-10). However, it is the position of this paper that an additional cluster on foreign policy reorientation needed to be put into consideration.

The above position is taken notwithstanding the mention of reengagement efforts as well as normalisation of financial relations with IFIs such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the Paris Club of creditors, among others. As will be discussed, this cluster would have been a crucial *sine qua non* for the success of ZIMASSET since it lays the basic orientation of the country's foreign relations. Hence, a plan to attract investors would need to fit in that orientation.

The basic argument in this paper is that Zimbabwe's foreign policy focus needed broadening or transforming in order to aid socio-economic transformation of the country through ZIMASSET[1]. The current *status quo* in which much focus is on China may be deleterious even to future economic development efforts of the country. There is need to engage intensively with emerging powers such as India and Brazil, not only to widen financing options as implied in the blueprint, but also to attract investments as well as acquire the technology required in different economic sectors. These two emerging economies, as will be discussed, are already actively involved in and with other Sub Saharan African countries because of their need for African resources (especially in the case of India). At the same time reengagement efforts with the powerful economies of the Commonwealth group, United States of America (USA) and Europe have to be put in full swing to ensure a wide pool of international partners as opposed to an isolationist stance.

II. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF FOREIGN POLICY THEORY AND ZIMBABWE'S FOREIGN POLICY

A foreign policy is a guide to actions taken beyond the boundaries of the state to further the goals of that particular state (Kinsella, Russett & Starr 2013: 53). To other scholars it is purposive action and behaviour with the view towards promoting the interests of a single political community or state (Hill 2003: 20 and Baldwin 2000: 167). Foreign policy formulation is conditioned by both internal and external factors. External factors may include the country's relationship with great powers, changing balance of power within the global system and economic global economic crises among other pertinent factors. Internal factors may include the ideological orientation of the ruling government (Morgenthau 2012: 67), history, public opinion and parochial interests of various holders of bureaucratic offices in government among others.

Zimbabwe's foreign policy is also a product of such external and internal considerations, and the manner in which the country's foreign policy has developed from 1980 testifies to this fact. According to Stan Mudenge, Zimbabwe's former Minister of Foreign Affairs;

'Zimbabwe's foreign policy objective is fundamentally to help safeguard and enhance the security and prestige of the country. In addition, it is geared towards the improvement of quality of life of the Zimbabwean people. This is done through interaction with other countries at various levels in order to influence the behaviour of other actors so that the international environment is conducive to the attainment of these goals' (Chigora 2007: 172).

In an address to the United Nations (UN) in August 1980, President Mugabe, then Prime Minister expounded on the five key principles of Zimbabwe's foreign policy. These are national sovereignty and equality among nations, attainment of a socialist egalitarian and democratic society as well as the right of all peoples to self-determination and independence. Additionally, non-racialism at home and abroad and positive non alignment and peaceful coexistence among nations are important principles of Zimbabwe's foreign policy (Patel 1985: 229-230). In all these principles there are overlaps which also incorporate the principles of nationalism, Pan-Africanism, anti-imperialism, solidarity, non-intervention and non-interference in internal affairs, multilateralism and the Look East Policy which has been amplified since 2003 (Chan & Patel 2006: 176). Since 1980 in Zimbabwe, the chief maker and articulator of foreign policy was the President, and certainly his views, personality and experience as an African nationalist have been crucial in this regard (ibid. 176).

[1]. The ZIMASSET plan has since disappeared from government discourses on development meaning it has failed to achieve its objectives. Even government controlled media no longer puts attention on the plan.

It is also important to note that Zimbabwe operates a particularly active foreign policy that integrates liberal, classical and neo-realist as well as peripheral realist perspectives. Indeed, Zimbabwe intervened in Mozambique during that country's civil war in an effort to protect the Beira corridor as well as checkmating South African sponsored rebels. The country also intervened in the Democratic Republic of Congo under Operation Sovereign Legitimacy to prevent the toppling of the Laurent Kabila regime by rebels in 1998. The country has also participated in various UN Missions in Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia and East Timor among others. While the liberal perspective (especially complex interdependence) believes that states gain more in economic cooperation and general multilateralism defined in modern days by globalisation, classical realists like Hans Morgenthau (2012: 70) forward the notion that states use any means available to achieve their interests. To Morgenthau, national interest is defined in terms of power, hence, every state should seek power relative to other states. Neo- realism, as espoused by Kenneth Waltz (1979: 97) is more concerned about the survival of the state in an anarchic environment in which there is no overarching authority to lay down the rules. States find themselves in a self-help system/structure, which forces them to take decisions as rational agents. The above principles justify why the government of Zimbabwe's foreign policy became more oriented towards the East given a backdrop of severed relations with the West since the year 2000.

However, there is a feeling among Third World scholars (noted below) that these Western International Relations (IR) theories are inadequate or even inappropriate to the analysis of developing countries' foreign policies (Nkiwane 2001: 280; Tickner 2003: 297; Ayoob 1989: 68-69, 2002: 27 & Smith 2009: 269-270). This view prompted the crafting of peripheral realism by Carlos Escude (1997). In peripheral realism, Escude (1997) attempts to develop an IR theory that focuses on the predicament of the weak and vulnerable states. Escude does this, first, by offering a critique of realism and neo-realism, which he believes, focuses primarily on the arbitrary separation of politics and economics and the assumed centrality of anarchy. For Escude (1997: 4), these assumptions may be appropriate, relative to great powers, but they fail when used to analyse peripheral states.

For weak states, economics and politics are intertwined because only economic development will create the possibility of developing state power in interstate affairs. Escude (1997: 82) extends his critique to Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's concept of complex interdependence, which he criticises for being similarly Eurocentric in nature because the relative decrease in the ability of great powers to utilise their power does not represent a corresponding increase in the power of weaker states. Escude (1997: 87-89) then proposes five principles of peripheral realism. A peripheral government should abstain from interstate power politics and devote itself to promoting local economic development instead. It should abstain from costly idealistic interstate policies and must abstain from risky confrontations with great powers. It should abstain from unproductive political confrontations with great powers even when such confrontations have no immediate cost in the short run and it should study the possibility of alignment or bandwagoning with a dominant and hegemonic power or power coalition (Niemann 1998: 181).

III. ZIMBABWE-CHINA ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The turn of the 21st century coincided with the imposition of sanctions on Zimbabwe by the USA and Europe, and other countries in the West such as Australia and Canada. It also saw the exit of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth group of countries. This prompted the ZANU PF government under R.G Mugabe to reemphasise the Look East Policy (LEP) in 2003, aimed at (re-) invigorating Zimbabwe's economic and diplomatic relations with China and much of East Asia (Chipaike and Mhandara 2013: 153; Hodzi et al 2013: 80 & Stiftung 2004: 1). However, the evolution of this policy over the years has shown that its central target is China. In 2012, the outgoing Chinese ambassador to Zimbabwe pegged the total volume of trade at US $800 million, having increased from US $600 million in 2010 (*The Herald*, May 7, 2012). However, while Zimbabwe exports unprocessed commodities such as chrome and platinum as well as tobacco, China exports value added products such as machinery, electrical items, engine and motor parts, plastics as well as communications equipment. This pattern of trade is unfortunately similar to the traditional economic relationship between Africa and colonial powers, hence, it does not serve Zimbabwe's economic transformation efforts well (Frederick, Ebert, Stiftung 2004: 5).

Chinese companies have played a significant role in revamping Zimbabwe's energy and communications sectors. Zimbabwe's domestic power generation, which stands at around 1200 MW, against a national demand of about 2 200MW and installed capacity of 1960 MW, remains a major constraint to economic revival in the country (Manyeruke 2011:101). In this regard, Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) received transformers and other electrical equipment worth

$110 million. In November 2004, ZESA Holdings Limited signed a cooperation agreement with the Chinese Aero-technology Import and Export Corporation (CATIC) for equipment worth $ 2.4 billion (Manyeruke 2011: 101). Chinese companies have also started work at Kariba hydro-power station and Hwange colliery power plant to increase capacity and output (*Financial Gazette*, July 10, 2014).

Chinese firms have also won lucrative tenders in Zimbabwe's communications sector. For example, Chinese telecoms giant, Huawei was awarded a $66 million contract to lay a fibre optic network for Econet wireless (*IT News Africa*, February 17, 2011). Additionally, cheaply priced computer brands and improved media infrastructure have been made available through increasing Zimbabwe-China economic cooperation. On the investment front, it is reported that, in 2011 alone, Zimbabwe signed agreements to the tune of $700 million with Chinese investors having an interest in mineral extraction and beneficiation (*Mail and Guardian,* Nov 24, 2011). The Chinese Development Bank was also reported to be keen to invest $10 billion in Zimbabwe's mining and agricultural sectors (*The Canadian Business Journal,* n.d). The Chinese government donated an Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centre (ATDC) to the tune of $30 million at Gwebi Agricultural College. This donation was made as part of the commitments made by China to Africa from the 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The Centre, which was commissioned in 2012, will be absorbed as one of the Ministry of Agriculture's centres of excellence in research and extension that include research stations, farmer training centres and agricultural colleges (Mukwereza 2013: 18).

China has also given aid and development assistance packages of different forms to the Zimbabwean government (Hodzi, Hartwell & de Jager 2013: 88). In 2012, China made a $14 million donation in the form of 4, 190 tonnes of rice and 9, 723 tonnes of wheat as emergency food aid. The donation constituted 40 percent and 3 percent respectively of annual rice and wheat requirements for the country (Mukwereza 2013: 18). In 2006, a $200 million Buyers Credit Loan Facility was extended to Zimbabwe for fertiliser, agrochemicals, agro equipment, animal health products and other equipment. In 2009, China provided a $53 million grant to Net One, Zimbabwe's state owned mobile operator. In 2010, EXIM Bank provided a $400 million loan to Zimbabwe that was meant to finance two hydro-electricity plants to be built by a Chinese company Sino Hydro at Kariba (Hodzi et al 2013: 88). A Chinese delegation in 2010 also extended a $200 million loan from the EXIM Bank to the Mugabe government and there were talks about further loans and investments in the country. China also provided a $98 million loan for the construction of the National Defence College by the Anhui Foreign Economic Construction Company (Hodzi et al 2013: 88). The above Sino-Zimbabwe deals explain the country's overreliance on a China oriented foreign policy and implementation of ZIMASSET in the post 2013 period by the former President R.G Mugabe. This has led some scholars to analyse Zimbabwe as China's client state (Brautigam 2017).

An assessment of ZIMASSET shows that the Look East foreign policy option has seen Zimbabwe achieving some objectives through economic development partnership with China. Empirical evidence testifies that since the inception of ZIMASSET the government of Zimbabwe signed some deals with China. Zimbabwe-China cooperation are in tandem with ZIMASSET's key success factors for example, 'Rehabilitation, upgrading and development of key infrastructure and utilities comprising power generation, roads, rail, aviation and water (ZIMASSET 2013: 32). The Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Patrick Chinamasa singled out deals concluded with China as of July 2015 that is, the Kariba South Hydro Power Station Expansion in which the government of Zimbabwe and China Exim Bank signed a $319.5 million preferential buyer's credit loan agreement for the project on November, 11, 2013, China Exim Bank signed a concessional loan agreement to provide funding of up to $218.9 million for the implementation of Net One network expansion on August 25, 2014, a facility of $150m was secured for the purposes of developing the Victoria Falls International Airport and the development and rehabilitation of the City of Harare municipal water and sewage treatment works to the tune of $89 million (Huni 2013). The above deals satisfy ZIMASSET's third cluster dealing with Infrastructure and Utilities. It should however be noted that Zimbabwe did not get the actual funding, from China, that it needed to fund the ZIMASSET policy mainly because of the fact that the country has been struggling repaying existing loans (*New Zimbabwe,* December, 2017). In fact, the bulk of the $27 billion initially touted as the amount needed to fund the ZIMASSET programmes was reportedly going to be negotiated with China. However, China did not commit itself as a result of the political risk and lack of clarity in Zimbabwe's economic policies and an uninspiring political outlook.

The relative 'advantage' of Chinese development assistance is that it is non-conditional in a political sense. There are no considerations of human rights violations, undemocratic governance or other vices that are used by the West to deny their own form of aid to governments in need. However, the *Beijing Consensus*, which explains the Chinese model of investments and aid disbursement has been criticised for supporting *rogue* regimes that trample human rights and do not respect the rule of law (Naim 2007: 97). Thus, the Chinese model offers little incentive for Zimbabwe's ZANU PF government to improve its chequered human rights record, government transparency and its stance on corruption (Naim 2007: 97). Chinese loans are also offered at deeply concessional rates, with flexible repayment terms. This may be to Zimbabwe's advantage in the interim as it provides the government with alternative sources of infrastructure financing, in the absence of such aid from the country's traditional Western donors.

However, Zimbabwe's continued access of concessional Chinese finance should be treated with caution since there is a risk there that the country may mortgage a whole generation's future and sink into more debt. According to the Newsday (June 19, 2017), Mugabe lamented over the massive fraud involving Chiadzwa diamonds, massive leakages and smuggling of gems by Chinese companies Anjin and Jinan among many. On 18 June 2017, the then President of Zimbabwe, R.G Mugabe lamented that, he was made to 'wave dummy cheques' by the Chinese diamond companies who pledged US$10 million for the Zimunya-Marange Share Ownership Trust to develop affected mining communities (Newsday June 19, 2017). These are clear indications of unfair business practices on the part of the most trusted 'all weather friends', the Chinese hence Zimbabwe needs a more pragmatic and cautionary foreign policy outlook. Furthermore, China's investment policy has also been criticised for externalisation of forex, unfriendly labour practices, importing labour and violation of environmental laws. Whilst China is also looking South and West, this paper's position is that Zimbabwe's foreign policy should be more diversified through engaging various actors in the global village.

IV. INDIA-AFRICA RELATIONS

India-Africa relations have evolved over a long time. In recent history, the main characteristic of India's Africa policy was its support for the continent's liberation from colonial bondage as well as efforts for ending racial discrimination, popularly known as apartheid, in South Africa. India, under Nehru's leadership was also instrumental in the establishment of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM), an organisation that was heavily influenced by the Afro-Asian summit at Bandung in 1955 (Beri 2011: 5). India's relationship with Africa is cast in terms, which emphasise the political affinity between the sub-continent as one of the first decolonised countries after the World War 11 and the parallel nationalistic aspirations of Africa as well as their common development status. Like China, India's foreign policy supports non-interference into state sovereignty and supports South-South cooperation (Alden 2010: 14). Although India started availing technical support to African countries in the 1970s, it is in the present century that a serious stand on the economic aspect of the country's relations with Africa was taken. In 2007, the Indian government launched multilateral platform, the India-Africa Summit involving 15 African countries and Delhi, committed itself to raising the credit line for Indian businesses wishing to operate in Africa to $5.4 billion, provide $500 million for development cooperation, improved market access to African exports, training for over 1500 Africans in Indian Universities and improvements in defence cooperation. Furthermore, India has written off debt owed by African countries and established an India-Africa fund of $200 million offering credit to projects that promote Indo-African integration (Alden 2010: 14; Alvarenga et al, n.d: 143). Indian corporates such as Tata and Vendata mining as well as a range of pharmaceutical companies are driving large investments in traditional Eastern and Southern African markets as well as opening new operations in West Africa. The state owned Oil and Natural Gas Company ONGC has also been actively involved in bids for oil block leases in different African countries, a reflection of the Asian country's interests in energy resources for its booming economy which grew by 9.6% in 2006/2007 (Alden 2010: 15). In 2009, bilateral trade between Africa and India stood at $39 billion. However, trade between India and Africa is arched in the traditional colonial pattern in which the latter exports manufactured products, technology services as well as pharmaceuticals while African countries export raw commodities.

The potential development impact of Zimbabwe's enhanced engagement of India:

India-Zimbabwe ties date back to the era of the Munhumutapa Kingdom, in 14th century where Indian merchants established strong links with Zimbabwe, trading in textiles, minerals and metals (Nyemba et al 2013: 26). India also played a critical role in support of liberation movements in Zimbabwe. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi participated in the Independence Day celebrations in 1980. Since then, several Indian Prime Ministers and former President of India, Dr. S.D. Sharma have visited Zimbabwe, and former President Mugabe also visited India several times. He was a recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Award in 1989. However, since 1996 no bilateral high level visit from India has taken place, though former PM Shri Vajpayee and President Mugabe met twice on the side lines of UNGA and NAM Summits in 2003 (Indian Embassy 2013). India and Zimbabwe share a similarity of views on most international issues and closely cooperate at UN, NAM and other multilateral fora like WTO and G-15. India has supported Zimbabwe in the Human Rights Commission and Zimbabwe supported India for its elections to ECOSOC, UNESCO, Council of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and in the UN Human Rights Council elections. India and Zimbabwe are members of G-20 in WTO and having common position on Intellectual Property Rights and agricultural subsidies. Zimbabwe generally supports India in most of the elections in the multilateral fora and resolutions in the UN. During the year 2011, Zimbabwe supported India´s candidates for election to the UN Advisory Committee on the Administrative and Budgetary Question (ACABQ). Zimbabwe also supported India's candidature for a non-permanent seat in the UNSC (Indian Embassy 2013).

India has been a partner in the development of Zimbabwe, assisting in the field of education, telecommunications and power sectors. During severe drought in 2003, India donated 50,000 tonnes of rice to Zimbabwe (*Pan African News Agency*, September 16, 2003). Indian public sector companies have a successful history of engagement with Zimbabwe and companies like Water and Power Consultancy Services (WAPCOS), HMT and Telecommunications India Ltd (TCIL) had executive projects in Zimbabwe. On 14 June 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between India and Zimbabwe in Harare for a grant of US$5 million for development of SME sector in Zimbabwe. President Mugabe inaugurated the Indo-Zim SMEs Project on 4th August 2008 at the Harare Institute of Technology (*Newsday*, June 1, 2011). The final phase of the Indo-Zim SME project got underway with experts from India coordinated by HMT; a 13-member team from HMT organised one-day workshop on entrepreneurship in 10 provinces. The SME project was completed in February 2013. Under the MoU signed on 14th September 2011 for setting up the Hole-in-the-Wall electronic learning stations by HIWEL Delhi, three children Computer Learning Stations were successfully set up in 2012, one each in Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare. These are now fully functional. TCIL successfully completed installation of all the IT equipment and software at the sites of University of Zimbabwe and Parirenyatwa Hospital (*The Herald*, September 15, 2011).

These Centres have been tested end- to end with Senegal hub and TCIL, New Delhi. TCIL has also completed the setting up of two hotline links between the Heads of State. The tele-medicine equipment, except for X-ray digitizer, has become operational and the project is awaiting formal launch (Indian Embassy 2013). India is on course to set up a Food Testing Laboratory (FTL) and a Rural Technology Park in Zimbabwe (RTP) under IAFS-II apart from a Vocational Training Centre. In 2012, India approved a Line of Credit worth US$28.6 million for upgrading of Deka Pumping Station and River Water Intake System in Zimbabwe. An Agreement to implement the Line of Credit was signed between Exim Bank and Zimbabwean side on 21 June 2013 (*The Herald*, August 1, 2012). Since then, WAPCOS have been appointed as Project Management Consultants for the project. Additionally, assistance to Zimbabwe under the ITEC programme has been a regular feature of India's assistance to Zimbabwe for capacity building. ITEC is a successful and much sought after programme in Zimbabwe. Starting with 3 Zimbabweans in 1985, over 556 Zimbabweans have been trained in short-term civilian courses in India under the ITEC programme. After the India-Africa Forum Summit in April, 2008, the ITEC slots for Zimbabwe have been increased from 40 in 2008-09 to 150 in 2011-12. The ITEC/ICCR training slots/scholarships extended by India to Zimbabwe were 257 during 2012-13. These training slots/scholarships were expected to touch 260 in 2013-14. The ITEC programme remains popular and is an important aspect of the bilateral relations (Indian Embassy 2013).

It is quite evident that India and Zimbabwe have solid and cordial relations and these form a solid base on which a positive foreign policy 'offensive' could have been launched by Zimbabwe in order to achieve some of ZIMASSET's objectives. However, this relationship should be more of partnership than philanthropic altruism in the form of 'aid' hand-outs. India is a particularly competitive manufacturer of pharmaceuticals. Instead of Zimbabwe just importing those lifesaving drugs, special incentives can be drafted to attract Indian pharmaceutical investors willing to partner Zimbabwean companies in the same field. It is common knowledge that Zimbabwean pharmaceutical companies such as CAPS, NatPham, Varichem and Datlabs among others are struggling due to liquidity constraints hence, seeking partnership with Indian firms in this field could have been prudent to meet the requirements of the ZIMASSET Social Services and Utilities cluster *(Newsday*, November 8, 2013). These operations could have been housed in the much talked about Special Economic Zones that were promised by the government under ZIMASSET (*The Zimbabwean,* April 16, 2014). Such partnership would not only ensure general human security but employment creation as well. A re-energised Zimbabwean foreign policy towards India could also help attract partnerships in the areas of technology services such as communications and general ICT. Such arrangements would need to be based upon appropriate technology transfer agreements within the partnerships. Modern economies are knowledge based and Zimbabwe would benefit from such an arrangement.

However, a major drawback to this arrangement would be in the country's indigenisation regulations, because the relevant government authorities neither consistently nor clearly spell them out. This lack of clarity resulted in the lack of policy direction by government and consequently scared away potential investors (*Newsday*, March 14, 2014). It negatively impacted on one of the overall objectives of the ZIMASSET Plan, that is, increased Foreign Direct Investment in the period 2013-2018 (ZIMASSET 2013). Zimbabwe also faces stiff competition for these economic partnerships from other African countries that seem to have more conducive investment climates, for example countries in East Africa as well as South Africa (Alden 2010: 15). Thus, going forward, Zimbabwe's domestic economic policy needs clarification first if the investment climate is going to improve.

V. OVERVIEW OF BRAZIL-AFRICA, BRAZIL-ZIMBABWE RELATIONS

Brazil and Africa are bound by history. Brazil's historical origins owes much to Africa due to the role of the Atlantic slave trade and its part in the wider commercial network of the Portuguese (Alden 2010: 16). However, of the three emerging powers (including China and India) that prominently feature in this paper, Brazil is the least engaged in Africa. This trend was mainly because of the mutual lack of interest between the two parties in much of the 20th century chiefly because of the Cold War. The 1970s witnessed the establishment of a number of Brazilian embassies in Africa and a few investments in Lusophone countries such as Angola and Mozambique as well Nigeria and South Africa. In Angola, Brazil's two-way trade with the Southern African country surpassed $1 billion in 2007. Angola also received $750 million worth of investments in 2006 from Brazil (Stuenkel 2013: 29 & Alden 2010: 17). In 2005 alone, Brazil's state run company Petrobas invested $1.9 billion in Nigeria's coal, oil and natural gas sectors. In 2007, Vale invested around $700 million in Mozambique's coal, oil and natural gas sectors as well (Stuenkel 2013: 35) It was however President Lula da Silva who early in his term identified Africa as a top priority. Lula made twelve trips to Africa in his term as President while his foreign Minister made 67 official visits to Africa. In return, Brazil received 47 African heads of state from 27 Nations (Stuenkel 2013: 30). In this phase, Brazil initiated the IBSA dialogue forum including India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA). However, unlike China and India, which are looking for natural resources to feed into their massive industrialisation projects, Brazil is a resource rich country and an oil exporter. As a result, she sees Africa as a market for a diversified range of agricultural machinery, bio-fuels, food and seeds.

While there is not much literature on Brazil-Zimbabwe relations, the little that exists shows that Zimbabwe already benefits from the 'More Food for Africa' Programme. Brazil initiated this programme in Africa in 2010 at the Brazil-Africa Dialogue on Food Safety, Hunger Alleviation and Rural Development spearheaded by the country's Ministry of Agrarian Development. Brazil's Chamber of Commerce approved $640 million in lines of credit for the programme to Africa in the 2011-12 financial year (Mukwereza 2013: 120). Ghana and Zimbabwe were the first African countries to join the programme in which they will get technical assistance to import agricultural equipment from Brazil. The main programme focuses on the importation of Brazilian tractors although an equally important component of the More Food for Africa package for Zimbabwe could be the supply of irrigation equipment. One of the key strategies for robust economic growth and development envisioned under ZIMASSET was, 'Implementing an Import Substitution programme (particularly to address machinery, equipment, fuels, chemicals and consumer products) ZIMASSET 2013: 35). Zimbabwe has already received agricultural implements from Brazil for mechanisation purposes although there were complaints that the distribution of this machinery was done along political party lines by the former first lady Grace Mugabe. Engaging Brazil would have played a critical role in the resuscitation of the agricultural sector particularly in smallholder farming. However, government indebtedness could be a problem since the government was expected to borrow from the fund to facilitate this programme and repay the loan within 10 years (Mukwereza 2013: 120). This is problematic considering the fact that Zimbabwe has a ballooning external debt of more than $10 billion. More benefits could be realised from partnerships with Brazilians on various projects including establishing agricultural equipment assembly plants in the country as well as a resuscitation of the now forgotten Jatropha projects that may also produce bio-fuels. In fact, Brazilian private sector players provided expertise in the setting up of the $600 million Chisumbanje ethanol processing plant (Mukwereza 2013: 121). Such partnerships are not only critical for employment creation but they can also ensure critical skills transfer.

Therefore, going forward, Zimbabwe's foreign policy should focus on negotiating such deals as well as others for training of Zimbabwean students in different agricultural 'schools' in Brazil in order to ensure agricultural productivity in Zimbabwe. These initiatives can be started through dialogue with the Brazilian Embassy in Harare since Zimbabwe is

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fortunate to be hosting one of the thirty-seven Brazilian embassies in Africa. However, it should be noted that despite strides made in Zimbabwe-Brazil bilateral engagements in the agro industry, NewsdzeZimbabwe (December 8, 2017) reported that Brazil had suspended the farming equipment facility to Zimbabwe. The motivating factors for the above development is that, 'Brazil has indefinitely withheld disbursing outstanding farming implements worth US$60 million to Zimbabwe under the US$98 million More Food for Africa programme amid allegations of rampant abuse of the facility by top government officials, among other regularities…'. It is also reported that Brazil suspended the second phase of the agriculture support scheme since Zimbabwe was defaulting on loan repayment commitment.

However, the fact remains that the government needs to create the necessary policy framework and investor friendly environment that may incentivise interested partners. The rampant corruption characterising state institutions and government officials requires urgent attention. Economic policy clarity is lacking in terms of investment laws vis-à-vis indigenisation laws given the 51% (for locals) and 49% (for foreigners) condition. Although the new government has hinted that the law will be amended, this is one major issue requiring urgent attention if the government is to be successful in courting international development partners and investors.

VI. RE-ENGAGING THE WEST

This paper emphasises that engaging the international financial institutions including the IMF, World Bank, Paris club of debtors and western countries could have been an important element for the success of ZIMASSET. The ZIMASSET Document proposed various internal and external funding mechanisms for the success of the economic blueprint summarised as follows;

In order to ensure that the Plan is fully funded, the following, *inter-alia*, have been identified as financing mechanisms: tax and non-tax revenue, leveraging resources, Sovereign Wealth Fund, issuance of bonds, accelerated implementation of Public Private Partnerships, securitization of remittances, re-engagement with the international and multilateral finance institutions and other financing options, focusing on Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) (ZIMASSET 2013: 11).

From the above it is apparently clear that the architects of ZIMASSET gave priority to reengagement with the West but in practise put much of their attention on China. An analysis of Zimbabwe's Look East foreign policy shows too much dependence on China. A more diversified FP strategy focusing on active engagement with other BRICS countries and reengagement with the Western states widens the options available for Zimbabwe. This calls for the re-mending of Zimbabwe's bilateral relations with Britain towards re-admission into the Commonwealth family and a reversal of the unilateral R.G Mugabe's withdrawal from the group without Parliamentary approval to the detriment of the country.

This paper observes that another major FP impediment in the implementation of ZIMASSET is the use of seemingly offensive language demonising the Western states as chief culprits in the pre-2013 Zimbabwe's economic stagnation. The ZIMASSET document Executive Summary notes that,

Zimbabwe experienced a deteriorating economic and social environment since 2000 caused by **illegal economic sanctions** imposed by the western countries. This resulted in a deep economic and social crisis characterised by a hyperinflationary environment and low industrial capacity utilization leading to the overall decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 50% in 2008 (ZIMASSET 2013:8).

By shifting the blame for Zimbabwe's economic malaise solely to the West, the Zimbabwean government sought to absolve itself from wrong doing. However, it is common knowledge that corruption, lack of accountability, bureaucratic red tape, populist policies and general mismanagement of State Owned Enterprises have also contributed to the bleeding of the economy over the years. In addition, Zimbabwe's land reform programme, which disturbed the agricultural base of the country's industry also significantly contributed to economic meltdown. Concomitantly, the picture that emerges is of a government that was unwilling to reform its political and economic systems on the basis that all the country's economic problems were caused by exogenous factors.

Moreover, the ZIMASSET blueprint Executive Summary also states that, 'Source documents recognise the continued existence of the illegal economic sanctions, subversive activities and internal interferences from hostile countries' (ZIMASSET 2013: 8-9). Former President Mugabe is also known for using inflammatory language at international forums, a position that is not in sync with reengagement efforts. Such ideological blame shifting and anti-western stance curtails any efforts at re-engagement for development purposes. Despite strained relations over the last decade, statistics show that the West is still a viable trading and economic development partner for Zimbabwe, hence *The Standard* (15 February, 2015) reports that,

… despite the Look East Policy, the European Union's trade with Zimbabwe amounted to $860 million in 2011 with a trade surplus of $271 million in favour of Zimbabwe. South Africa now accounts for 68% of the exports and is followed by United Arab Emirates at 6% and China at 5%. Despite strained relations, the United States has been the leading provider of humanitarian assistance to Zimbabwe, providing more than $1,4 billion in assistance from 2001.

It is important for the government of the day to embrace a more pragmatic and diversified foreign policy strategy as well instituting political and economic reforms in order to attract much needed capital inflows for the success of socio-economic reconstruction.

In line with this idea one of the provisions of ZIMASSET's foreign policy initiative included, 're-engagement with the international and multilateral finance institutions and other financing options' to widen the capital inflows into the country (ZIMASSET 2013). It is against this backdrop that Government constituted a Debt Arrears Clearance Committee (DACC) in May 2015, which was mandated to come up with strategies to resolve the country's debt burden (Chinamasa 2015: 2). This Western targeted foreign policy roadmap was earmarked for the clearance of Zimbabwe government's arrears amounting to US$1.8 billion owed to multilateral financial institutions in early 2016 (Chinamasa 2015). The Zimbabwe Government's desire to service the country's external debt arrears, boost investor confidence and attract international lenders was a positive development.

Despite the above efforts re-engaging the West and international IFIs suffered from foreign policy inconsistency given the challenges confronting the Patrick Chinamasa led Lima[2] external debt settlement agreement. In October, 2015 Zimbabwe tabled proposals in Lima, Peru, to clear arrears to the IMF amounting to US$110 million, WB (US$1,15 billion) and AfDB (US$601 million) by the end of June 2016 (*The Financial Gazette*, 24 March, 2016). According to the *Zimbabwe Independent* (September, 16, 2016), 'the Lima Plan is based on Zimbabwe paying off its US$1,8 billion arrears to preferred internationals financial institutions (IFIs) — the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and African Development Bank — to secure US$2 billion in fresh funding'. The *Zimbabwe Independent* (September, 16, 2016), further reports that, 'The two transitional plans have become a theatre of ZANU PF power struggles in government.' This contradicts one section of ZIMASSET which states that, 'the implementation of this Plan will rely on the following Key Success Factors (KSFs): political commitment and leadership from the highest level....' (ZIMASSET 2013: 31). The government of Zimbabwe vacillated between the western centred Lima Plan and the possibility of a China bailout option. Lack of political support from a cross section of the Cabinet and the ruling party, mainly because of factional politics, slowed the Lima plan.

The resignation of R.G Mugabe and the ascendency of E.D Mnangagwa has witnessed renewed hope described as the 'dawn of a new era' for Zimbabwe's socio-economic transformation among the local and international players. The inaugural speech by President E.D Mnangagwa renewed optimism for international engagement given the following promises; free and fair elections, jump-starting the country's lifeless economy and stamping out rampant corruption, protecting and promoting the rights of the people, compensation of former white farmers and creation of friendly environment for foreign investors. The *Newsday* (December 5, 2017) reported that, among the factors militating against economic turnaround in Zimbabwe, in his first cabinet meeting E.D Mnangagwa cited low capacity utilisation by industry and high country risk perception and policy inconsistency. Addressing the above challenges will go a long way in addressing some of the economic challenges facing the country.

The new Zimbabwe government needs to harness the diplomatic opportunities and renewed hope in international engagement following the renewed confidence ushered in by the fall of R.G Mugabe. According to the British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson as cited in the Press Association (29 November 2017), 'for as long as the President (Mnangagwa) acts on his words, then Britain is willing to work alongside him and offer all the support we can. The UK's relationship

P. Chinamasa was the Finance and Economic Development Minister since 2013 who presided over the country's initiatives in re-engaging the West and IFS to rescue Zimbabwe burdened with a debt legacy. The initiatives are summed up in the Lima Initiative document. The Lima strategy's key derivable includes; strengthen confidence in the financial sector, re-engagement with international community, improve investment climate, modernise labour laws among many.

with Africa and the African Union will continue to go from strength to strength and as we leave the EU I want to work even more closely with my counterparts in the region.' Even the US ambassador to Zimbabwe expressed his optimism for the prospects of reengagement between the two countries. Reuters reports that the IMF scheduled to dispatch a team to Harare to meet the new government and assess the country's fiscal and economic situation. The IMF spokesperson Gerry Rice reiterated that the visit, 'will update our assessment of Zimbabwe's fiscal position, foreign exchange developments and inquire about the new administration's economic plans.' (The Zimbabwe Mail November 30. 2017). Thus, Zimbabwe needs to adopt a more pragmatic foreign policy direction to take advantage of the opportunities at hand.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the need for a broadening of Zimbabwe's foreign policy focus. Indeed, the Look East Policy of 2003 shifted the focus of the country's foreign policy much to China in the face of sanctions at the turn of the 21st century and unfortunately paid lesser attention to other emerging powers such as India and Brazil as well as on reengaging with the country's erstwhile partners in the West. These countries have expertise that Zimbabwe can tap into especially in the areas of technology-based services and pharmaceuticals in the case of India as well agricultural expertise in the case of Brazil. A more pragmatic reengagement plan with the West and IFIs is a major foreign policy pillar which was lacking in the ambitious ZIMASSET blueprint. Political will, policy consistency and creating an investor friendly environment should be an important variable in Zimbabwe's foreign policy strategy. Partnerships and skills transfer are critical for the country's economic advancement. The new President E.D Mnangagwa' administration should capitalise on renewed international confidence and goodwill towards Zimbabwe and devise investor friendly reforms meant to attract capital inflows and engagement with diverse development partners under the new political dispensation following the closure of the Mugabe era. A combination of a broad foreign policy focus, policy clarity and consistency and enhanced ease of doing business will ensure the achievement of present and future economic development targets.

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