

# CHAPTER 5: IMAGE-BUILDING, INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND RE-ENGAGEMENT

AURTHUR CHIVAMBE, ENOCK MUSARA AND OLIVER KUWA

---

## ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to discuss and examine image-building, international engagement and re-engagement in Zimbabwe. The background to this subject is that the National Development Strategy 1: 2021-2025 (NDS1) is the successor to the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP) and is the first five-year medium-term plan aimed at realising the country's Vision 2030. The NDS1 outlines the strategies, policies, legal and institutional reforms and the programmes and projects to be implemented over the five-year period, 2021 -2025, to achieve accelerated, high, inclusive, broad-based and sustainable economic growth and socio-economic transformation and development. The methodology used in this chapter includes the desktop study and case study method. Textual and contextual are methods used to analyse the data collected. Findings noted are Zimbabwe's re-entry into the global system brings with it the challenge and opportunity of engaging potential investors not in terms of ideological divisions but of competitive advantage. Western policy should move away from singling out Zimbabwe and become more regionally focused, consistently supporting sustainable economic growth and transformation, grounded in good governance and human rights. The chapter recommends that Zimbabwe's government should seek to re-engage in international diplomatic and business fora,, including seeking to re-join the Commonwealth. It is concluded that on she is mindful of the need for new alliances, new investment partners and the need to be reintegrated into the global society.

## INTRODUCTION

The Second Republic of Zimbabwe ushered in an opportunity to improve the country's image and international relations, allowing Zimbabwe to claim her rightful place among the community of nations (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020). In Zimbabwe, engaging the international community is

of great significance because it will attract investment, promote economic growth and national wealth creation within the context of the global economy. The engagement is also important since the locals benefit from the creation of jobs, better living standards and foreign currency will enable good international trade relations in Africa and other countries in the world. Improved international relations play a key role in the social, economic and cultural growth of the country. As a result, in Zimbabwe, there is great competition for inward investment and increased exports to support Vision 2030.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

It is important to understand how Zimbabwe conceptualises foreign policy. Stern (2000) conceives foreign policy as a sequence of positions or courses of action in pursuit of objectives. Foreign policy is about actions, reactions and interactions to situations, events, issues, demands and pressures from the international arena. Kegley and Wittkopf (2001) posit that a state's foreign policy is determined by interrelated factors such as international, inter-domestic and domestic. Rosenau (1976) views foreign policy from three dimensions, that is, orientations, foreign policy as commitments and foreign policy as activities (behaviours). In Zimbabwe, the formulation of foreign policy is guided and informed by the President. This is spelt out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade which states that 'the creation and enunciation of Foreign Policy is a prerogative of the Head of State or Government' (Chan and Patel, 2006).

The relationship between China and Africa has developed noticeably over the last five decades and three separate periods can be distinguished within this time frame (Kanza, 2006). Initially, relationships were established between China and African nation states as they gained independence and the second period when China was given a UN Security Council seat during the period of 1971. The last phrase included the post-Maoist period where it is characterised by growth and liberalisation of the Chinese economy. It can be noted that it was during the 1950s that China's relationship with Africa started to develop. Before 1955, Africa was of no significant importance to China, but from then onwards, China sought international recognition and political allies, hoping to strengthen

international alliances against the capitalist West and the revisionist communist Soviet Union (*ibid.*).

In the Sudan, international development assistance plummeted from 1.9 billion in 1985 to \$50 million by the late 1990s. This was due to non-governmental organisation (NGOs) changing and tending to focus their attention on humanitarian relief in the late 1980s through the so-called Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). OLS has played a significant role in humanitarian assistance in delivering the Southern Sudan. It is a tripartite agreement between the Government of the Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the UN to deliver humanitarian assistance, based on the principles of neutrality, impartiality and transparency. The OLS disburses about \$200 million a year from donor funds, mainly for food assistance. Of this, an estimated 60-70% is devoted to logistics, security and transport.

In most African countries, governments are keen to re-enter the community of nations through opening up of trade, foreign financing and investment. Within the government and civil society, debate is beginning on specific aspects of economic policy. The key cross-cutting issues that run through these debates relate to reforming governance and fiscal federalism and unleashing pro-poor growth. At a national level, the question of federal relations and revenue-sharing lies at the heart of hopes for peaceful unified African countries, but in the medium-to-long term, it will also provide the critical context for policy reform across the sectors. Pro-poor growth will require the reversal of elite policies in agriculture, a refocus on food security, especially in the war-affected areas and other poor regions, a rebalancing of spending towards primary level health and education and fixing social services delivery mechanisms. A reduction in military spending and improved management of oil revenues is central. Under the umbrella of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), the Bank in Africa should have the possibility of engaging governments and other stakeholders to define an inclusive poverty reduction strategy for a unified Africa, with all the capacity for sector reform planning, consultations and civil society involvement that this implies.

In the local context of Zimbabwe, the country needs to re-engage with the West, as the country cannot remain isolated. Engagement with the international community is of great importance and Zimbabwe should be also be part and parcel of the forward-looking international community (Nyangani, 2015). Crucially, re-engagement of the West will help the country access foreign capital and investment that she needs to resuscitate her economy.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter provides a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed journal articles, published magazines, secondary government reports and newspapers. Inductive content analysis was applied to identify major themes and impact areas addressed in the literature to develop a conceptual framework, detailing image-building, international engagement and re-engagement in Zimbabwe.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE PROVISION S IN THE NDS1 DOCUMENT**

The National Development Strategy 1: 2021-2025 (NDS1) is the successor to the TSP and is the first five-year Medium-Term Plan aimed at realising the country's Vision 2030. National priorities were crafted, taking into consideration the TSP Mid-Term Review, Vision 2030, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Africa Agenda 2063, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) and provincial and district profiles (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020). As a result, Zimbabwe has implemented different blueprints to improve Vision 2030, development and economic growth. Nevertheless, Zimbabwe has, in the past implemented different blueprints but failed due socio-economic and political factors. The introduction of the NDS1 is believed will transform itself to the current levels of development.

In the NDS1, there is the introduction and achievement goal set to reach the so-called "Upper Middle-income Society" by the government through the formulation and implementation of bold and robust policies and other interventions that the government will undertake through short and medium-term National Development Plans (NDP). More so, the NDS1 came as an anchor to the backdrop of the TSP that was aimed at

stabilising the macroeconomy and the financial sector, introducing necessary policy and institutional reforms to transform the economy to a private sector led economy, and launching quick-wins to stimulate growth (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020). The TSP was introduced to deal with long-term effects that include unsustainable budget and debt and inflationary pressures in Zimbabwe, would retard the economy. Because of this, the TSP implementation came with significant progress as many changes, including fiscal consolidation, restoration of monetary policy, stabilisation of the exchange rate, the undertaking of governance and institutional reforms, entrenched engagement and re-engagement with the international community, facilitation of investment and infrastructure development, were witnessed (*ibid.*).

The NDS1 is underpinned by the Integrated Result Based Management (IRBM) system and National and Sectoral Results Frameworks to systematically guide its formulation and implementation process. The National and Sectoral Development Results Frameworks allow for horizontal and vertical linkages, hence improving efficacy in programming. Consequently, the two are to transform the economy to growth and development and institutions to enhance public sector efficiency and effective service delivery.

#### **APPRAISAL OF PLANNING**

The NDS1 is an important policy document that recognises Zimbabwe's external image problem. It also recognises that foreign policy and the national economic policy are interlinked. In addition, pointing out key foreign policy challenges, it is aimed at asserting the strategic importance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs relative to other ministries. The plan needs to be buttressed by strategic processes that describe in greater depth how the ministry aims to achieve key goals such as a national diaspora policy, public diplomacy and re-engagement with the West (*ibid.*). Indeed, the strategy for re-engagement is probably the most vital immediate objective and one that needs to be articulated clearly. The plan is undoubtedly key to economic policy, but this presents a challenge since the ministry also has to explain and 'sell' Zimbabwe's economy and economic policy abroad (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019) . This is not

always easy to do at the best of times, but it is particularly difficult during the current economic crisis in Zimbabwe.

The robust economic growth and transformative thrust of moving up the value chain during the NDS1 period is premised on availability of efficient key enablers such as energy, transport and water (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020). Moving the economy up the value chain and domesticating these value chains will also depend on the availability of throughput from primary sectors such as agriculture and mining. Priority under the NDS1 is to increase investment in new infrastructure and rehabilitation and upgrading of existing infrastructure. Focus will also be on increasing production and productivity through resolving bottlenecks such as the land tenure in agriculture, legislative gaps in mining and operationalising the productivity centre.

As far as modern international relations are concerned, the notion of sovereignty entails non-deference to outside powers and authority beyond that of international/multilateral institutions such as SADC, the African Union (AU), the International Court of Justice, and the United Nations (Chitiyo and Kibble, 2014). If Harare and London were to engage in the context of the ongoing crisis, there is no way they were going to relate on an even keel. The latter would give conditionalities and the former simply has to comply (*ibid.*).

A restrictive visa regime, in comparison with other countries in the region, has created a huge disincentive for tourists and investors who are opting to take their patronage and business elsewhere. Consequently, Zimbabwe's ranking on several internationally recognised indices that project the country's image declined over the past two decades. For instance, the 2014 Good Country Index ranked Zimbabwe 120 out of 125.

#### **APPRAISAL OF MONITORING**

In this regard, the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) has also developed a robust monitoring and evaluation system that will anchor the NDS1. Under the SMART Zimbabwe 2030, a broad strategy that includes the e-Government Programme, a Whole of Government Performance Management Solution (WoGPMS) is used to monitor all programmes and

projects implemented by the government on a real time basis during the NDS1. This strategy, therefore, requires acceleration and intensification of the implementation of ICT systems in both the public and private sectors (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020).

In terms of monitoring, there is need for transparency in government processes such as in justice delivery, the tendering process and the fight against corruption. According to the Republic of Zimbabwe (2020), these includes:

- National unity that is blind to race, colour, ethnic origin, creed, etc.
- To develop a disciplined public service, including the uniformed services.
- Re-engagement with IFIs (international financial institutions) (IMF, WB).
- Compensation of former farm owners
- Re-admission into the Commonwealth
- Facilitating factors towards 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 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.

The monitoring of an agreement is an issue that has been much discussed by Zimbabwean civil society and its international partners, and there have been several exercises to specify the kinds of benchmarks that should be put in place to determine the efficacy of any agreement (Chitiyo and Kibble, 2014). These benchmarks, however, should not be specified without determining how and who will monitor these. It is not enough to merely provide a list of indicators without an equivalent measuring process. Some of this should be done by Zimbabwean civil society organisations that have been doing an excellent job already, and some may need to be done by new initiatives (*ibid.*). This local process should be complemented by external bodies, with at least a small team from SADC/AU to act as arbiters over the validity of reports.

There should be agreement by Zimbabwean civil society to insist that no economic re-engagement, balance of payment support or development assistance, takes place without there being satisfactory compliance with the benchmarks. There should be no removal of personal sanctions. The only assistance that is acceptable in the short term is direct humanitarian assistance to the ordinary people of Zimbabwe, delivered through churches and NGOs in the case of food, and through local government structures in the case of health (*ibid.*).

Corruption remains a major economic challenge and a major disincentive to local and foreign institutional investment. The currently moribund Zimbabwe Anti-corruption Commission (ZACC) needs to be re-activated and given a proper mandate, independence and powers to investigate, report on and end the culture of financial impunity. This, in turn, requires political will and support at the highest level.

#### **APPRAISAL OF IMPLEMENTATION**

Several strides were made in transforming the governance ecosystem to ensure that the country's institutions, systems and practices conform to the provisions of the new Constitution. To guarantee constitutional provisions, including fundamental rights, freedoms and responsibilities under the TSP, Government aligned more than 75% of the laws to the Constitution (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020). This was also further complemented by implementation of various public sector reform measures to enhance institutional and individual performance towards provision of quality services to the citizenry (*ibid.*). Notwithstanding these achievements, the TSP faced several challenges during its implementation. These include, among others, high inflationary pressures, exchange rate volatility, continued illegal sanctions against the country, and exogenous shocks like droughts, Cyclone Idai and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The implementation of the NDS1 will require a change of mindset and a new way of thinking and doing business (*ibid.*). This mindset change will require public officials and the private sector to think, act and produce desired outcomes and outputs timeously. This includes ease of doing business reforms, upholding the rule of law and combating corruption



through the ZACC. Further, successful implementation of the NDS1 prioritised programmes and projects is premised on the predictability of the national budget. In this regard, the NDS1 will prioritise timely availing of funds to support identified programmes and projects in the strategy that is implemented to deliver the desired outcomes.

Within the implementation of the NDS1, Zimbabwe should also consider re-engagement with multilateral fora such as the Commonwealth. This would help it to reach out to several different countries and engage in trade promotion initiatives, through the Commonwealth Business Council (Chitiyo and Kibble, 2014), for instance. For example, there are indications that the government is re-engaging with Western organisations and the extension of the IMF staff monitoring team in Harare through tentative re-engagement with the international financial institutions. The Foreign Ministry's efforts through the NDS1 could be supplemented by a White Paper outlining the changing context of regional, continental and global relations, and the implications for Zimbabwe (*ibid.*).

#### **APPRAISAL OF EVALUATION**

On the domestic front, consolidating macroeconomic stability during the NDS1 period is critical for enhancing certainty and confidence in the economy by anchoring exchange rate and inflation (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020). During period, the priority is to strengthen fiscal and monetary coordination, ending all quasi-fiscal activities, curbing all unbudgeted expenditures and deepening the market-based foreign exchange rate system. To evaluate, there is need for the government to have relevant, skilled and motivated human resources who will deliver the desired outcomes of the NDS1. In this regard, evaluation is done through appropriate skills mix and regular review of conditions of service.

Consequently, Zimbabwe's ranking on several internationally recognised indices that project the country's image declined over the past two decades (*ibid.*). For instance, the 2014 Good Country Index ranked Zimbabwe 120 out of 125 and, in addition, Zimbabwe ranked 19 out of 48 African countries in the Country Brand ranking index in 2019. However, ongoing reforms, including the ease of doing business, saw the country

moving up the Good Country Index ranking of 102 out of 153 in 2019 (*ibid.*).

According to ZIDERAA (2018) demands for re-engagement and some of the conditions set out by the US Senate committee for re-engagement with Zimbabwe include,

- Non-involvement of the defences forces in elections.
- Release of provisional and final voters' roll.
- International observers (US, AU, SADC, EU (European Union)).
- Impartial media access for all political parties.
- Compensation for white farmers for land.
- Currency reform, including reform of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ).
- Genuine reconciliation efforts.

## **DISCUSSION**

Zimbabwe's international goodwill was damaged following the implementation of the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme and the backlash from the international community was immediate through the imposition of illegal sanctions and unfavourable international media coverage (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020). The Land Reform Programme happened in the late 2000 period and was also perceived as a necessary evil. This because of the repossession of land to the blacks through willing-buyer-willing-seller during. The situation was worsened by lack of a clear commitment and actual redress of external debt arrears, a critical factor slowing the re-engagement process with the IFIs and bilateral partners. By the turn of the 20th century, Zimbabwe's fortunes on the international arena had turned upside down. This scenario because of the ruling party's (ZANU PF) waning legitimacy in the late 1990s. The Zimbabwean economy began to collapse in the mid-1990s. Fiscal deficits, foreign currency shortages and fuel scarcity became common. Mismanagement and corruption, unfair terms of trade and indiscriminate servicing of foreign debt were the reasons for the underperformance of the economy. Unemployment levels increased along with reduced government expenditure on social services.

The Diaspora Engagement Programme is implemented during the strategy period. The Zimbabwean diaspora has an important part to play in the

country's recovery and in its own success abroad. The diaspora in the United Kingdom will need to manage its internal differences and craft a collective vision if it is to be seen in Harare as a serious partner in Zimbabwe's development, and in London as a partner in UK policy-making on the country and the region (*ibid.*). A dedicated ministry for the diaspora should be established in Zimbabwe to address issues such as investment, remittances, the diaspora vote, diaspora return, the economy and wider diaspora-Zimbabwe partnerships. This would give more impetus to the current re-engagement drive between Zimbabwe and the diaspora.

Following some concerns over the credibility of the electoral process, the future of Zimbabwe's re-engagement with the international community remains somewhat uncertain (*ibid.*). More so, the non-resolution of external debt arrears will continue imposing significant limits on the amount of support available from development partners and constrain Zimbabwe's access to international capital markets and private investment. Among them is the pace of the global economy recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The recovery will have implications on domestic socio-economic progress. To this end, a robust information management and dissemination process to project Zimbabwe as an attractive investment destination and building a highly competitive national brand is critical for re-engagement and image-building. The shift from traditional diplomacy to economic diplomacy has huge potential to improve the country's image, strengthening cooperation with the international community, thus improving economic recovery growth prospects (*ibid.*).

There is need for critical engagement defined by key benchmarks around the operationalisation of the constitution. However, in adopting this approach, international partners and civil society must move away from dictating a roadmap to government (Ward, 2015), but through sustained dialogues, develop a local-based and mutually accepted general framework. There is need to increase engagement at diplomatic and staff levels, especially between international partners and the GoZ (*ibid.*). There is a danger of missing the opportunity for positively influencing reforms, if Zimbabwe is not engaged with constructively.

With the focus on Zimbabwe having thus shifted from the regional and international radar, the seemingly available opportunity for influencing

issues of policy and reform in Zimbabwe is through the empowerment of citizen and civic-led initiatives (Dialogue Online, 2015:3). This chapter calls for the Zimbabwean civil society to come up with a roadmap that seeks incremental engagement that is gradual and aligned to institutional reforms based on the new constitution. International and regional partners may aid the reform process in Zimbabwe through provision of support that seeks to complement their diplomatic efforts. Adopting an engagement strategy of this nature may help to hedge against potential democratic regression as Africa has had significant cases where democratic constitutions have been changed to accommodate the wishes of the incumbents (*ibid.*). Already, in Zimbabwe there is talk on the part of government 'reviewing the constitution on the arguments of fiscal austerity' (Zimbabwe Situation 2015) that may potentially threaten the survival of some democratic institutions (*Newsday*, 2015). It is at this point that engagement with Zimbabwe by international and regional partners has to take on full board civil society to ensure the broadening and deepening of democratic systems and values to guarantee sustainable rule of law and democratic stability.

The Zimbabwean government should take the initiative in normalising relations with the international community. It should seek to re-engage in international diplomatic and business fora, including seeking to rejoin the Commonwealth. The government has stated that the main obstacle to re-entry into the Commonwealth is the levy (Mzembi, 2013). Western policy should also not single out Zimbabwe, but should become more regionally focused, consistently supporting economic growth, good governance and human rights. The normalisation of Zimbabwe's international relations with the West is essential for economic recovery. The electoral legitimacy debate will continue to divide Zimbabweans and the international community alike, but the reality is that for the time being ZANU-PF is the dominant force in Zimbabwean politics (Chitiyo and Kibble, 2014).

## **CONCLUSION AND OPTIONS**

In a nutshell, international and regional partners may also intensify diplomatic efforts and at the same time include civil society in their engagement strategies to broaden and deepen democratic practice. Taking such an approach will most likely ensure entrenchment and

sustainability of democratic institutions and systems in the long term and make Zimbabwe a law abiding player within the community of nations. To be admitted and accepted by the international community, Zimbabwe is aware that she has to play by the rules of the globe, being open for business is one of these. Be that as it may, one notes that conservatism, change and continuity dominate the country's foreign policy. Despite a change in administration, Zimbabwe's foreign policy remains informed by regional integration, African integration, multilateralism and territorial sovereignty.

Regional and international actors cannot continue to wait for regime change as a prerequisite for constructive engagement. The problems in Zimbabwe are not unique to the country. To varying degrees, issues of governance, corruption and inequality, and the difficulties of translating growth into jobs, are of concern to governments across the region. The promotion of the 'region brand' is as important as that of the 'nation-brand', and this requires the southern African region, as a whole, to address human development issues, implement pro-poor policies and tackle increasing food insecurity. To end isolationism, Zimbabwe should re-engage with friends from which it had become estranged. There is need for urgent economic recovery opening up Zimbabwe to international investment that is protected through binding international agreements such as Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreements (BIPPAS) and need for civil and political reforms to transform the political landscape. Nevertheless, following some concerns over the credibility of the electoral process, the future of Zimbabwe's re-engagement with the international community remains somewhat uncertain.