

**Zimbabwe's Foreign Policy in Southern Africa 1980-2013**

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## Abstract

Soon after independence on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1980, Zimbabwe's foreign policy was shaped by the realities on the ground, which saw the country managing a sound relationship with both the Capitalist West and the Communist Eastern blocs. The post- independence foreign policy was therefore premised on security concerns illuminated by the Cold War era. This was one of the reasons President Robert Mugabe adopted a policy of reconciliation and this earned his government recognition on the international platform. However, in Southern Africa apartheid South Africa was still the vanguard of capitalism and oppression, such that she posed a serious threat to the newly- born Zimbabwean nation. This necessitated Zimbabwe to position herself both in the region of Southern Africa and the African continent to counter potential instability emanating from within these areas. Irrespective of how the international community viewed the country's foreign policy, Zimbabwe has continued to influence regional, continental and world geo-politics, especially on behalf of the Third World. This raises a question, why as a result of its foreign policy, the country is now regarded as a pariah state, especially by some Western countries which used to applaud its political economic policies soon after independence. Therefore, this study argues that the political economy of Zimbabwe had a far-reaching bearing on its foreign policy. For this reason the problem necessitates an investigation of Zimbabwe's foreign policy perspectives in Southern Africa since the turn of the 1990s. Two main theories, namely Realism and Afro-centrism, inform the study as an attempt to understand Zimbabwe's foreign policy paradigm shift and perhaps provide answers to the objectives raised. The research therefore employs a qualitative approach, where the conceptual nature of the study into the foreign policy of Zimbabwe is largely desktop research. However the nature of the study will also require that oral interviews be conducted to substantiate some of the arguments advanced.

**Key Words:** Zimbabwe, foreign policy, Cold War set up, Pan-Africanism, political crisis, Southern Africa, Regional solidarity, post 2000 period