

Zimbabwe's International Relations

Zimbabwe is a state that has undergone significant ruptures in its domestic and international politics in recent years. This book explores how Zimbabwean citizens have, under difficult circumstances, reconstructed ideas of their state by imagining the wider world. Unlike other work on international relations, which tends to focus on the state level, this book is based on the accounts of ordinary people. Drawing on interviews with more than two hundred Zimbabweans, collected over three years, Gallagher explores how citizens draw on emotional responses to the international to find and construct different 'others'. While this unique and compelling read will appeal to those researching Zimbabwe, Gallagher's wider conclusions will interest those studying and advancing the broader theoretical debates of international relations.

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Fantasy, Reality and the Making of the State

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This book is dedicated to the memory of Nancy Chivavaya.



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Preface

This is a book about how citizens 'make their state' by imagining and engaging with the wider world. It is about International Relations (IR), but it focuses on citizens rather than on elites, and on emotions such as desire and aggression rather than interests. It is also a book that attempts to make general points about international relations by looking at Zimbabwe, which, as an African country, is more often treated as able only to offer a peripheral, reflective or alternative contribution to IR. In this book, what Zimbabweans feel about themselves in relation to the wider world forms the basis for creating understanding of how IR works.

This book goes to press in the wake of the British decision to leave the European Union. Much of the Brexit discussion has focused on the idea of British sovereignty: its independence, autonomy, control and identity. This idea of sovereignty rests on a fantasy of autonomous selfhood, something that emerged as a bedrock of European thought during the Enlightenment (Taylor, 1989). It established the notion of individual self-containment, which then underwrote all sorts of assumptions in IR about how state-selves interact with each other as ready-made entities. This particular idea of how states emerge and behave in the world became the normal. States which came about as a result of decolonisation – including most African states – were seen as abnormal. Their perceived deficiencies – dependence on external support, or lack of inherent coherence and popular resonance, for example – were understood as due to the complications of their unconventional births.

So what happens if one begins to look at IR from this 'abnormal' perspective? Inayatullah and Blaney suggest that views from the margins are better at uncovering 'the denied and recessive aspects of self' (2004: 219). In Zimbabwe's case marginality would be a symptom of not just colonial legacies but of a protracted and painful period of economic and political chaos that has exposed particularly raw



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understandings of who people are in relation to their world. Zimbabweans are in a good position to think about 'denied and recessive aspects of self'.

Crucially, their story begins with the international: it is by understanding the collective selfhood within the international context that the state is made. That citizens of a post-colonial country should grasp this is unsurprising. Theirs is a story in which the state clearly emerges through relationships – colonial and post-colonial relationships in particular – rather than seeming to pre-exist them. Yet the way Zimbabweans make their state highlights how they use the international in creative and complex ways. A distinctive sense of Zimbabweanness emerges from a web of international relationships; it is not dominated or subsumed by them.

This, it seems to me, is not a peculiar way to realise selfhood, but one that echoes the relational nature of who we are as individuals and who we are as collectives. What is uncovered is not an 'abnormal', post-colonial condition, but insight into what makes all states. Ideas about vulnerability and dependence do emerge. But they are not passive or purely reactive; they are part of creative processes of the construction of a selfhood that is brought about through relationships. This is an understanding of selfhood that gets us beyond the fantasy omnipotence about independence, autonomy and control – although such fantasies can play their part, too. What Zimbabwean understandings of the making of themselves in relation to other states suggest to IR is that sovereignty, or selfhood, does not create relationships, but emerges through them.

I am grateful to all the Zimbabweans who helped me and talked to me about their country. In particular, I would like to thank Dido, and all the family, who made my visits so much fun; Arthur and Clara, for their hospitality, their stories and generous patience with my questions; Precious, Rodrick and Winos, for long conversations and generous help finding people to interview; Eric, for his kindness and care; and Lucia, for reconnecting me with old friends and haunts. Most of all, thanks to Vimbai, who took me to the most unlikely places, got me out of trouble and was an inspiration and mentor throughout the whole research project.

As I developed the writing, I received help from many colleagues and students who read early drafts, commented on conference papers and discussed research findings. In particular, I would like to thank Teresa



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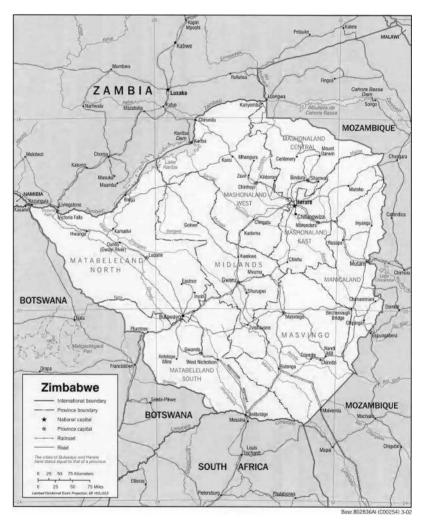
Almeida Cravo, Jonathan Fisher and Marie Gibert from the Africa Research Group; Michael Bacon, Danielle Beswick, Christina Boswell, Stephen Chan, Carl Death, Langton Miriyoga, Lara Nettelfield, Laura Routley and, in particular, Peter Vale. I presented versions of this work along the way, and I am particularly grateful to David Harris and members of the Centre for African Studies in Bradford; Meera Sabaratnam, Tom Young and members of the SOAS Department of International Politics; and my own Department of Politics and International Relations at Royal Holloway for their helpful questioning and engagement with the work. I thank students from my Africa classes at Royal Holloway who pushed me to think more about Zimbabwe in relation to the rest of the African continent.

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Financial support for fieldwork came from the British Academy Leverhulme Trust and Sir Ernest Cassel Educational Trust. Early articulations of parts of the argument in this book have appeared in publication elsewhere. The argument about recognition is discussed in 'Creating a State: A Kleinian Reading of Recognition in Zimbabwe's Regional Relationships', European Journal of International Relations: 1–24, 2015, DOI: 10.1177/1354066115588204. Some of the empirical findings contained in Chapter 6 featured in 'The Battle for Zimbabwe, 2013: From Polarisation to Ambivalence', Journal of Modern African Studies, 2015, 53(1): 27–49. And some of the ideas explored in the postscript were first aired in 'Interviews as Catastrophic Encounters: Loss and Loneliness in IR Research', International Studies Perspectives, 2015, DOI: 10.1111/insp.12099. Finally, early ideas about Britain as the 'good state' appeared in 'Good State, Bad State: Loss and Longing in Postcolonial Zimbabwe', in: Ebenezer Obadare (ed.), The Handbook of African Civil Society (Springer, 2013).



Map of Zimbabwe

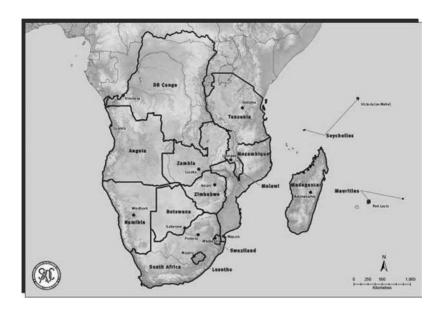


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Map of the SADC Region





Acronyms

AU African Union

ESAP Economic Structural Adjustment Programme

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GNU Government of National Unity HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus

IG Inclusive Government

IMF International Monetary Fund

IR International Relations

MDC-M Movement for Democratic Change – Mutambara MDC-N Movement for Democratic Change – Ncube MDC-T Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai

MP Member of Parliament

NGO Non-Governmental Organisation

SADC Southern African Development Community
UDI Universal Declaration of Independence

UK United Kingdom US United States

ZANLA Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army

ZANU Zimbabwe African National Union

ZANU-PF Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front

ZAPU Zimbabwe African People's UnionZCTU Zimbabwe Congress of Trade UnionsZEC Zimbabwe Electoral Commission

ZIPRA Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

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