



## *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.

JULIA GALLAGHER is Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations at Royal Holloway, University of London. She is the author of *Britain and Africa under Blair: In Pursuit of the Good State* (2011), editor of *Images of Africa: Creation, Negotiation and Subversion* (2015), and co-author of *Why Mugabe Won: The 2013 Elections in Zimbabwe and their Aftermath* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

# Zimbabwe's International Relations

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

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. There 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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Finally, I thank Jill, Jonathan, Sophie and Christina for all piling in at the end to help with the title; and Shaun, Shona and Connie who got the best and worst bits of me during the whole process, and helped keep it all together.

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Map of Zimbabwe



Credit: University of Texas Libraries

*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 Union
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army