The impact of the Look East Policy on Zimbabwe’s economy from 2000-2012: The case of China-Zimbabwe relations

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ABSTRACT

Between the years 2000-2009, Zimbabwe experienced its worst socio-economic and political challenges in its post-independence history. The period saw a spiral downfall of the economy in the midst of an increasingly unstable political landscape. As a result of the deteriorating economic environment and a worsening human rights record, Zimbabwe’s traditional aid donors and traditional partners from the west began to disengage from the country, withdrawing their commercial and political support. In the midst of Western isolation and sanctions, China increased its stakes in Zimbabwe, China does not interfere in her partner’s domestic affairs hence she snubbed Western calls to put pressure on the Zimbabwe government for political and economic reforms. Thus China offered both economic and political support in various forms to the Mugabe administration, China provided Zimbabwe with several trading arrangements, aid, loans and investments. The study explains the post-2000 nature of China’s increased engagements with Zimbabwe and explores the impact it had on the economy resulting from close interaction. The study revealed that China’s support was important to bail out the Zimbabwe government against Western sanctions despite failing short of preventing the deterioration of the country’s political and economic situation.