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**The Successes and Challenges of Zimbabwe's Economic Diplomacy since
2017**

By

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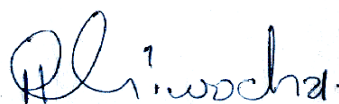
ABSTRACT

This study examines the successes and challenges of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since the 2017 political transition. It assesses how the government's re-engagement agenda, expressed through the "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" policy, Vision 2030, NDS1, investment promotion, regional integration and renewed engagement with international financial institutions, has influenced foreign direct investment, trade performance and international economic relations. The study is located within economic diplomacy theory, institutional theory and political economy perspectives, which together show that diplomatic outreach produces durable economic outcomes only when supported by domestic policy coherence, macroeconomic stability and institutional credibility. Methodologically, the study adopted an interpretivist qualitative case-study design, using semi-structured interviews with twelve key informants from government, diplomacy, business, academia and international organisations, supported by document analysis of policy, investment and macroeconomic reports. The findings indicate that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy has achieved important symbolic and relational successes, particularly by improving international visibility, reopening diplomatic channels, promoting investment opportunities, and strengthening participation in SADC and AfCFTA frameworks. However, these gains have not translated into sustained foreign direct investment, broad export expansion or strong investor confidence. Currency volatility, debt arrears, policy inconsistency, weak coordination, infrastructure constraints, governance concerns and limited productive capacity continue to undermine diplomatic efforts. The study concludes that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy has created useful external opportunities, but its effectiveness remains constrained by domestic structural weaknesses. It recommends stronger institutional coordination, credible macroeconomic reforms, export diversification, infrastructure improvement and policy consistency to convert diplomatic engagement into measurable economic transformation.

DECLARATION

I, Hannington Chiwocha (B250323A), hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own research and study, except to the extent indicated in the acknowledgements and references included in the body of the paper, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any other university.

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Signature: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, whose unwavering support, sacrifices, and belief in the power of education have been the foundation upon which this academic journey was built. Your encouragement, resilience, and the values you instilled in me have shaped not only this work but the person I have become. Thank you for teaching me that perseverance and hard work are the keys to overcoming any obstacle.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MSc	Master of Science
NDS1	National Development Strategy 1
NDS2	National Development Strategy 2
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
ZIDA	Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency
ZimTrade	Zimbabwe National Trade Development and Promotion Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

This chapter introduces the study's investigation into Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since the 2017 political transition, providing a comprehensive foundation for understanding how foreign policy reforms have been leveraged to achieve domestic economic transformation. The chapter begins by establishing the background context of Zimbabwe's shift from international isolation to proactive re-engagement under the "Zimbabwe Is Open for Business" initiative, situating this within broader continental and global trends in economic diplomacy. Following this background, the chapter articulates the purpose of the study and presents a clear statement of the problem, highlighting the persistent gap between diplomatic ambitions and tangible economic outcomes despite policy reforms. The chapter subsequently outlines the study's specific objectives and corresponding research questions, which focus on assessing FDI inflows, institutional constraints, and government measures implemented between 2017 and 2026. The justification for undertaking this research is then presented, underscoring its scholarly and policy relevance at a time when Zimbabwe's development frameworks such as Vision 2030 and NDS1 hinge on successful diplomatic engagement. The chapter concludes by detailing the key assumptions underpinning the study, the temporal, geographical, and methodological delimitations that define its scope, and the limitations related to time, access, data subjectivity, and generalizability that must be acknowledged in interpreting the findings.

Economic diplomacy has grown to be a critical tool by which states relate foreign policy to trade, investment and financial collaboration. Modern literature suggests that economic diplomacy has gone beyond the traditional bargaining to include tactical involvement with

multilateral organizations, regional unions and even non-state actors (Okano-, Heijmans, 2021). It also helps governments to rebrand themselves in the context of world markets at work with changing capital flows and competition in geopolitics (Bergeijk & Moons, 2020). The author argues that the success of economic diplomacy lies not in external outreach, but also in internal policy coherence and institutional credibility (Sajadi 2025). On the continent of Africa, states have grown to rely on the international relations to find an opportunity to trade and receive foreign direct investment in competitive markets of the world (UNCTAD, 2024). Nevertheless, the results have been mixed with the structural shortcomings usually having a detrimental effect on the diplomatic will. Zimbabwe is no different as this wider continental trend is witnessed since 2017. With a new government in power since November 2017, the nation has assumed a new proactive foreign policy stance under the slogan Zimbabwe Is Open for Business (Mlambo & Zondi, 2021). This motto marked the conclusive change of isolation to re-integration into the international financial institutions and investors worldwide. The foreign-policy principle at the time of being a friend to everyone and an enemy to no-one was another principle reinforcing the idea of reestablishing relations in political lines (Musavengane & Simatele, 2022). The result of these philosophical changes was to make economic diplomacy a major tool in the process of regaining credibility and recovery of growth. Practically, the government sought new talks with IMF and the World Bank as it enticed investors in the mining and agricultural sectors (IMF, 2025). Despite the fact that the reported inflows to mining were on the rise between 2018 and 2022, the macroeconomic instability affected investor confidence (World Bank, 2025). This indicates that diplomatic repositioning in itself cannot be a sure way of ensuring long-term economic benefits.

The change in ideology that took place after 2017 was also institutionalised using national development frameworks that made economic diplomacy the centre of economic

recovery. Vision 2030 identified the desired objective to convert Zimbabwe into an upper-middle-income country, an objective that required more trade and capital inflow coupled with better foreign relations (IMF, 2025). This long-term vision was converted into policy priorities of the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) 2021-2025, which included the development of exports, the payment of debt, and the recovery of the sector of the private (UNCTAD, 2024). NDS1 has focused on re-engagement, promotion of investment, and policy reforms as the key pillars to economic revival. These reforms are bound to be strengthened by NDS2 which will give impetus to regional integration efforts. In turn, economic diplomacy turned out to be not only a foreign-policy strategy but also one of the development strategies in accordance with Vision 2030. According to Musavengane and Simatele (2022), cooperation in the region that was a part of this strategic alignment was viewed in the context of SADC and AfCFTA cooperation frameworks. According to Okano-Heijmans (2021), diplomatic outreach pegging itself on national development plans promotes credibility in the policies. However, structural issues like currency volatility and debt burden have limited the actualisation of these objectives (World Bank, 2025). Even though export receipts have been enhanced in specific areas, there is still unequal trade performance. Such conflict between ambition and structural limitations defines the context of the current study. Engaging the placement of the economic diplomacy of Zimbabwe in its respective philosophies and development plans, the paper offers a substantiated insight into how post-2017 reforms tried to align foreign policy with the national transformation objectives.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy under the post-2017 New Dispensation on political shifts, foreign direct investment (FDI), trade relations, economic connectivity, and macroeconomic stability.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Since the adoption of the New Dispensation in 2017, Zimbabwe has pursued economic diplomacy as a strategy to rebuild international relations, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), expand trade, and support economic recovery. Despite increased diplomatic engagement with international partners and financial institutions, the anticipated improvements in investment inflows, trade performance, and economic growth have remained below expectations (IMF, 2025). Persistent macroeconomic instability, exchange rate volatility, governance challenges, and policy inconsistencies have continued to undermine investor confidence and limit the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy efforts (World Bank, 2025).

Although several studies have examined Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy, they have largely focused on specific issues such as policy inconsistency, governance challenges, or institutional weaknesses in isolation. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence that comprehensively evaluates how Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy has influenced political shifts, foreign direct investment, trade relations, economic connectivity, and macroeconomic stability under the post-2017 New Dispensation (Musavengane & Simatele, 2022). Furthermore, existing studies have paid limited attention to the perspectives of key stakeholders involved in implementing and benefiting from economic diplomacy, resulting in an incomplete understanding of the factors affecting its effectiveness.

This lack of comprehensive evidence makes it difficult for policymakers to determine whether Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy has achieved its intended objectives, identify the structural and institutional barriers limiting its success, and formulate evidence-based strategies to improve future diplomatic and economic outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to address

this knowledge gap by examining the impact of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy on political transformation, investment, trade, economic connectivity, and macroeconomic stability through the perspectives of key stakeholders.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To explore stakeholders' perceptions of the contribution of economic diplomacy to foreign direct investment inflows and trade performance in Zimbabwe between 2017 and 2025.
2. To examine the institutional, policy, and structural factors influencing the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy between 2017 and 2025.
3. To explore stakeholders' perspectives on the measures implemented by the Government of Zimbabwe to promote economic diplomacy and how these measures have influenced international economic relations between 2017 and 2025.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How has economic diplomacy influenced foreign direct investment inflows and trade performance in Zimbabwe between 2017 and 2025?
2. What institutional, policy, and structural factors have influenced the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy between 2017 and 2025?
3. How have the measures implemented by the Government of Zimbabwe to promote economic diplomacy influenced the country's international economic relations between 2017 and 2025?

1.6 Assumptions

1. The study assumes that the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since 2017 is influenced by the interaction between diplomatic strategies, domestic institutional frameworks, and macroeconomic conditions.
2. It assumes that foreign direct investment, trade performance, and investor confidence are reasonable indicators of the outcomes of economic diplomacy.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study will be significant to several stakeholders by providing a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since the introduction of the New Dispensation in 2017.

Government of Zimbabwe: The findings will provide policymakers with evidence on the effectiveness of economic diplomacy in promoting foreign direct investment, trade, and international economic relations. The study will also identify institutional and policy gaps that can inform the formulation of strategies to strengthen economic diplomacy and support the achievement of Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade: The study will assist diplomats and government officials in evaluating the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's diplomatic engagements and identifying approaches that can improve trade promotion, investment attraction, and international partnerships.

Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA) and Other Investment Promotion Agencies: The findings will provide insights into factors influencing investor confidence and investment promotion efforts, enabling these institutions to develop more

effective investment attraction strategies and improve Zimbabwe's competitiveness as an investment destination.

Private Sector and Business Community: Local and international investors, business associations, and exporters will benefit from a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy. The study may help businesses make informed investment and trade decisions while highlighting areas requiring policy improvement.

Regional and International Development Partners: Organisations such as regional economic communities, development agencies, and international financial institutions will gain a deeper understanding of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy and the structural factors affecting economic cooperation, thereby supporting evidence-based engagement with the country.

Academic Researchers and Students: The study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on economic diplomacy by providing qualitative evidence on Zimbabwe's post-2017 experience. It will also serve as a valuable reference for future studies in international relations, diplomacy, public policy, economics, and development studies.

Future Policymakers and Scholars: The study will identify areas requiring further research and contribute to policy debates on strengthening economic diplomacy in developing economies, thereby supporting the design of more effective diplomatic and economic development strategies.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study is delimited to an assessment of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy under the post-2017 New Dispensation, with particular emphasis on its influence on foreign direct investment (FDI), trade relations, international economic relations, and the institutional, policy, and structural factors affecting its effectiveness. The study focuses on the period from 2017 to 2025, as this period marks the introduction of the "Zimbabwe Is Open for Business" policy and encompasses the implementation of key national development frameworks, including Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1). Geographically, the research is confined to Zimbabwe, although it considers the country's interactions with regional and international partners where these are relevant to economic diplomacy. The study is limited to the perspectives of key stakeholders involved in economic diplomacy, including government policymakers, diplomats, business leaders, officials from investment promotion agencies, and representatives of international financial institutions. Furthermore, the study adopts a qualitative research approach, relying on interviews and document analysis to explore stakeholders' experiences and perceptions rather than measuring the statistical impact of economic diplomacy.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The study may encounter several limitations during the research process. First, access to senior government officials, diplomats, and representatives of international organisations may be limited because of their demanding schedules and the sensitive nature of issues relating to economic diplomacy. To address this challenge, the researcher will seek appointments well in advance, maintain flexibility in scheduling interviews, and, where necessary, interview other knowledgeable stakeholders with relevant expertise. Second, because the study relies on qualitative interviews, participants may provide subjective opinions or withhold information

due to political or institutional sensitivities. To minimise this limitation, the researcher will assure participants of confidentiality and anonymity, encourage honest responses, and triangulate interview findings with information obtained from official documents and published reports. Finally, the findings of the study may not be generalisable to other countries because they are based on Zimbabwe's unique political, economic, and institutional context. However, providing rich descriptions of the research context and methodology will enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar settings.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

To ensure clarity and conceptual consistency throughout this study, the following key terms are defined as they apply specifically to the context of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy and post-2017 reform agenda. These definitions are distinct from the core terminologies embedded in the dissertation title and focus instead on the operational and analytical concepts that underpin the research.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): This refers to cross-border investment made by a resident entity in one economy with the objective of establishing a lasting interest in an enterprise resident in another economy, typically involving significant managerial influence or control over the investee firm (UNCTAD, 2024). In the Zimbabwean context, FDI is measured through capital inflows into sectors such as mining, agriculture, manufacturing, and services, and serves as a primary indicator of the effectiveness of economic diplomacy in attracting external capital.

Macroeconomic Stability: This denotes a condition in which an economy exhibits relative price stability, sustainable fiscal and current account balances, manageable levels of public debt, and a predictable exchange rate environment that together foster conducive

conditions for investment and economic growth (World Bank, 2025). For Zimbabwe, macroeconomic stability has been a persistent challenge, with currency volatility and inflationary pressures undermining the credibility of diplomatic overtures since 2017.

Institutional Credibility: This refers to the degree of trust, legitimacy, and predictability that domestic public institutions command among both domestic and international stakeholders, reflecting their capacity to enforce contracts, uphold the rule of law, and implement policies consistently over time (Sajadi, 2025). In the study, institutional credibility is examined as a critical mediating factor that determines whether Zimbabwe's diplomatic signals translate into tangible economic commitments from investors and multilateral partners.

Investor Confidence: This is defined as the collective sentiment and expectation of investors regarding the future profitability, security, and stability of their investments in a given host country, shaped by factors such as policy predictability, legal protections, political risk assessments, and macroeconomic indicators (Bergeijk & Moons, 2020). The study treats investor confidence as both an outcome of effective economic diplomacy and a prerequisite for sustained FDI inflows and trade expansion.

Structural Constraints: These refer to deeply embedded economic, institutional, and infrastructural barriers that limit a country's productive capacity, competitiveness, and responsiveness to policy reforms, including debt overhang, currency distortions, obsolete industrial infrastructure, and skill shortages (Okano-Heijmans, 2021). In Zimbabwe's case, structural constraints are identified as the primary obstacles that have diminished the impact of diplomatic re-engagement efforts between 2017 and 2025.

Policy Coherence: This denotes the extent to which different policy domains such as trade, investment, fiscal, monetary, and foreign policy are aligned and mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory or fragmented, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of government interventions (Musavengane & Simatele, 2022). The study examines policy coherence as a critical determinant of whether Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy can overcome institutional fragmentation and deliver sustainable development outcomes.

1.11 Dissertation Outline

This dissertation is organised into five distinct but interconnected chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive analysis of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since the 2017 political transition. The structure follows a logical progression from theoretical and contextual grounding through methodological design, empirical investigation, and finally to synthesis and policy recommendations.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter provides the foundational framework for the entire study. It presents the background context of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy post-2017, articulates the statement of the problem, and outlines the purpose, objectives, and research questions that guide the inquiry. The chapter further justifies the study's scholarly and policy relevance, states the key assumptions, delineates the temporal, geographical, and methodological delimitations, acknowledges the inherent limitations, defines essential operational terms, and concludes with this dissertation outline, thereby establishing the roadmap for the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter offers a comprehensive review of theoretical and empirical literature on economic diplomacy, examining its evolution from traditional state-centric bargaining to contemporary engagement with multilateral institutions, regional blocs, and non-state actors. It reviews conceptual frameworks on the relationship between diplomatic outreach and economic outcomes, analyses the African and Southern African context of economic diplomacy, and specifically surveys Zimbabwe's diplomatic and economic history leading up to 2017. The chapter also reviews empirical studies on FDI determinants, trade facilitation, and institutional reforms, culminating in the identification of the research gap that this study seeks to address and the development of an analytical framework.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter details the methodological approach adopted to address the research questions. It describes the qualitative research design, justifying the choice of semi-structured interviews and document analysis as primary data collection methods. The chapter outlines the target population, sampling strategies, data collection instruments, and procedures for gaining access to key informants including policymakers, diplomats, business leaders, and international financial institution representatives. It also discusses data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, trustworthiness measures, and the triangulation strategies employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis, and Findings

This chapter presents the empirical data gathered from interviews and documentary sources, organised thematically in alignment with the three research objectives. It analyses stakeholder perspectives on the extent to which FDI inflows and trade performance have improved as a result of economic diplomacy since 2017, examines the institutional, policy, and

structural factors influencing diplomatic effectiveness, and evaluates the specific measures implemented by the Zimbabwean government to promote economic engagement. The chapter provides rich qualitative evidence, including direct quotations and documentary extracts, while synthesising patterns, convergences, and divergences across participant responses.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and Areas for Further Research

This concluding chapter synthesises the key findings from Chapter Four, drawing evidence-based conclusions that directly respond to each research question. It discusses the theoretical and policy implications of the findings, reflecting on how Zimbabwe's experience contributes to the broader literature on economic diplomacy in developing and transitional economies. The chapter offers a set of actionable policy recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy, addressing structural constraints, and aligning diplomatic strategies with national development aspirations. Finally, it acknowledges the study's limitations, suggests avenues for future research, and reflects on the overall contribution of the dissertation to academic knowledge and policy discourse.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy under the post-2017 New Dispensation. It begins by discussing the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study, followed by a review of the concept of economic diplomacy and its evolution in international relations. The chapter further examines the relationship between economic diplomacy and foreign direct investment, Zimbabwe's post-2017 economic diplomacy strategy, regional economic diplomacy and integration, and lessons from selected emerging economies. It also presents the conceptual framework that guides the study and identifies gaps in the existing literature that justify the need for the current research. The chapter provides the theoretical and empirical foundation upon which the study is based.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning Economic Diplomacy

2.2.1 Economic Diplomacy Theory

Economic diplomacy theory focuses on the ways in which states combine economic and diplomatic means to secure specific objectives such as the expansion of trade and the acquisition of foreign investment. Okano-Heijmans (2021) explains that the theory considers the integration of diplomacy, economics, and the global power hierarchy. Economic diplomacy uses both informal and formal channels. Formal channels refer to (for instance) treaties and informal channels refer to negotiations and business relations i.e., the 'informal economy' (Bergerijk & Moons, 2020). A further, and more contemporary, perspective on economic diplomacy is, as Sajadi (2025) describes, the integration of financial, commercial, and

geopolitical dimensions into one cohesive whole for the creation of a country's foreign policy. In this regard, for Zimbabwe, this aids in establishing the country's economic diplomacy framework post-2017, when economic diplomacy centred on restoring Zimbabwe's economic relations with other nations. Zimbabwe's 'Open for Business' policy, as Ndakaripa (2020) posits, reflects the country's effort at integration of its foreign policy with its economically motivated foreign policy. Such policies, however, achieve their objectives when there is alignment between the country's diplomatic objectives and the situation on the ground; this, however, continues to be the case in Zimbabwe.

The theory posits that economic diplomacy is more than just external activities; it also includes internal preparedness. Musavengane and Simatele (2022) assert that before a country venture into diplomatic activities, there should be sufficient internal frameworks. As stated by Mlambo and Zondi (2021), Zimbabwe's re-engagement strategy is thwarted by poor governance and policy inconsistencies. Melber and Southall (2021) contended that Zimbabwe's foreign policy demonstrates the relationship between politics and economics, even if they are often conflicting. In the opinion of Melber and Southall (2021), Zimbabwe's Foreign policy is a resultant of the interplay of the politics and economics, which tend to be in contradiction with each other. Therefore, it means that while diplomatic relations may foster a lot of activities, economic activities may not be a result of that. The theory illustrates that for a country to be successful in economic diplomacy; there should be synergy between the domestic and external policies and that is the dilemma Zimbabwe is facing.

2.2.2 Institutional Theory and Policy Coherence

The role of governance and policymaking in economic diplomacy is captured by institutional theory. Bryman (2021) states that the rules, norms, and expectations of institutions

shape what decisions are made. Creswell & Creswell, (2022) argue that institutions that are unified and accountable in their processes are able to implement policies more effectively. Economic diplomacy requires stable policy frameworks at the domestic level. Ganda (2020) attributes the inconsistent policies that led to the decline of the Zimbabwean economy and the loss of confidence by international investors to policy inconsistency. Mlambo and Zondi (2021) state that Zimbabwe's failure to re-engage with the international community is attributed to poor institutional coordination. The above mentioned are evidence that the strength of institutions is of great significance when it comes to economic diplomacy.

Actors of the state need institutional consistency to achieve the economic objectives. Musavengane and Simatele (2022) state that with in Zimbabwean economic diplomacy, there is a need for the collaboration of the ministries of commerce, finance, and foreign affairs. World Bank (2025) states that due to Zimbabwe's changing policies, there is a loss of confidence amongst investors. Kabonga (2022) states that a legislative framework is necessary to facilitate economic governance and to establish confidence amongst the public. Murombo (2022) states that the lack of transparency in the mining industry is an obstacle to the implementation of policies. These challenges are a demonstration that weak institutions undermine economic diplomacy. Zimbabwe's inconsistent diplomacy is best understood using institutional theory. The explanation to the mixed results of Zimbabwe's diplomacy in the international community is provided by institutional theory.

2.2.3 Political Economy Perspectives

The fusion of politics and economics in their domains of interconnectedness and support is further emphasized in Zimbabwe and can be seen in the circumstances of economic diplomacy. Zimbabwe's political system has an impact on her economic policies and her

relations with the outside world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ruhanya, 2020). As per Helliker and Murisa (2020), the previous system of governance has an impact on the economic choices a country makes. Some authors (Ndakaripa, 2021) opine contrary to the belief held in the majority circles that the economic challenges being faced by Zimbabwe is as a result of the sanctions imposed on the country. In their own way, the internal policy choices of the country do count. As sanctions are an impediment to the economics and diplomacy of a country, Johnny (2024) is of the belief that the economic and diplomatic performance of Zimbabwe is further complicated by sanctions. Against this background, it is important to understand economic diplomacy in the context of politics.

Economic diplomacy as a subfield of political economy concerns itself with the evolution and continuity of systems under examination. For example, as Rusero (2024) puts it, Zimbabwe's foreign policy towards the Southern African Development Community (SADC) results from a confluence of its economic and political interests. Thus, Zimbabwe's objectives are a function of regional power shifts and strategic geo-political objectives. Nkomo (2022) is of the view that Zimbabwe's diplomacy toward its immediate neighbors is undergirded by the pursuit of power and hegemony. Furthermore, as Batsani-Ncube (2025) notes, the relationship between Africa and China is a case of economic and political or strategy interdependence and exemplifies the hybrid of economic diplomacy and political strategy.

2.2.4 Stakeholder and Perception-Based Approaches

Stakeholders and perceptions approaches focus on each actor's understanding and response to economic diplomacy initiatives. Using a stakeholder perspective, as Okeke et al. (2023) describe, shows the qualitative aspects of the impacts of a policy and the more nuanced ways that qualitative impacts matter over more traditional quantitative measures. Musavengane

and Simatele (2022) state that while a stable policy and governing environment exists, the perception of/in the policy and governing environment can shape/influence the confidence of investors. IMF reports (2025) state that even with reforms, negative perception can act as a barrier to the potential of reforms to increase investments. According to Gwakwara and Niyitunga (2024), the perception of/in the policies and governance of a country can affect the standard of diplomatic relations the country holds with other countries. These different perceptions show that economic diplomacy is as much about the perceptions as it is about the initiatives. Thus, perceptions of stakeholders are meant to shape the economic diplomacy initiatives of Zimbabwe. Perceptions shape the economic results of the diplomatic efforts.

2.3 Conceptualising Economic Diplomacy

2.3.1 Evolution of Economic Diplomacy in International Relations

The first diplomacy focused on political and security aspects and downplayed the economic ones, Okano-Heijmans (2021). Countries understood trade, investment, and finance as components of national power and advancement. Bergeijk and Moons (2020) claim the interconnectedness of states brought about by globalisation makes economic relations imperative. Foreign policy has shifted to incorporate economic objectives such as the pursuit of market and investment opportunities, marketing and investment opportunities, as stated by Sajadi (2025) The post-colonial development constraints and economic integration of Africa encourage this shift. Economic diplomacy transforms not only the objectives but also the means that governments employ to achieve national goals in a globalised economy.

Economic diplomacy shifted focus for poorer states after the Cold War. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Ruhanya (2020) believe Zimbabwe's foreign policy after a period of ideological disputes should focus on economic cooperation and growth. Melber and Southall (2021) during

this time of policy re-engagement, states used economic cooperation and incentives to re-establish international relations. In 2017, Zimbabwe pragmatically attracted investments and restored global confidence and accelerated this shift. Ndakaripa (2020) states the “Zimbabwe is open for Business” policy is in line with the global economic diplomacy for national recovery trend. Helliker and Murisa (2020) warn the system of historical political and governance structures impacts the diplomatic strategy. Economic diplomacy will provide more options however; the local context will determine the outcome.

2.3.2 Definitional Debates: Trade Diplomacy, Commercial Diplomacy, and Economic Statecraft

The challenges of academic discipline, tourism, commercial, and economic statecraft are manifold and economic diplomacy is one of them. Okano-Heijmans (2021) points out that economic diplomacy consists of many activities that advance a nation’s economic interest abroad. Here, trade diplomacy is concerned with the negotiation of trade and accessibility of markets. While the commerce of state diplomacy is concerned with the facilitation of entrepreneurs and investors through diplomacy, Sajadi (2025) characterises the economic statecraft of a nation as using sanctions or rewards to manipulate a certain political situation. These variations signify that even though concepts overlap, their use in practice differs. In this case, the use of economic diplomacy with different definitions, and as a result different considerations, applies to the Zimbabwe case more than most.

In the case of Zimbabwe’s post-2017 diplomatic initiatives, and as Ndakaripa (2020) observes, definitional variations are relevant as Zimbabwe’s re-engagement policy attempts to attract foreign direct investments using commerce and commercial diplomacy. Mlambo and Zondi (2021) state that the Government has employed the use of bilateral relations to bypass

sanctions using economic statecraft. In her research, Gwakwara (2025) argues that through legislative cooperation, parliamentary diplomacy has now begun to encourage economic activity; Johnny (2024) argues that international sanctions impose economic diplomacy a dead end; therefore, the attempts are complicated. The Zimbabwean case has often exposed the shortcomings of different concepts; The shortcomings of the attempts are a testimony to the necessity to the understanding of economic diplomacy.

2.3.3 Instruments and Tools of Economic Diplomacy

Economic diplomacy abides by different strategies to fulfil a state's economic objectives internationally. Okano-Heijmans (2021) explains economic diplomacy as a triangulation of bilateral agreements, international negotiations, and the promotion of investments. Abundant literature cites the role of trade agreements and frameworks of regional integration in securing and liberalising market access and trade in zones of proximity (Bergeijk and Moons, 2020). According to UNCTAD (2024), it is crucial to consider structures like the African Continental Free Trade Area which aid in constructing regional economic integration for African states. Embassies focus on investors and partners to help them achieve these objectives. The combination of these instruments with domestic economic policies is when they are most effective.

Economic prospects and challenges describe Zimbabwe's adoption of these instruments. The government's re-engagement strategy, highlighted bilateral investment treaties and international financial institutions, as pointed out by Mlambo and Zondi (2021). According to Ndakaripa (2020), mining investment promotion policy sparked Zimbabwe's renewed interest. In Murombo (2022), mining governance shows where Zimbabwe should focus to build investors' confidence. From Caplow and Festic (2025), Zimbabwe's

macroeconomic instability is a barrier to that. They observed the gap Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy and along a continuum of Zimbabwe's economic performance, the diplomacy was a result of the integrated divergent elements of economic diplomacy and the domestic environment.

2.4 Economic Diplomacy and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

2.4.1 Determinants of FDI in Emerging Economies

Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) are affected by economic, institutional, and geopolitical factors. UNCTAD states (2024) that FDI is also determined by market size, availability of macroeconomic stability, and natural resources. In Zimbabwe, the FDI flow is once again determined by the country's minerals, the mining industry and the agriculture industry are especially appealing to foreign investors (Maune et al., 2023). Unfortunately, Zimbabwe is experiencing high levels of inflation and volatile currency, which causes macroeconomic conditions to be a significant hindrance to would-be investors (World Bank, 2025). In addition to inflation and unstable exchange rates, high inflation creates uncertainty which deters investment for the long term (IMF, 2025).

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is a double-edged sword for developing countries, especially those undergoing a transition from a command and control economy. Chakawa (2023) lists a number of structural, operational and tactical challenges impacting a developing economy's governance and capacity to attract foreign direct investment. Chakawa (2023) also points to a deficiency in analysis between the structural and operational governance challenges and the propensity of foreign investors to invest in the developing economy. Chakawa (2023) posits that for a developing country to host foreign direct investments (FDI), it needs to address a number of internal tactical challenges to establish multilateral (or bilateral) trade (or

investment) relations with a developed country. Musavengane & Simatele (2022) claimed that Zimbabwe has the potential to benefit from establishing classical diplomatic systems.

2.4.2 Role of Diplomatic Engagement in Attracting FDI

The Driving Economic Diplomacy Report (2020) formally acknowledges the impact of the economic diplomacy exercised by Zimbabwe, particularly with the “Zimbabwe is Open For Business” initiative instituted in 2017. This initiative marked the first time Zimbabwe attempted to innovate or re-align its foreign diplomacy for the better. This strategy positioned Zimbabwe in the Southern African region with the aim of attracting investors due to the regions' rich natural resources. Ideally, this campaign, along with the instituted economic diplomacy, would achieve the desired foreign direct investment, particularly within the spheres of mining, agriculture, and infrastructure (Batsani-Ncube, 2025).

Regardless of the diplomatic attempts, the world Zimbabwe is in economically has not been too glorious. Interest that foreign investors show is equally as short-lived. The World Bank (2025) acknowledges the improvement regarding foreign investments within the borders of Zimbabwe, but with a caveat stating that “foreign direct investments within the borders of Zimbabwe and foreign investments in Zimbabwe remain a paradox due to the unstable economic governance and a recurrent unstable economy in Zimbabwe”. Michael Melber and Southhall (2021) world is cautious. Whether within the borders of Zimbabwe or outside the borders of Zimbabwe, the world is Zimbabwe is a world that has been in a state of economic instability. The Zimbabwean economy is, and has been, a world with an unstable economic environment, and for that reason, an economically poor world. The Zimbabwean economy has, and continues to, illustrate a realm of poor control of inflation and currency management which has resulted in an economically poor world to the investors (IMF 2025).

Zimbabwe's diplomatic initiatives have successfully amassed some degree of international recognition. However, this international recognition will have minimal impact without any economic reforms. Having an international recognition of a country without a positive international recognition of its policies in its domestic marketplace will mean that country has a deteriorating economy. The positive international recognition in its economy means that country will have to develop a positive international recognition of its economy through economically effective diplomatic engagements with economically effective investor nations. From this positive engagement, that country will have to make sure that its domestic marketplace policies go along with developing its domestic marketplace policies to improve its economy by integrating its economy to that of the world. From this positive economic engagement, the country will have to maintain a policy and make economic reforms to improve the economy of the country. Therefore, the economic reforms that will maintain the economic engagement with investor nations will not transform the economy of the country if the investor nations are economically effective and the domestic marketplace policies of that country do not undergo positive changes to improve the economy of that country.

2.5 Zimbabwe's Economic Diplomacy Strategy (Post-2017)

After the political changes that took place in Zimbabwe in 2017, the authorities in Zimbabwe refocused efforts at reviving integration initiatives of the global economy that had been stalled. As one of the initiatives, Zimbabwe's new campaign, 'Zimbabwe is Open for Business', is intended to encourage foreign investment flows to Zimbabwe (Mlambo & Zondi, 2021). Zimbabwe's new foreign policy strategy aims to attract potential investors by moving from the previous government's policy of self isolation. Even with the open door policy, Zimbabwe's enduring economic problems, especially the financial problems, inflation, and currency instability, continue to erode the success of self isolation (Helliker & Murisa, 2020).

Restoring relationships with international financial systems, especially with the World Bank and IMF, is one part of the financial and economic strategy of Zimbabwe. A commitment to the IMF has improved Zimbabwe's credit rating and has led to some debt reconciliations (IMF, 2025). According to Mateko et al., (2025) Zimbabwe's enduring debt crisis has been characterized by a loss of trust by both Zimbabwean has been described. In losing trust, the World Bank (2025) concurs.

International Relations Diplomacy has led to improved, especially in the agricultural and mining sectors (Ndakaripa, 2020). The World Bank (2025) adds, ‘No amount of cross-border investment, in the absence of improved domestic policy and legal frameworks, will lead to economic stability in a country.’ Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy is good, however, it would be even better if it was paired with international diplomacy and integrated with the economic policy frameworks structural which are the root causes of the country’s economic challenges.

2.6 Regional Economic Diplomacy and Integration

Regional economic diplomacy is important for Zimbabwe because it will strengthen economic relations and diplomatic ties with other regions through trade and investment. Zimbabwe's participation in regional trade organizations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will allow Zimbabwe to gain greater access to trade markets and to lower trade restrictions (Musavengane & Simatele, 2022). SADC, especially Zimbabwe, can strengthen its multilateral trade relations with other countries through trade agreements (Rusero, 2024) Additionally, UNCTAD (2024) reports that Zimbabwe will be able to trade more with Africa and meet its

economic requirements through the diversification of African trade and the cooperative regional trade in Africa's trade.

Zimbabwe still faces certain obstacles resulting from economic and governance challenges that affect the potential for the country's economic engagement with SADC, as stated by Melber and Southall (2021). Though the World Bank (2025) points out the absence of tariffs that affect logistics and other trade barriers negatively impact the trade agreements made with Zimbabwe and the SADC members. For instance, Gwakwara (2025) depicts the progress made by Zimbabwe in the regional diplomacy with SADC member states via the assembly diplomacy and the strategic area partnerships. Most of the Zimbabwean regional diplomacy with SADC member states is still at Gwakwara's (2025) assembly diplomacy level and therefore does not reflect the country's economic engagement with the SADC member states.

2.7 Comparative Lessons from Emerging Economies

Economic diplomacy is an essential strategy, but it can only be fully achieved with the right domestic policies and governance. Rwanda is an example of how economic diplomacy can be effective with domestic policies and governance credibility. Rwanda is one of the leading contestants in the foreign direct investment league (World Bank, 2025) as a result of the improved 4 economic and institutional 5 frameworks. 6 Investment diplomacy is one of Rwanda's 7 positive economic policies, and 8 other countries such as Zimbabwe can learn from 9 Rwanda's example (Okano-Heijmans, 2021).

Vietnam is of similar in position to Zimbabwe. Economic policies that are driven by trade, such as those that were adopted by Vietnam, are 10 focused on creating a 11 trade system where 12 commerce is the primary 13 factor. Resultantly, 14 commerce is the primary 15

factor. Consequently, trade-focused economic policies have, in turn improved commerce, which has improved Vietnam's position in the global trade system (UNCTAD, 2024). Vietnam has improved foreign investment through economic diplomacy that focused on trade and export (UNCTAD, 2024). Zimbabwe is similarly positioned, and economic diplomacy, trading and internal trade reforms will enhance foreign trade.

Zimbabwe could benefit from reviewing Ethiopia's industrial diplomacy model, especially in the area of mining. Ethiopia is currently expanding industrial parks, alongside FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) targeted at specific economic growth (World Bank, 2025). Similarly, Zimbabwe's mining sector possesses the potential to attract foreign investment, but improved governance and transparency are required to achieve the potential outlined by Mutlokwa & Okoloise (2025). The experience of these emerging economies demonstrates the need for Zimbabwe to integrate economic diplomacy with the necessary domestic changes to stimulate economic growth.

2.8 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study synthesizes existing literature to formulate a conceptual model that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy correlates to economic outcomes. The model integrates the theory of economic diplomacy and the political economy to express the relations of diplomatic strategies, structures, and economy-wide variables. The framework hypothesizes that economic outcomes such as foreign direct investment and trade are not purely a result of diplomacy, but dependent on the coupled domestic policy and economic framework. Furthermore, the model incorporates external variables such as sanctions and global economic shocks. The study framework is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

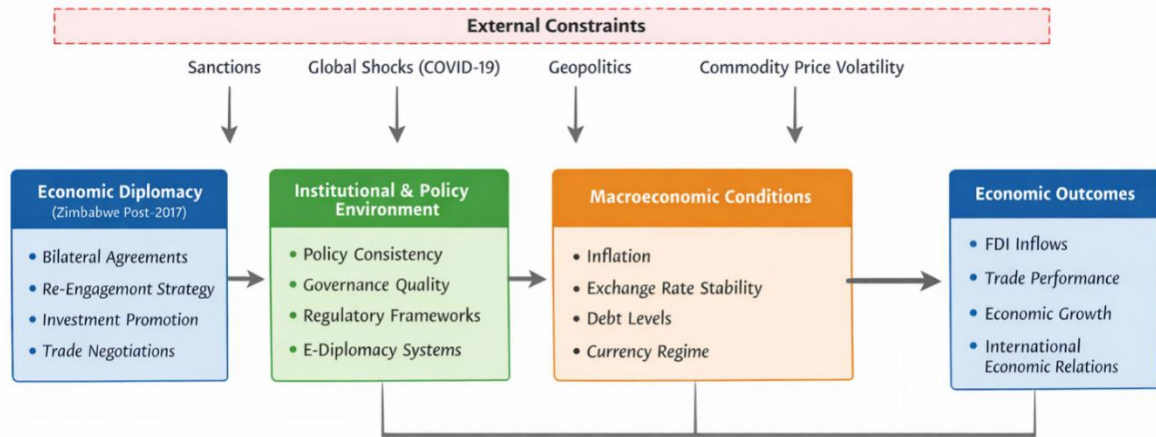


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Zimbabwe's Economic Diplomacy Outcomes

The impact of economic diplomacy on Zimbabwe, as well as institutional and macroeconomic factors, is shown in Figure 2.1. The framework allows for analysis of how external factors impact the mentioned relationships. The relationships for the dimensions of diplomacy, policy space, and economic outcomes can be analyzed, within the given time period of 2017-2023.

2.8 Chapter summary

Since 2017, the main components of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy have both positive and negative attributes. Zimbabwe has improved foreign relations and foreign direct investments, but still has tremendous macroeconomic and institutional challenges. The literature review has spotlighted policy inconsistency, democracy, and cooperation among neighbors as the most important elements of economic diplomacy. Moreover, it has stressed the need to synergize economic diplomacy and internal reforms. This will address, to some

extent, the large deficits in literature, particularly the absence of empirical studies in Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy. This underscores the urgent need to undertake studies in this area.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and justifies the research methodology adopted in exploring the success and challenges in Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy from 2017. The chapter explains

the philosophical underpinnings, research approach, and design adopted in guiding the research. In addition, it explains how these concepts were integrated with the research objectives and questions. The chapter also discusses the research setting, target population, and sampling adopted in selecting appropriate participants for the research. Further, it explains how data collection methods such as interviews and document analysis were adopted in collecting data for the research. The chapter also explains how data analysis methods were adopted in ensuring credibility and trustworthiness in data collection. In addition, it discusses ethical issues and limitations in research methodology. The chapter provides an appropriate framework in explaining how the research was conducted in a systematic way. The framework is clear and coherent.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the system of beliefs and assumptions about the nature of knowledge and reality that underpins the research process and guides the choice of methodology. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2023), research philosophy encompasses fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), and the role of values in research (axiology). These philosophical assumptions shape how a researcher conceptualises the research problem, selects appropriate methods, and interprets findings. Creswell and Creswell (2023) assert that a clearly articulated research philosophy is essential for ensuring methodological coherence and justifying the research approach adopted. In this study, the research is grounded in an interpretivist philosophical paradigm, which holds that social reality is subjective and constructed through the meanings and interpretations that individuals attach to their experiences.

Interpretivism posits that knowledge is not objective or value-free but is instead shaped by social, cultural, and historical contexts, making it particularly suitable for understanding complex policy phenomena such as economic diplomacy (Bryman, 2021). This paradigm is appropriate for the current study because economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe involves multiple actors policymakers, diplomats, business leaders, and international financial institution officials each with distinct perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of the successes and challenges of diplomatic engagement. Unlike positivism, which seeks to uncover universal laws through objective measurement, interpretivism acknowledges that the effectiveness of economic diplomacy cannot be reduced to quantifiable indicators alone but must be understood through the lived experiences and meaning-making processes of those involved (Bell et al., 2022).

The interpretivist philosophy aligns with the study's objectives of exploring stakeholder perceptions, understanding the interplay between institutional frameworks and diplomatic strategies, and examining the contextual factors that influence economic diplomacy outcomes in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, this philosophical stance recognises that the researcher's own positionality and values inevitably shape the research process, requiring reflexivity and transparency in data collection and analysis (Okano-Heijmans, 2021). By adopting an interpretivist lens, this study acknowledges that the findings represent one interpretation among many possible interpretations of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy, thereby contributing to a richer and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.3 Research methodology

Research methodology refers to the overarching strategy and rationale that guides the choice and application of specific research methods in addressing the research problem.

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2023), methodology provides the theoretical and philosophical justification for the research approach, distinguishing it from methods, which are the specific techniques used to collect and analyse data. In this study, a qualitative research methodology has been adopted as the overarching framework for investigating Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since 2017. Qualitative research is defined as an approach that seeks to understand social phenomena from the perspective of those involved, emphasising meanings, experiences, and contextual factors rather than numerical measurement and statistical generalisation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This methodology is particularly appropriate for the current study because the research objectives focus on exploring stakeholder perceptions, understanding institutional dynamics, and examining the complex interplay between diplomatic strategies and economic outcomes all of which require in-depth, contextual, and interpretive analysis rather than quantifiable metrics.

According to Bryman (2021), qualitative research is especially suited to policy-oriented studies because it allows researchers to capture the nuances of decision-making processes, the influence of institutional culture, and the diverse perspectives of various stakeholders. Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2022) further assert that qualitative methodology is valuable for investigating phenomena that are context-dependent, dynamic, and shaped by human agency, such as economic diplomacy. The qualitative approach adopted in this study enables the researcher to explore the research questions through semi-structured interviews and document analysis, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of how diplomatic initiatives have been formulated, implemented, and experienced by different actors in Zimbabwe. Unlike quantitative methodologies that prioritise hypothesis testing and statistical generalisation, qualitative methodology embraces the complexity and subjectivity of social reality, allowing for the emergence of unexpected themes and insights (Bazeley, 2020).

Moreover, this methodology aligns with the interpretivist philosophical paradigm underpinning the study, as it recognises that knowledge about economic diplomacy is co-constructed through the interactions between the researcher and participants, and is shaped by the specific historical, political, and institutional context of Zimbabwe. By adopting a qualitative methodology, this study is well-positioned to provide rich, detailed, and contextually grounded findings that contribute meaningfully to both academic scholarship and policy discourse on economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe and comparable contexts across Africa.

3.4 Research Design

Research design is defined as “the overall plan which guides the way a research is structured, how data is collected, and how it is analyzed” (Babbie, 2021). In this study, the research design formed a framework within which economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe since 2017 was analyzed. Walliman (2021) asserts that a research design should match the purpose of the research to produce credible results. In this case, since the purpose of the research was to analyze a policy issue in a given context, the design had to support such an objective. Johnson and Christensen (2020) emphasize that a research design should match the nature of the problem under investigation. This ensured that the research remained logical and methodologically sound. Moreover, this ensured that diverse sources of information were synthesized in a cohesive framework.

Saunders et al., (2023) note that a case study is appropriate for conducting research about a policy issue in a real-life context. Creswell and Creswell (2023) note that such a design enables a researcher to analyze complex relationships between various elements. This is because a case study is appropriate for conducting studies about real-life issues. The descriptive part of this design enabled this study to document policy initiatives and economic diplomacy.

Babbie (2021) asserts that descriptive research is appropriate for giving a clear account of events and processes. On the other hand, the exploratory part of this design enabled this study to analyze the underlying causes of policy initiatives and economic diplomacy. Walliman (2021) asserts that exploratory research is appropriate when little is known about a given problem. This ensured that this study went beyond mere description. Moreover, this enabled this study to produce a deeper explanation of economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe.

3.5 Population and sample

Target Population

The term "target population" refers to the larger group of individuals from whom relevant data can be collected. According to Häder (2022), in qualitative research, populations are defined based on relevance rather than size. The target population for this study comprised 25 key stakeholders directly involved in Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy between 2017 and 2025, including policymakers, diplomats, officials from investment promotion agencies, representatives of international financial institutions, and business leaders, who were selected because of their knowledge and experience of the subject under investigation. The study was based on individuals with direct involvement in the processes of economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe. This included policymakers, diplomats, business persons, and institutions. Mweshi & Sakyi (2020) argue that the selection of the population in any study should be based on the research goals. This ensured that the participants in the study had the capability to provide relevant information regarding the study topic. It also ensured that the study was able to capture all perspectives regarding the study topic.

The inclusion of different interest groups in the study was beneficial to the study in terms of providing a comprehensive overview regarding economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe.

According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2023), the selection of knowledgeable participants in any study improves the quality of the study. According to Bryman (2021), diverse perspectives are beneficial in providing a better understanding in qualitative research. This approach allowed the study to capture different perspectives regarding policy formulation and implementation. It also ensured that the study was not based on assumptions but rather on facts. This made the selection of the study's population beneficial to the study in terms of credibility. It also allowed the study to have a balanced view regarding economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe.

Sample Size

The sample size for the research was 15 research participants. The sample size was considered adequate in obtaining the research sample. Bekele & Ago (2022) describe the sample size in qualitative research as the number at which the researcher is able to obtain data saturation. In this research, the sample size was adequate in obtaining data saturation in which the responses obtained were repetitive. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2023) describe the sample size in qualitative research as relatively small in number. Nyimbili & Nyimbili (2024) describe the importance of obtaining data saturation as the most credible approach in obtaining the research sample. The sample size in this research was adequate in obtaining the research sample as it was comprehensive in covering the most significant stakeholders in the research topic. The sample size in this research was significant in enhancing the credibility of the research as it enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth understanding in the research topic, especially in the context of Zimbabwe.

The sampling strategy indicates how participants are selected and identified to generate information that is pertinent to the research. In qualitative research, sampling is conducted by considering how to obtain information that is rich and meaningful. Häder (2022) indicates that

sampling in qualitative research is conducted by considering how to obtain information that is rich and meaningful rather than statistical information. In this research, a non-probability sampling approach was used since it involved participants who had direct experience and knowledge of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since 2017. Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) indicate that sampling is conducted by considering how it can be aligned with the research purpose to ensure that it is conducted adequately. In this research, sampling was conducted by considering how to obtain information that is rich and meaningful. In qualitative research, sampling is conducted by considering information richness and saturation. This is evident in Bekele and Ago (2022).

The research utilized purposive sampling as the main approach in selecting the sample based on their knowledge in economic diplomacy. Nyimbili & Nyimbili (2024) describe purposive sampling as a technique by which the researcher is able to identify individuals who are knowledgeable in the research topic. The research sample was recruited from the most significant stakeholders in the research topic. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2023) describe purposive sampling as the most appropriate approach in obtaining in-depth understanding of the research topic. In addition, the research utilized snowball sampling as the alternative approach in obtaining the research sample. Häder (2022) describes snowball sampling as the most effective approach in obtaining the research sample, especially in hard-to-reach groups.

3.6 Sampling methods

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3.7 Data collection methods

3.7.1 Primary Data

In this study, the primary data referred to the information obtained directly from the respondents through the interviews conducted in the process of fieldwork. The interviews with the policymakers, diplomats, officials from investment promotion agencies, representatives of international financial institutions, and business leaders, who were selected because of their knowledge and experience of the subject under investigation. This type of data is significant in the study in the sense that it offered the researcher the opportunity to obtain information on the understanding and implementation of economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe. According to Dang, Van Nguyen, and Tran (2024), primary qualitative data is significant in the sense that it offers the researcher the opportunity to obtain information directly from the participants in the field of study. This is significant in the sense that it offered the researcher the opportunity to obtain information on the understanding and implementation of economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe. Broache (2022) asserts that the researcher is able to access the information of interest through the interviews conducted with the respondents. Roberts (2020) asserts that the interviews are significant in the sense that the researcher seeks information on explanation rather than measurement.

3.7.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data referred to the documentary materials that were pertinent and relevant to the formulation, implementation, and consequences of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy. This entailed policy documents, government publications, IMF and World Bank reports, trade and investment reports, strategy documents, speeches by officials, and publications by scholars. Creswell and Creswell (2023) note that secondary data is particularly significant in policy-oriented studies because it offers a structured account of institutional concerns and official discourses. In the current study, such documents helped the researcher to investigate the manner in which Zimbabwe's diplomatic and economic agenda had been formally formulated and articulated since 2017. Bell, Bryman & Harley (2022) note that documentary data is significant in qualitative studies because it ensures the maintenance of the institutional context in which the accounts of the participants are constructed and interpreted. Li & Zhang (2022) note that secondary data can be significant in qualitative studies when employed critically rather than descriptively. In the current study, however, secondary data was not employed as supplementary evidence only. It was necessary in the sense that it helped the researcher test the claims of the participants against the policy and institutional evidence.

3.8 Validity and reliability

3.8.1 Validity

Validity in qualitative research refers to the credibility and trustworthiness of findings, ensuring that the study accurately represents the phenomenon under investigation rather than the researcher's assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, credibility was enhanced through triangulation by using multiple data sources, including interviews and document analysis, as well as gathering perspectives from policymakers, diplomats, business leaders, and officials from international financial institutions to verify findings. Member checking was also

conducted by allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the interpretations, while prolonged engagement with participants strengthened understanding of the research context. Transferability was promoted through thick description by providing detailed information about the research setting, participants, and data collection procedures, enabling readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar contexts. Confirmability was ensured through reflexivity and the maintenance of an audit trail that documented research decisions and analytical processes, thereby enhancing the overall trustworthiness of the study (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research is commonly referred to as dependability and concerns the consistency and transparency of the research process rather than the replication of identical findings (Bryman, 2021). In this study, dependability was achieved through the maintenance of a comprehensive audit trail documenting methodological decisions, interview procedures, coding processes, and analytical interpretations from the beginning to the end of the research. Consistency in data collection was maintained by using a semi-structured interview guide that ensured all participants responded to the same core questions while allowing flexibility to explore emerging issues. A reflective journal was also maintained to record methodological decisions, researcher reflections, and contextual observations that could influence the interpretation of the findings. These measures enhanced the transparency and consistency of the research process, ensuring that the findings were dependable and could be critically examined by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022).

3.9 Data presentation and analysis

3.9.1 Thematic Analysis

The research design that was used is thematic analysis for qualitative data since it is considered most effective in establishing patterns and issues across different sources of information. Kiger and Varpio (2020) assert that thematic analysis is a flexible yet robust process that is most effective in analyzing qualitative data in a manner that is closely connected to the research problem. In this research, it was effective since it helped the researcher identify different issues like investment attraction, policy inconsistency, re-engagement, institutional trust, and macroeconomic constraints. Braun and Clarke are not in your list; therefore, Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) can be placed here since they assert that thematic analysis is most effective in a research design that aims at comparing different issues and at the same time ensuring that context is not lost. Bazeley (2020) asserts that thematic analysis is most effective since it allows a researcher to move from a general overview to a more in-depth analysis. It is a research design that is most effective in a research that has used more than one type of data.

3.9.2 Stages of Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis used in this study followed a set of predetermined steps to ensure that there is a smooth transition from raw data to findings. Kiger & Varpio (2020) stated that the analytical process used in qualitative research should be transparent to enhance the rigour of the research by eliminating the subjective component. The study started with familiarization. In this step, the raw data in the form of interviews was read over and over again to identify any emerging patterns. Mezmir (2020) stated that familiarization with the raw data is essential in qualitative research because the findings are usually based on interpretation. The next step in the thematic analysis used in this study was to generate codes. In this step, relevant information about economic diplomacy, policy, and stakeholders was identified. Salmona & Kaczynski

(2024) stated that codes are essential in qualitative research because they help to break down the raw data into smaller parts that can be analyzed. The initial stages of the thematic analysis ensured that there is a smooth connection between the findings and the raw data.

After coding, the research process moved on to the next step of the development and refinement of the themes that include the basic patterns of the data. As noted by Kiger and Varpio (2020), a theme is a collection of organized ideas rather than the replication of ideas. It is an essential concept in the process of qualitative research. Related codes are grouped in the formation of a group of themes such as investment attraction, institutional constraints, and policy inconsistency, among others. These are the major themes of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy. As noted by Reyes, Bogumil, and Welch (2021), the process of reviewing and refining the themes is a vital process that ensures the analysis is coherent and evidence-based. In this process, the data is reviewed in the formation of a set of themes that is a true reflection of the data and the information being provided by the participants and the documentary evidence. Lastly, a set of themes is defined and interpreted in the context of the research goals. As noted by Fife and Gossner (2024), the process of interpretation is the process of transforming the analysis into explanation. This process ensures that the research findings are credible and analytically robust and at the same time capture the complexity of the context in the process of the research.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical principles to ensure the protection and well-being of participants throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained by providing participants with adequate information about the purpose of the study, their role, and their right to ask questions before agreeing to participate (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifiable information, while participation remained entirely voluntary, with participants free to withdraw at any stage without penalty (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). The study also ensured the avoidance of physical, psychological, professional, or reputational harm by designing non-intrusive research questions and handling sensitive issues with care (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2023). Furthermore, all research data were securely stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher, and ethical clearance and the necessary institutional permissions were obtained prior to data collection to ensure compliance with professional and academic ethical standards.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed account of, and a justification for, the methodological framework that was employed in addressing the research problem of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since 2017. From this discussion, it has been evident that the research was guided by an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative research approach, in addition to a case study research design that allowed for a deeper and in-depth analysis of the research phenomenon within its real-life context. As such, this chapter has provided a detailed account of how purposive sampling was employed in selecting participants who possessed adequate knowledge and experience in addressing the research problem, in addition to how semi-structured interviews and document analysis were employed in gathering data. Similarly, this chapter has provided a detailed account of how thematic analysis was employed in analyzing the gathered data, in addition to how measures of trustworthiness and ethical integrity were employed in addressing the research problem, alongside a discussion of the limitations of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The current chapter presents the outcomes of analysis and discussions on the results regarding the positive and negative experiences that the state had with economic diplomacy from 2017 onwards. In particular, the data for the analysis included qualitative data gathered via interviews conducted with 12 respondents and documentary sources. Interviewees included representatives of the government, diplomatic service, private sector, academics, and international organizations. The outcomes of the research were divided into several themes depending on the research questions. The first one is about the outcomes of economic diplomacy based on foreign investments and trade. The second one focuses on the institutional,

policy, and structural obstacles to economic diplomacy. The last one discusses the activities of the government and reengagement strategy as well as the influence on international economic relations. Views of the interviewees are provided to support the outcomes and discuss their views on economic diplomacy.

Overall, the findings show that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy after 2017 produced mixed outcomes. The study found that the country gained renewed diplomatic visibility, improved investor attention, and increased participation in trade and regional platforms. However, these gains were limited by weak conversion of diplomatic engagements into actual FDI inflows, export growth and sustained investor confidence. The findings further show that institutional fragmentation, policy inconsistency, macroeconomic instability, debt arrears, infrastructure weaknesses and limited productive capacity continued to constrain the effectiveness of economic diplomacy. Therefore, the chapter demonstrates that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy achieved important visibility and re-engagement benefits, but its practical economic outcomes remained restricted by domestic structural and policy challenges.

4.2 Theme 1: Economic Diplomacy Outcomes on FDI and Trade Performance since 2017

4.2.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Renewed investor interest but limited realised FDI inflows

The theme highlights that despite the increased visibility of Zimbabwe through its economic diplomacy post-2017, not all the attention resulted in real FDI investments. According to the interviews conducted, the general consensus among the participants was that the message "Zimbabwe is open for Business" was effective in increasing foreign investors' attention towards investing in Zimbabwe, particularly in sectors like mining, energy, agriculture, infrastructure, and tourism. On the other hand, there was a consensus from the participants that investor interest cannot automatically translate into FDI flows. From the

results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that foreign investors were more interested in engaging with the Zimbabwe investment pitch and were participating in forums while showing interest in investing, however, most remained reluctant to do so until they were assured that their investments would bear fruits.

One participant noted that renewed attention was visible after the government's post-2017 investment message:

“Since 2017, I would say FDI inflows have improved in terms of interest, but the actual realised investment has been uneven. There was definitely renewed attention after the ‘open for business’ message.” (Participant 01)

Another participant observed that the private sector saw more engagement from foreign actors after 2017:

“FDI interest increased after 2017, especially because the government was actively saying Zimbabwe was open for business. We saw more foreign delegations, investment forums, and enquiries from potential partners.” (Participant 02)

This was reinforced by another respondent, who argued that attention increased but did not amount to major transformation:

“Since 2017, Zimbabwe’s FDI inflows have improved mainly in terms of renewed attention rather than large-scale transformation. Economic diplomacy has helped the country communicate a more open investment message.” (Participant 11)

As per the views, there is a clear indication from the respondents that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy post-2017 enhanced investors' awareness, but was not sufficient enough to trigger significant investment. Participant 01 draws a clear line between enhancing interest

and the lack of significant investments made, whereas Participant 02 affirms that investment forums were more common. Participant 11 offers a different perspective by referring to the re-engagement efforts as bringing about a change in attitude towards Zimbabwe as opposed to a complete revolution. From this analysis, it can be deduced that while Zimbabwean officials were able to shift the tone of negotiations, the results were insignificant. In no way did the participants deny the value of economic diplomacy; however, they referred to its effectiveness as being incomplete. This finding addresses the first research objective in that economic diplomacy activities concerning FDI increased post-2017, but the realisation of investment failed to meet expectations.

The findings are comparable to those found in the studies done by Ndakaripa (2020), where he observes that despite the limitations associated with poor economic reforms both domestically and internationally, economic diplomacy undertaken by Zimbabwe has been unique since the Mugabe regime. Economic diplomacy still remains an important driver in the growth of Zimbabwe as reported by Maune, Matanda & Chitombo (2023), yet a good environment for the accumulation of capital has been crucial towards this end. Macro-economic stability and sound policies are a prerequisite for investor confidence as reported by the IMF (2025). The World Bank (2025) notes that private investments depend on macro-economic stability and reforms leading to a good environment for doing businesses. All these studies show that economic diplomacy can be used as a strategy for attracting foreign investments, yet a favorable environment is essential to do so.

The documentary evidence supports the interview finding that Zimbabwe gained renewed investor attention after 2017, although this did not fully translate into realised investment. ZIDA (2025) shows that investment licensing increased, with many projects approved and large projected investment values recorded. However, the same evidence also

shows that actualised investment remained lower than projected investment, which confirms the gap between investor interest and real capital inflows. This agrees with Maune, Matanda and Chitombo (2023), who argue that FDI can support Zimbabwe's economic growth, but only where the domestic environment gives investors enough confidence to commit resources. The evidence therefore strengthens the argument that economic diplomacy improved Zimbabwe's visibility, but visibility alone was not enough. The stronger point emerging here is that investment promotion became more active, but the country still needed greater policy certainty and implementation credibility to convert interest into actual investment.

4.2.2 Gap between diplomatic engagements and measurable economic outcomes

It reflects another key finding associated with Theme 1: that Zimbabwe has been relatively successful at creating diplomatic activity, but less so with achieving economic results. Investment conferences, bilateral engagement, memorandums of understanding, trade missions and cooperation agreements were mentioned by participants. But they all pointed out that most of the initiatives failed to turn into projects, exports and investments within a relatively short period of time. This is critical for two reasons – first, because it transforms the focus of evaluation from the level of diplomatic activity to its economic conversion. Instead of asking whether Zimbabwe interacted with international partners after 2017, we need to assess whether these interactions yielded tangible results. The answer appears to be positive for the first part, but negative for the latter one.

One participant explained that agreements were not being converted quickly enough into actual projects:

“The limitations are visible in the slow conversion of agreements into actual projects. There is a noticeable implementation gap. Zimbabwe has been successful in attracting diplomatic attention, but less successful in converting it.” (Participant 04)

Another participant made a similar point by linking delayed projects to weak economic conversion:

“Not every agreement has translated into visible investment or export growth. Some projects take too long to start. That suggests that diplomatic success has not always become economic success.” (Participant 10)

This view was reinforced by another respondent, who described the economic conversion rate as low:

“Zimbabwe has succeeded in creating diplomatic visibility, but the economic conversion rate remains low. The limitations are visible in the slow implementation of some agreements.” (Participant 11)

The views illustrate that there was a common understanding that the challenge was the disjuncture between the engagement process and implementation. Participant 04 states that the challenge is the slow translation from agreements to actual projects. Participant 10 demonstrates that despite diplomatic success, there may not necessarily be investment or export development. Participant 11 captures this challenge in their quote, which describes the economic conversion rate to be low. From the responses above, it can be observed that the success of economic diplomacy cannot be determined merely by the number of meetings, missions or agreements. Success can only be measured when such processes result in the implementation of projects, employment opportunities, exports, transfer of technologies and improved trading relationships. The views thus further answer the first research objective by

providing evidence that although Zimbabwe engaged economically after 2017, the economic achievements were limited.

This is highly consistent with Ndakaripa's (2020) claim that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy following the year 2017 produced little due to weak domestic reforms in politics and economics. According to the IMF (2025), Zimbabwe's credibility in reforms and macroeconomic stability are the key to building investor confidence. This is similar to the World Bank's (2025) statement that mobilizing private investment calls for continuous reforms aimed at cutting down business obstacles and improving macroeconomic stability. UNCTAD (2024) is also clear on how the potential for trade in the region hinges on actual reductions in trade costs and improved market systems. These statements confirm the participants' assertion that merely holding agreements and meetings is insufficient. Based on the analysis provided above, the writer's conclusion is that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy has achieved the point of transitioning from visibility to implementation.

The documentary evidence strengthens the finding that Zimbabwe created diplomatic activity after 2017, but struggled to turn it into measurable economic outcomes. ZIDA (2025) shows increased investment licensing and high projected investment values, yet actual investment realisation remained lower than the figures promoted through investment approvals. This supports the participants' argument that agreements, licences, forums and missions do not automatically become operational projects. IMF (2025) also shows that investor confidence remained affected by arrears, weak reserves, limited external financing and policy credibility concerns. These documents help explain why diplomatic engagements often remained at the level of promises, meetings and signed intentions. The main issue was therefore not the absence of diplomatic effort, but the weak conversion of effort into delivery. From this

evidence, Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy should be judged by implemented projects, export deals and realised investment, not only by international meetings.

4.4 Theme 2: Institutional, Policy and Structural Constraints Affecting Economic Diplomacy

4.4.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Institutional coordination and fragmentation among ministries, embassies, investment agencies and trade bodies

The sub-theme highlights the extent to which the coordination of institutions impacts Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy efforts. There were multiple times throughout the interviews where it was stressed that it is impossible to rely on foreign affairs officials when it comes to investment and trade because the outcome depends on finance, industry, mining, agriculture, investment promotion, custom offices, embassies, and private sector organizations too. The interviews imply that there must be institutional coordination for economic diplomacy to be successful since business representatives are expecting a unified message from Zimbabweans, as well as a process that would be consistently followed up. On the other hand, the lack of such coordination makes fragmentation quite serious. If the institutions do not collaborate, then the country may be presenting itself as ambitious abroad without providing assistance to its investors and exporters domestically. In turn, this creates a problem for turning diplomatic interactions into economic success.

A participant mentioned that economic diplomacy needs a voice that is unified nationwide:

“Economic diplomacy requires ministries, embassies, investment agencies, trade bodies, and private sector actors to speak with one voice. There are still cases where institutions work in silos.” (Participant 01)

Another participant observed that weak institutional coordination affects implementation after diplomatic engagement:

“Economic diplomacy requires the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, trade institutions, investment agencies, and line ministries to work together. Where coordination is weak, implementation suffers.” (Participant 03)

This was reinforced by another respondent, who linked fragmented systems to duplication and delayed responses:

“Sometimes institutions pursue similar goals but through separate systems. This creates duplication, delays, and confusion for partners who expect one clear government position.” (Participant 12)

The views show the same preoccupation with the issue that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy will suffer from lack of institutional coherence where institutions fail to act as one unit. According to participant 01, there is a need for all institutions including the ministries, embassies, investment promotion agencies, and private sector to speak with one voice. As per participant 03, lack of coherence affects more than just communication, implementation is hindered as well. Participant 12 explains the issue through examples that explain how the procedures that take place within the country cause confusion among foreign entities. The information shows how institutional coordination is essential for the success of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy because if the investors receive positive signals from the country abroad, they face slow procedures locally. The findings provide an answer to the second research objective in terms of establishing an internal factor that influences Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy.

It is also pointed out by the authors that the effectiveness of economic diplomacy requires integration of trade, investments, and foreign policy policies carried out by the state rather than as individual activities. The researcher emphasizes that in the modern era, for economic diplomacy to be effective, there should be a link established between diplomats, domestic actors, corporations, and policymakers. As stated by Ndakaripa, economic diplomacy of Zimbabwe after 2017 did not prove to be very successful due to the contradiction between the diplomatic promotion and reforms in the country. The World Bank (2025) also speaks of the same aspect stating that the development of the private sector in the future will require reforms conducted in the country with the goal of eliminating obstacles in the process of doing business.

The documentary evidence can be used under this sub-theme to show that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy required stronger coordination between national institutions. World Bank (2025) stresses that private-sector growth in Zimbabwe depends on improving the business environment and reducing regulatory barriers. This supports the interview finding that fragmented institutional processes can weaken investor confidence even where embassies and investment agencies promote the same national message abroad. Economic diplomacy works better when foreign affairs, finance, trade, industry, ZIDA, ZimTrade and sector ministries provide clear and consistent guidance to investors and exporters. Okano-Heijmans (2021) also explains that modern economic diplomacy depends on linking foreign policy action with domestic economic priorities. The researcher's assessment is that Zimbabwe's main weakness was not only external perception, but the lack of a smooth internal system that could follow up investment leads and trade opportunities.

4.4.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Policy inconsistency, regulatory uncertainty and weak predictability

The sub-theme demonstrates that lack of policy coherence emerges as a significant barrier to economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe. In their responses, participants consistently mentioned that investors and development partners take into consideration the internal policy framework prior to making any resource commitments. According to the findings from the interview data, the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's external communication will be undermined by the lack of coherence in internal regulations, particularly those pertaining to the currency policy, taxes, licensing, and investment processes. It should be noted that the participants did not question the existence of the country's policy declarations but indicated that the issue stems from the fact that the existing policy frameworks undergo constant changes, lack clarity and are unpredictable. It is important to mention that economic diplomacy hinges on trust. In other words, once a country opens up for foreign investments, its international partners will expect consistency and reliability.

One participant noted that policy inconsistency creates confusion even where reforms exist:

“Policy inconsistencies, changes in regulations, and currency-related measures sometimes confuse investors. The problem is not always policy absence. Sometimes the problem is implementation and predictability.” (Participant 01)

Another participant observed that regulatory instability weakens the diplomatic message presented to investors:

“Frequent policy adjustments, particularly around currency, taxation, and licensing, can create uncertainty. Investors always ask about predictability. If the regulatory environment is not stable, diplomatic messaging becomes difficult.” (Participant 03)

This concern was also reinforced by another respondent, who linked policy uncertainty to reduced partner confidence:

“Regulatory uncertainty, changing currency rules, and inconsistent implementation sometimes weaken partner confidence. Investors and development partners want predictability. If the domestic policy environment appears unstable, economic diplomacy becomes more difficult.” (Participant 12)

It is clear from the views that there was a consensus on the importance of the predictability of policies in successful economic diplomacy. Participant 01 raises an important issue in that sometimes the problem is not the non-existence of policies, but rather the uncertainties that arise due to lack of implementation. Meanwhile, Participant 03 highlights that constant alterations of currency policies, taxes, and licensing pose problems in persuading investors. Participant 12 states that predictability of domestic circumstances is expected from both investors and development partners. It means that the success of economic diplomacy depends on the internal policies of the country. Specifically, the external message about attracting foreign investments is seen against the background of domestic policies. In other words, policy inconsistency becomes a problem for economic diplomacy since the latter requires predictability. Hence, the study addresses its second research question by proving that policy inconsistency affects the country's reputation on a global stage.

Helliker and Murisa (2020) note that despite some changes and continuities in the political economy of Zimbabwe post-2017, this explains why promises of reforms were not always sufficient to erase older governance issues. In a similar vein, Ndakaripa (2020) suggests that Zimbabwe's "open for business" diplomacy was hampered by its failure to undertake meaningful domestic reforms and overcome negative perceptions. According to the IMF

(2025), credible policies and sound macroeconomic management are important to revive confidence in Zimbabwe. The World Bank (2025) equally suggests that an enabling regulatory framework is essential in promoting private investments and job creation. These are corroborations of the interview results indicating that economic diplomacy cannot be divorced from regulatory predictability. In the writer's view, Zimbabwe's diplomatic narrative will continue to be fragile if domestic policies are not made more predictable.

The documentary evidence confirms that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy has been linked to national development ambitions, especially through investment promotion, export growth, infrastructure development and private-sector recovery. Ndakaripa (2020) shows that the "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" message was part of a wider attempt to reposition the country as an attractive investment destination after 2017. However, Ganda (2020) argues that policy inconsistency has remained one of the factors affecting Zimbabwe's economic performance and investor confidence. This supports the interview findings because participants did not suggest that Zimbabwe lacked policy statements or reform intentions. Rather, their concern was that policy changes, uneven implementation and weak predictability reduced trust. The documentary evidence therefore helps to show that Zimbabwe has a clear economic diplomacy language, but its credibility depends on whether policy promises are implemented consistently. In this sense, policy predictability becomes part of diplomacy itself.

4.4.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Macroeconomic instability, currency volatility and debt arrears

It is clear from this sub-theme that macroeconomic instability, currency instability, and debt arrears have limited the ability of Zimbabwe to conduct economic diplomacy. The interviewees consistently linked investor reticence with the general economic situation. The findings indicate that even in cases where diplomats have made compelling presentations on

economic investments, the partner nations continue to look at currency instability, debt sustainability, financing, and risks in the macroeconomic environment. This is vital since economic diplomacy involves not only attracting foreign investments but also ensuring partners that the business environment can accommodate such investments. In this context, it is worth noting that currency instability and debt arrears limit Zimbabwe's access to international finance and make it hard for investors and exporters to plan for their activities. As a result, participants identified macroeconomic instability as a structure barrier limiting Zimbabwe's negotiating power.

One participant indicated that macroeconomic instability has hindered Zimbabwe's efforts to attract investment and negotiate successfully:

“The main structural challenges include sanctions, debt arrears, limited access to international credit, infrastructure constraints, and macroeconomic instability. These issues affect Zimbabwe's ability to attract investment and negotiate confidently.”
(Participant 10)

Another participant observed that debt and currency-related problems create a difficult background for diplomatic engagement:

“Several structural challenges have affected Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy. These include sanctions, debt arrears, infrastructure constraints, power supply problems, and macroeconomic instability.” (Participant 03)

This was reinforced by another respondent, who linked external debt and currency instability to reduced practical benefits from diplomacy:

“Zimbabwe’s economic diplomacy has been affected by structural challenges such as external debt, sanctions, currency instability, infrastructure gaps, limited access to international finance, and low industrial productivity.” (Participant 05)

From the above sentiments, participants clearly perceived macroeconomic instability as one of the key constraints in economic diplomacy. Quotation from participant 10 relates the issue of debt arrears and lack of credit as a reason for lack of negotiation confidence. Participant 03 describes the situation of macroeconomic instability together with sanctions and infrastructure issues as some of the tough conditions in which diplomats operate. Participant 05 provides a more detailed illustration by highlighting currency instability and external debt as constraints which make diplomatic efforts ineffective. From all the above sentiments, it is clear that the economic diplomacy occurs in an economic structure that is limited. The participants did not indicate that economic diplomacy does not work, but instead noted that it will be weaker because of macroeconomic instability. This finding addresses the second research objective by demonstrating how currency volatility, debt arrears and instability are among the key domestic factors impacting economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe.

Based on Mateko et al. (2025), the problem of the debt of the country continues to affect the country since it poses problems to the economy of the country. According to IMF (2025), even though reforms have been initiated, the problems caused by arrears continue to affect the country in seeking assistance from the global community. According to World Bank (2025), the success of the process of economic diplomacy is contingent on the state of macroeconomic stability. According to Ndakaripa (2020), low performance in the economic performance can be traced to confidence problems in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the position of the participant about the influence of macroeconomic factors on economic diplomacy is confirmed by the sources provided.

The IMF and World Bank documents further support the interview finding that macroeconomic instability reduced the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy. IMF (2025) acknowledges some stabilisation efforts, but still identifies continuing concerns linked to fiscal pressure, arrears, limited external financing, dollarisation, weak reserves and governance weaknesses. World Bank (2025) also notes that Zimbabwe's private-sector recovery depends on macroeconomic stability and a more enabling regulatory environment. These documents support the participants' argument that investors do not respond only to diplomatic messages. They also assess whether the country offers a stable currency environment, credible policies and protection for long-term investment. This makes macroeconomic reform a core condition for successful economic diplomacy rather than a separate domestic issue. The evidence therefore suggests that Zimbabwe's diplomats may communicate investment opportunities abroad, but weak macroeconomic fundamentals continue to limit the strength of that message.

4.5 Theme 3: Government Measures, Re-engagement and International Economic Relations

4.5.1 Sub-theme 3.1: The “Zimbabwe is Open for Business” campaign and re-engagement strategy

This sub-theme reveals the “Zimbabwe is Open for Business” initiative, together with the re-engagement strategy, as the primary government tools used in the promotion of economic diplomacy following the year 2017. Interviewees felt that these strategies aimed at altering the outward appearance of Zimbabwe from one of isolation to one of engagement, particularly in terms of investment, trade, and partnerships. It seems clear from the data that participants believed that such campaigns were a calculated effort to demonstrate to foreign

investors and institutions that Zimbabwe was ready to return to the negotiating table. Nevertheless, the analysis reveals that these strategies were significant only as a stepping stone, meaning that they were responsible for laying the ground work for improved economic diplomacy but were not guarantees of its success. In other words, this theme is relevant since it highlights how Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy emerged through political initiatives before being operationalized into practice.

One participant stated that the campaign was part of broader efforts:

“The government introduced several measures, including the re-engagement policy, the ‘Zimbabwe is Open for Business’ campaign, investment promotion activities, and efforts to strengthen bilateral economic relations.” (Participant 01)

Another participant observed that the government also used platforms and forums to promote this new direction:

“Since 2017, government has introduced the re-engagement agenda, the ‘Zimbabwe is Open for Business’ message, investment promotion forums, and stronger participation in regional and international economic platforms.” (Participant 06)

This was reinforced by another respondent, who linked the campaign to trade missions and wider international platforms:

“The government has introduced the re-engagement agenda, the ‘Zimbabwe is Open for Business’ message, investment promotion forums, trade missions, and increased participation in regional and international economic platforms.” (Participant 12)

It is clear from the sentiments above that the participants agreed on the identification of the re-engagement agenda and the campaign 'Zimbabwe is open for business' as the major government policy initiatives after 2017. Participant 01 focuses on the bilateral economic relations, whereas Participant 06 sees the link between the mentioned campaign and the investment forums, including regional ones. Participant 12 reinforces the idea of the link and mentions the trade mission and wider international participation, as well. It can be concluded that the campaign was used by the government as a diplomatic tool through which it would present Zimbabwe as an economy open for trade and investments. Nevertheless, considering the choice of words in the answers, one should note that the mentioned initiatives were more of a promotional and relational nature. Thus, they increased the visibility and communication opportunities but could not guarantee economic re-engagement by themselves.

The re-engagement strategy as a symbol of the “Zimbabwe Is Open for Business” message is supported by Ndakaripa (2020). According to Mlambo and Zondi (2021), the re-engagement strategy was aimed at positioning Zimbabwe after a series of poor external relations. In addition, Chipaike (2023) demonstrates that the strategy also encompassed closer ties with China and other non-Western countries. Gwakwara (2024) considers the bilateral ties between Zimbabwe and EU states and finds that the re-engagement process with Europe was complicated despite the shift in the rhetoric. Therefore, these references support the findings from the interview that indicate that the measures taken by the government helped improve communications; however, they did not eliminate the limitations.

The documentary evidence shows that the re-engagement strategy was not only a slogan, but part of Zimbabwe’s wider effort to rebuild international economic relations after 2017. Mlambo and Zondi (2021) argue that Zimbabwe’s re-engagement policy was intended to move the country away from diplomatic isolation and restore relations with external partners.

Chipaike (2023) further shows that post-2017 re-engagement also involved efforts to strengthen economic relations with China and other non-Western partners. This supports the participants' view that the "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" campaign was designed to reposition Zimbabwe as a country ready for trade, investment and cooperation. However, the evidence also shows that re-engagement needed more than positive communication. Its success depended on policy credibility, institutional capacity and visible implementation. The campaign therefore created a useful diplomatic platform, but the country still needed stronger domestic delivery to make the message convincing.

4.5.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Use of embassies, investment forums, trade missions and bilateral engagements

This sub-theme highlights the increased involvement of the Zimbabwean government in utilizing embassies, investment forums, trade missions, and bilateral relations as means through which economic diplomacy was achieved. In the interviews, the participants revealed that embassies were no longer viewed in terms of their traditional roles alone; instead, they were expected to play other roles such as those of attracting investments and fostering trade, partnerships, and tourism. The importance of the above-mentioned change can be noted in terms of efforts to make economic diplomacy contribute directly to economic recovery. It is interesting to note from the findings that investment forums and trade missions provided opportunities for Zimbabwe to market itself to its foreign partners. However, the findings show that such measures were effective only when there was follow-up.

One participant noted that embassies were increasingly used for economic objectives:

“Since 2017, government has promoted re-engagement, the ‘Zimbabwe is Open for Business’ policy message, investment promotion missions, and stronger use of embassies for economic objectives.” (Participant 03)

Another participant observed that embassy work had shifted towards measurable economic responsibilities:

“Embassies have also been encouraged to focus more on economic outcomes, including trade, tourism, investment, and partnerships. This has shifted diplomatic work from mainly political representation.” (Participant 08)

This was supported by another respondent, who also identified embassies as tools for investment and partnership-building:

“Embassies have increasingly been expected to promote investment, tourism, trade, and international partnerships rather than focusing only on political representation.” (Participant 11)

From the views provided above, it can be seen that the respondents believed that Zimbabwean diplomatic missions had assumed an increased economic function after 2017. Respondent 03 correlates embassies with investment promotion missions while respondent 08 indicates a clear change from a mere political function to economic benefits. Respondent 11 confirms that embassies were supposed to promote investments, tourism, trade and partnerships. From the sentiments provided, it is clear that economic diplomacy was not just about slogans but rather about practical changes in diplomatic processes as well. In other words, the participants did not assert that such diplomatic measures would necessarily translate into investments or trades automatically. In this regard, the finding provides a positive answer

to the third research objective since it indicates that there was indeed an introduction of active diplomatic tools by the government, albeit with conditions.

According to Bergeijk and Moons (2020), embassies and diplomatic networks may help overcome the problem of information asymmetry to ensure smooth trade and investment flows. In her work, Okano-Heijmans (2021) highlights the importance of modern economic diplomacy which is dependent on connecting foreign policy actions with economic interests. Sajadi (2025) asserts that economic diplomacy can be effective when its efforts lead to trade agreements and investment deals and the advancement of national economic interests. In addition, Mujuru and Singh (2023) demonstrate that Zimbabwe and India were engaged in economic diplomacy within the framework of their bilateral relations. All these sources support the claims provided in the interview about the role of embassies, missions and bilateral approaches to enhancing economic diplomacy. In this regard, the author believes that Zimbabwe chose the right tools for economic diplomacy, although it could do more to monitor their effectiveness.

The documentary evidence supports the finding that Zimbabwe used embassies, investment forums, trade missions and bilateral engagements more actively after 2017. Bergeijk and Moons (2020) argue that diplomatic networks can support trade and investment by reducing information gaps between countries and firms. This reflects the role that Zimbabwean embassies were expected to play in promoting investment, tourism, trade and international partnerships. Mujuru and Singh (2023) also show that Zimbabwe's bilateral relations with India included economic and diplomatic dimensions that were relevant to trade and cooperation. These sources confirm that embassies and bilateral platforms can create openings for economic engagement. However, such tools only become effective when there is clear follow-up from domestic institutions. The researcher's view is that Zimbabwe selected

the right diplomatic instruments, but the effectiveness of those instruments depended on tracking outcomes, supporting investors and turning foreign interest into concrete economic activity.

4.5.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Participation in regional and continental platforms such as SADC and AfCFTA

From this sub-theme, it is evident that the involvement of Zimbabwe in the SADC and AfCFTA was considered critical to the economic diplomacy of the country post-2017. From the data collected through interviews, it can be observed that by joining the regions, Zimbabwe was able to take advantage of opportunities related to access to regional markets, economic cooperation, and formation of value chains. For most participants, this was a positive move due to the fact that the regions are nearby, familiar, and more strategic as far as economic development is concerned. Nevertheless, the participants emphasized the fact that being part of the region alone will not lead to success. In other words, there must be the ability to produce goods/services, meet infrastructural and quality standards to capitalize on the benefits offered by the regions.

It was mentioned by one participant that Zimbabwe had become quite proactive in regards to regional integration:

“Zimbabwe has been relatively active in regional integration discussions, particularly through SADC and AfCFTA. The country understands that regional markets are important for trade expansion.” (Participant 01)

Another participant observed that regional integration formed an important part of Zimbabwe’s economic diplomacy:

“Zimbabwe has been active in regional integration through SADC and AfCFTA, and this is an important part of its economic diplomacy. These platforms give the country access to wider markets.” (Participant 10)

This was reinforced by another respondent, who linked regional platforms to trade expansion and value chains:

“Zimbabwe has been active in regional integration efforts through SADC and AfCFTA, which is important for trade expansion and regional value chains.” (Participant 12)

These excerpts demonstrate how participants agreed on the relevance of SADC and AfCFTA in the process of economic diplomacy for Zimbabwe. Specifically, Participant 01 emphasizes regional markets as the way to develop economic diplomacy through trade. Participant 10 explains how SADC and AfCFTA have become an important aspect of the country’s economic diplomacy because they offer access to new markets. Participant 12 further elaborates on the issue by suggesting that such economic diplomacy instruments as SADC and AfCFTA are linked to regional value chains. Therefore, these responses confirm that Zimbabwean regional diplomacy contributed to creating opportunities for economic diplomacy. Nevertheless, the broader context provided by other questions also indicates that access to new markets is effective if a company is able to deliver its products regularly and compete effectively. In this regard, the finding answers the third research objective since it demonstrates that regional and continental economic diplomacy was promoted by Zimbabwe’s government.

Based on Musavengane & Simatele (2022), regional strategies are essential in the economic diplomacy of Southern Africa because the countries in the region have chosen to incorporate regional organizations as an important instrument in the pursuit of their economic

goals through trade and investment. Further, Rusero (2024) gives insight into the foreign policy of Zimbabwe in the SADC and proves that regional diplomacy remains an important dimension of the foreign policy orientation of the country. UNCTAD (2024) underscores the necessity for Africa to increase trade by developing regional markets and reducing trade costs and increasing participation in the value chain. Besides, Nkomo (2022) states that regional diplomacy of Zimbabwe relies greatly on its relations with South Africa, which plays an essential role in the region from both economic and diplomatic perspectives. Therefore, the literature above shows the relevance of regional platforms while also demonstrating the limitations of regional diplomacy as an individual instrument.

The documentary evidence from regional trade analysis supports the finding that SADC and AfCFTA created important opportunities for Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy, but they were not sufficient by themselves. UNCTAD (2024) argues that Africa's trade potential depends on reducing trade costs, improving infrastructure, strengthening trade procedures and building regional value chains. Musavengane and Simatele (2022) also show that regional cooperation remains important in Southern Africa's economic diplomacy because it links national economic interests to wider regional markets. This is relevant to Zimbabwe because regional platforms provide access to larger markets, but firms must still be able to supply competitive goods regularly. The evidence therefore confirms that Zimbabwe's participation in SADC and AfCFTA strengthened its diplomatic positioning. However, the practical benefits remained limited where production, energy, transport and logistics challenges persisted. Regional diplomacy therefore created space for trade, but domestic readiness determined whether that space could be used.

4.5.4 Sub-theme 3.4: Improved diplomatic visibility but incomplete credibility and trust-building

From this sub-theme, it is clear that the economic diplomacy that followed 2017 improved Zimbabwe's visibility internationally; however, credibility was still an issue. The discussion made it clear that while the country had become more active and visible after 2017, there was a difference between image and credibility. It was admitted that the 'Zimbabwe is Open for Business' image did play a key role in changing the attitude of other countries towards Zimbabwe and in creating the impression that the country wanted to reconnect. At the same time, it was also stated that credibility took more time because it involved policy continuity, agreement implementation, transparency, debt settlement, and reliable institutions. Credibility is one of the key aspects of economic diplomacy because it is essential for Zimbabwe's foreign partners to see evidence of stability and commitment.

One of the participants noted that the new image helped improve Zimbabwe's visibility internationally:

“They have improved the image to some extent, especially by showing that Zimbabwe wants to engage and attract investment. The message of openness was useful because it signalled a change.” (Participant 01)

Another participant observed that visibility had improved, but credibility remained harder to rebuild:

“The strategies have improved Zimbabwe's image to some extent because the country appears more open, active, and willing to engage. However, credibility is more difficult to rebuild.” (Participant 08)

This was reinforced by another respondent, who explained why image improved faster than trust:

“Image has improved faster than credibility because credibility takes longer to rebuild. It depends on policy consistency, implementation of agreements, transparency, and macroeconomic stability.” (Participant 12)

From the views, it can be seen that the participants viewed Zimbabwe’s return to the international community positively. It is acknowledged that the nation had indeed been able to improve its image and that diplomacy towards the country became open after 2017. But at the same time, they make it clear that visibility is not the same thing as credibility. Participant 01 talks about image and openness whereas Participant 08 notes how much harder it is to regain credibility than image. Participant 12 gives some insight as to why credibility requires consistent policies, their implementation, transparency, and macroeconomic stability. From this, it can be concluded that although the measures by the government have made diplomatic efforts smoother, credibility remained conditional. This is a direct answer to the third objective since it confirms the assumption that the measures improved international diplomacy, but not international economic relations.

According to Ahmed (2024), the future re-engagement of Zimbabwe is expected to depend on both opportunities emerging from the outside and challenges posed from the inside. According to Kupeta (2025), the process of creating a positive image has played a significant role in the media coverage of the re-engagement process of Zimbabwean diplomats. On the other hand, according to Mutanda (2023), the re-engagement process in Zimbabwe was unsuccessful because of the problem in normalization of the situation through the use of sanctions-based and reforms-based initiatives. At the same time, Caramento et al. (2023) note that although Zimbabwe became more active internationally following the events of 2017, the government still lacked credibility. Overall, all these facts demonstrate that the process of regaining the trust of other countries happened significantly slower than gaining their attention.

In general, it can be stated that the economic diplomacy of Zimbabwe has succeeded in regaining its visibility, yet its credibility is still missing.

The documentary evidence can be infused here by showing that Zimbabwe's post-2017 re-engagement improved visibility, but credibility remained incomplete. Ahmed (2024) argues that Zimbabwe's international re-engagement was shaped by both external opportunities and internal constraints. This supports the interview finding that the country became more visible and more willing to engage, but still faced doubts about policy stability, transparency and implementation. Caramento, Tendi and Tinho (2023) also show that Zimbabwe's international engagement after 2017 remained affected by questions of political credibility and reform depth. The evidence therefore confirms that image and trust did not move at the same speed. Zimbabwe could communicate openness quite quickly, but trust required consistent policy behaviour over time. The researcher's view is that economic diplomacy improved the country's external presence, but credibility remained dependent on reforms that foreign partners could observe in practice.

4.6 Summary

This chapter examined the key findings from the research using three thematic areas. Based on the findings, improvements have been made on the diplomatic profile, investment, trade, and regional relations of Zimbabwe since 2017. However, the analysis established that there was no reflection of these results on the foreign direct investments, export performance, and international image of Zimbabwe. Among the issues that have been cited include inconsistency, fragmented institutions, macroeconomic instability, indebtedness, poor infrastructure development, and lack of productive capacity among others. The results of the document review were consistent with the interview findings and proved that the Zimbabwean

vision under Vision 2030 and NDS1 was restricted due to implementation challenges and structural barriers. In conclusion, the chapter establishes that the economic diplomacy of Zimbabwe has recorded some success especially in terms of creating diplomatic avenues for engagement.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

The chapter highlights the summary, conclusions, recommendations, policy implications, and future research directions. The chapter relies on information gathered from the analyzed interviews and document analysis in Chapter Four. It is important to note that the objective of the chapter is not to restate all the findings, but rather to show how the findings relate to the objectives of the study. Therefore, the chapter will indicate if there were any apparent successes of the economic diplomacy of Zimbabwe after 2017, the areas in which it faced limitations, and future directions to improve its effectiveness.

5.2 Summary of the Research

Chapter One: Introduction established the foundational framework for the study by introducing the background context of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since the 2017 political transition. The chapter articulated the shift from international isolation to proactive re-engagement under the "Zimbabwe Is Open for Business" initiative, situating this within broader continental and global trends in economic diplomacy. The statement of the problem highlighted the persistent gap between diplomatic ambitions and tangible economic outcomes despite policy reforms, noting that anticipated improvements in investment inflows, trade performance, and economic growth had remained below expectations. The chapter outlined three specific research objectives focused on assessing FDI inflows and trade performance, examining institutional constraints, and evaluating government measures implemented

between 2017 and 2025. The justification for undertaking the research underscored its scholarly and policy relevance at a time when Zimbabwe's development frameworks such as Vision 2030 and NDS1 hinge on successful diplomatic engagement. The chapter concluded by detailing the key assumptions underpinning the study, the temporal, geographical, and methodological delimitations defining its scope, and the limitations related to time, access, data subjectivity, and generalisability.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework provided a comprehensive review of theoretical and empirical literature on economic diplomacy. The chapter examined three key theoretical frameworks underpinning the study: Economic Diplomacy Theory, which focuses on how states combine economic and diplomatic means to secure objectives such as trade expansion and investment attraction; Institutional Theory and Policy Coherence, which emphasises the role of governance and policymaking in economic diplomacy; and Political Economy Perspectives, which explores the fusion of politics and economics in shaping diplomatic outcomes. The chapter also reviewed stakeholder and perception-based approaches, highlighting how perceptions shape the success of diplomatic initiatives. The conceptualisation of economic diplomacy traced its evolution in international relations from traditional state-centric bargaining to contemporary engagement with multilateral institutions, regional blocs, and non-state actors. The literature review examined the relationship between economic diplomacy and foreign direct investment, analysing determinants of FDI in emerging economies and the role of diplomatic engagement in attracting investment. Zimbabwe's post-2017 economic diplomacy strategy was reviewed, alongside regional economic diplomacy and integration through SADC and AfCFTA. Comparative lessons from emerging economies such as Rwanda, Vietnam, and Ethiopia demonstrated that economic diplomacy can be effective when combined with appropriate domestic policies and

governance credibility. The chapter culminated in the development of a conceptual framework illustrating the relationships between diplomatic strategies, institutional and macroeconomic factors, external variables, and economic outcomes, and identified gaps in the existing literature that justified the current research.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Design detailed the methodological approach adopted to address the research questions. The chapter established that the research was grounded in an interpretivist philosophical paradigm, which holds that social reality is subjective and constructed through the meanings and interpretations individuals attach to their experiences. This paradigm was deemed appropriate because economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe involves multiple actors with distinct perspectives, experiences, and interpretations. The study adopted a qualitative research methodology as the overarching framework, using a case study research design that enabled in-depth analysis of the policy issue within its real-life context. The target population comprised 25 key stakeholders, from which a sample of 15 participants was selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques to ensure the inclusion of knowledgeable informants including policymakers, diplomats, officials from investment promotion agencies, representatives of international financial institutions, and business leaders. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and document analysis, with secondary data drawn from policy documents, government publications, IMF and World Bank reports, trade and investment reports, and academic publications. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data, following a systematic process of familiarisation, coding, theme development and refinement, and interpretation. The chapter also addressed validity and reliability through triangulation, member checking, thick description, reflexivity, and maintenance of an audit trail. Ethical considerations were detailed, including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and secure data storage.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings presented the empirical findings organised thematically in alignment with the three research objectives. The first theme examined economic diplomacy outcomes on FDI and trade performance since 2017, revealing that while Zimbabwe gained renewed investor interest and improved diplomatic visibility, the translation of engagements into actual FDI inflows and export growth remained limited. Participants consistently highlighted a gap between diplomatic activity and measurable economic outcomes, with agreements, forums, and missions not always converting into implemented projects, investment, or trade. The second theme analysed institutional, policy and structural constraints affecting economic diplomacy, identifying three key sub-themes: institutional coordination and fragmentation among ministries, embassies, investment agencies and trade bodies; policy inconsistency, regulatory uncertainty and weak predictability; and macroeconomic instability, currency volatility and debt arrears. These factors were found to undermine investor confidence, weaken the credibility of diplomatic messaging, and limit Zimbabwe's negotiating power. The third theme examined government measures, re-engagement and international economic relations, highlighting the "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" campaign, the use of embassies for economic objectives, participation in regional and continental platforms such as SADC and AfCFTA, and the distinction between improved diplomatic visibility and incomplete credibility and trust-building. The chapter concluded that while Zimbabwe had made notable progress in creating diplomatic openings and improving its international image, the economic benefits remained constrained by domestic structural and policy challenges.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations and Areas for Further Research synthesises the key findings and presents evidence-based conclusions that directly respond to each research question. The chapter discusses the theoretical and policy implications

of the findings, reflecting on how Zimbabwe's experience contributes to the broader literature on economic diplomacy in developing and transitional economies. It offers actionable policy recommendations directed at specific stakeholders, including the Government of Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency, the private sector, regional and international development partners, and academic researchers. The chapter acknowledges the study's limitations, suggests avenues for future research, and reflects on the overall contribution of the dissertation to academic knowledge and policy discourse.

5.3 Conclusions Based on the Study Objectives

5.3.1 Conclusion on Objective One: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Economic Diplomacy's Contribution to FDI and Trade Performance

The study concludes that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since 2017 has successfully enhanced the country's international visibility, generated renewed investor interest, and created diplomatic openings for trade and investment engagement. Stakeholders consistently acknowledged that the "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" campaign and re-engagement strategy effectively communicated a changed national posture, attracting foreign delegations, investment forums, trade missions, and bilateral engagement. However, the study also concludes that these diplomatic achievements have not translated into the anticipated levels of foreign direct investment inflows or export growth. This conclusion is supported by the consistent finding across interviews that while investor attention and interest increased, actual realised investment remained uneven and below expectations. The gap between diplomatic engagement and measurable economic outcomes emerged as a central theme, with participants

noting that agreements, memoranda of understanding, and investment licences did not automatically become implemented projects, job creation, or export revenues.

This conclusion aligns with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, where Ndakaripa (2020) observed that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy produced limited results due to weak domestic reforms. The finding also corroborates the IMF (2025) assessment that investor confidence remained affected by macroeconomic instability, arrears, and policy credibility concerns, and the World Bank (2025) observation that private investment requires sustained reforms and an enabling business environment. The conceptual framework developed in Chapter Two hypothesised that economic outcomes such as FDI and trade are not purely a result of diplomacy but are dependent on coupled domestic policy and economic frameworks. This hypothesis is confirmed by the study's findings, which demonstrate that diplomatic visibility alone is insufficient to secure investment when domestic conditions remain unpredictable and unstable.

The study further concludes that stakeholders perceived economic diplomacy as having created important foundations for future investment, but the conversion of diplomatic effort into economic benefit requires complementary domestic reforms. The documentary evidence from ZIDA (2025) showing increased investment licensing alongside lower actualised investment values supports this conclusion, indicating that while the investment pipeline has grown, the realisation rate remains constrained. The study therefore concludes that Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy has been more successful as a strategy for diplomatic re-engagement than as a direct driver of FDI and trade expansion.

5.3.2 Conclusion on Objective Two: Institutional, Policy and Structural Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Economic Diplomacy

The study concludes that institutional fragmentation, policy inconsistency, and macroeconomic instability have significantly constrained the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since 2017. These factors emerged consistently across participant responses as the primary barriers preventing the translation of diplomatic engagement into tangible economic outcomes. The study establishes that economic diplomacy requires coherent institutional coordination among ministries, embassies, investment agencies, trade bodies, and private sector actors, yet Zimbabwe's institutional landscape remains characterised by siloed operations, duplication, and weak follow-up mechanisms. This fragmentation undermines the unified national message that investors and partners expect, creating confusion, delays, and reduced confidence.

The conclusion regarding policy inconsistency is particularly significant, as participants emphasised that the problem is not always the absence of policies but rather the unpredictability arising from frequent changes, unclear implementation, and weak enforcement. Currency policy, taxation, licensing, and investment regulations were identified as areas where inconsistency creates uncertainty, making it difficult for investors to plan for the long term. This finding supports the institutional theory framework reviewed in Chapter Two, which posits that unified and accountable institutions are better able to implement policies effectively (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The study confirms Ganda's (2020) argument that policy inconsistency contributed to the decline of the Zimbabwean economy and the loss of confidence by international investors. The World Bank (2025) observation that changing policies lead to loss of confidence among investors is also corroborated by the study's findings.

The study further concludes that macroeconomic instability, currency volatility, and debt arrears constitute structural barriers that limit Zimbabwe's negotiating power and reduce

the practical benefits of diplomatic engagement. Participants consistently linked investor reticence to currency instability, debt sustainability, and macroeconomic risks, noting that even compelling diplomatic presentations cannot overcome fundamental economic weaknesses. The finding that debt arrears limit access to international credit and make it difficult for investors and exporters to plan their activities confirms the analysis of Mateko et al. (2025) regarding the persistence of Zimbabwe's debt crisis and its impact on economic confidence. The study therefore concludes that macroeconomic reform is not merely a domestic policy issue but a core condition for successful economic diplomacy.

5.3.3 Conclusion on Objective Three: Government Measures and Their Influence on International Economic Relations

The study concludes that the Government of Zimbabwe implemented a range of measures to promote economic diplomacy that have positively influenced the country's international economic relations by improving diplomatic visibility, creating engagement platforms, and signalling a willingness to re-engage with the international community. The "Zimbabwe is Open for Business" campaign and re-engagement strategy were identified as the primary policy initiatives that repositioned Zimbabwe as an open economy ready for trade, investment, and cooperation. The study finds that these measures were effective in shifting the external perception of Zimbabwe from isolation to engagement, attracting foreign delegations, and creating diplomatic openings that had not existed prior to 2017.

The study also concludes that the government's use of embassies for economic objectives, investment promotion forums, trade missions, and bilateral engagements represents a practical operationalisation of economic diplomacy. Participants noted that embassies had been encouraged to focus on economic outcomes including trade, tourism, investment, and

partnerships, shifting diplomatic work from mainly political representation to measurable economic responsibilities. This finding is consistent with the literature on modern economic diplomacy, which emphasises the importance of connecting foreign policy action with economic interests (Okano-Heijmans, 2021; Bergeijk & Moons, 2020). The documentary evidence from Mujuru and Singh (2023) demonstrating Zimbabwe's engagement with India within the framework of bilateral relations supports this conclusion.

However, the study further concludes that the measures implemented by the government have been more successful in improving Zimbabwe's image than in building the credibility and trust necessary for sustained international economic relations. Participants consistently distinguished between visibility and credibility, noting that while image improved relatively quickly after 2017, credibility takes longer to rebuild and depends on policy consistency, implementation of agreements, transparency, debt settlement, and reliable institutions. This conclusion is supported by the finding that while Zimbabwe had become more active and visible internationally, foreign partners still had doubts about policy stability, transparency, and reform depth. The study confirms that economic diplomacy requires not only diplomatic outreach but also internal preparedness and policy coherence, as argued by Musavengane and Simatele (2022) and Mlambo and Zondi (2021).

The study concludes that Zimbabwe's participation in regional and continental platforms such as SADC and AfCFTA has positively influenced international economic relations by providing access to wider markets and opportunities for regional value chains. However, the practical benefits of regional integration remain limited by domestic production capacity, infrastructure challenges, and the ability to supply competitive goods regularly. The study therefore concludes that while government measures have created important diplomatic

foundations, their influence on international economic relations has been constrained by implementation challenges and structural limitations that require complementary domestic reforms.

5.4 Recommendations Based on the Findings

5.4.1 Recommendations for the Government of Zimbabwe

1. Strengthen institutional coordination for economic diplomacy

The Government of Zimbabwe should establish a formal inter-ministerial coordination mechanism specifically dedicated to economic diplomacy, bringing together the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Mines and Mining Development, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, the Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA), ZimTrade, and the private sector. This mechanism should ensure that all institutions speak with one voice, coordinate investment promotion efforts, and provide consistent follow-up to investor inquiries and trade opportunities. The coordination mechanism should meet regularly, develop joint action plans, and monitor the implementation of diplomatic agreements to ensure they translate into tangible economic outcomes.

2. Enhance policy predictability and consistency

The Government should prioritise policy stability as a core element of economic diplomacy by ensuring that regulations, particularly those related to currency, taxation, licensing, and investment, are clearly communicated, consistently implemented, and not subject to frequent changes that create uncertainty. The government should establish a policy

communication framework that provides investors with advance notice of policy changes, clear implementation guidelines, and predictable transition periods where changes are necessary. This approach will address the finding that policy inconsistency undermines the credibility of diplomatic messaging and reduces investor confidence.

3. Address macroeconomic instability and debt arrears

The Government should accelerate efforts to restore macroeconomic stability by implementing credible fiscal and monetary policies, addressing currency volatility, and pursuing a comprehensive debt resolution strategy. The government should engage international financial institutions, bilateral creditors, and multilateral partners in transparent negotiations to resolve arrears and restore access to international credit. The study's finding that debt arrears and currency instability limit Zimbabwe's negotiating power and reduce investor confidence underscores the urgency of addressing these structural barriers as a prerequisite for successful economic diplomacy.

4. Align economic diplomacy with national development frameworks

The Government should strengthen the alignment between economic diplomacy and national development frameworks, including Vision 2030, NDS1, and the forthcoming NDS2, by ensuring that diplomatic engagement explicitly targets the investment, trade, and partnership priorities identified in these frameworks. Economic diplomacy should be positioned not merely as a foreign policy strategy but as a core development instrument that supports national economic transformation. The government should develop a national economic diplomacy strategy that articulates clear objectives, targets, and indicators for measuring progress, ensuring accountability and evidence-based decision-making.

5. Strengthen the conversion of diplomatic agreements into economic outcomes

The Government should establish a systematic mechanism for tracking and monitoring the implementation of bilateral agreements, memoranda of understanding, investment licences, and trade missions to ensure that diplomatic engagements are followed up and converted into tangible projects, investment, and exports. This mechanism should assign clear responsibilities, establish timelines, and report regularly on progress. The finding that agreements are not being converted quickly enough into actual projects highlights the need for stronger implementation capacity and accountability mechanisms.

5.4.2 Recommendations for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

1. Enhance the economic function of embassies and diplomatic missions

The Ministry should further strengthen the economic function of embassies by providing diplomats with training in trade promotion, investment attraction, and economic diplomacy, and by establishing clear performance targets for economic outcomes. Embassies should be equipped with the necessary resources and expertise to identify investment opportunities, facilitate trade partnerships, and provide market intelligence to Zimbabwean businesses. The study's finding that embassies have been encouraged to focus on economic outcomes supports the need for continued investment in diplomatic capacity for economic engagement.

2. Strengthen bilateral economic relations

The Ministry should intensify bilateral economic engagement with strategic partners, including traditional partners such as China, South Africa, and the European Union, as well as emerging partners in Asia, the Middle East, and other African countries. Bilateral engagement

should focus on investment promotion, trade facilitation, technology transfer, and partnerships in key sectors including mining, agriculture, energy, infrastructure, and tourism. The Ministry should use bilateral platforms to address regulatory and policy concerns raised by investors and partners, building credibility through transparent and consistent engagement.

3. Leverage regional and continental platforms more effectively

The Ministry should strengthen Zimbabwe's participation in regional and continental platforms, including SADC and AfCFTA, by ensuring that the country has the institutional capacity to negotiate effectively, implement agreements, and take advantage of market access opportunities. The Ministry should work with line ministries and the private sector to identify opportunities for regional value chains, address trade barriers, and promote Zimbabwean exports in regional markets. The study's finding that regional platforms provide important opportunities but require domestic readiness suggests the need for coordinated efforts to enhance productive capacity.

5.4.3 Recommendations for the Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency (ZIDA)

1. Improve investment facilitation and aftercare services

ZIDA should enhance its investment facilitation role by providing comprehensive support to investors, including information on regulatory requirements, assistance with licensing and registration, and facilitation of access to infrastructure and utilities. The Agency should also strengthen its aftercare services to ensure that investors receive ongoing support and that their concerns are addressed promptly. The study's finding that investor interest does not always translate into realised investment suggests the need for stronger facilitation and follow-up mechanisms.

2. Strengthen investor targeting and promotion

ZIDA should develop targeted investment promotion strategies that identify priority sectors, source markets, and investor profiles aligned with Zimbabwe's development priorities. The Agency should use data and market intelligence to guide promotion efforts, ensuring that resources are focused on the most promising opportunities. ZIDA should also strengthen its collaboration with embassies, industry associations, and international partners to reach potential investors more effectively.

3. Address investor concerns on policy and regulatory issues

ZIDA should serve as a bridge between investors and government, communicating investor concerns about policy consistency, regulatory uncertainty, and implementation challenges to relevant policymakers. The Agency should advocate for policy reforms that address investor concerns and build confidence in Zimbabwe's investment environment. The study's finding that policy uncertainty is a key constraint on investment suggests the importance of ZIDA's role in policy advocacy.

5.4.4 Recommendations for the Private Sector and Business Community

1. Strengthen public-private partnerships in economic diplomacy

The private sector should actively participate in economic diplomacy efforts by engaging with government on investment promotion, trade facilitation, and policy reform. Business associations should collaborate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, ZIDA, and ZimTrade to provide market intelligence, identify opportunities, and advocate for policy improvements. The study's finding that institutional coordination is essential for economic diplomacy underscores the importance of private sector engagement.

2. Build productive capacity and competitiveness

Zimbabwean businesses should invest in improving productive capacity, quality standards, and competitiveness to take advantage of opportunities created through economic diplomacy. The study's finding that regional integration provides access to markets but requires domestic readiness suggests that businesses must strengthen their ability to supply goods and services competitively. Firms should also explore opportunities for regional value chains and strategic partnerships with foreign investors.

3. Use diplomatic platforms to expand exports and partnerships

Zimbabwean businesses should actively participate in trade missions, investment forums, and bilateral engagements to explore opportunities for exports and partnerships. Companies should use diplomatic platforms to identify potential buyers, partners, and investors, and to build relationships that can lead to tangible commercial outcomes. The study's finding that trade missions and investment forums have increased provides opportunities for businesses to engage.

5.4.5 Recommendations for Regional and International Development Partners

1. Support institutional capacity building for economic diplomacy

Development partners should provide technical assistance and capacity building to strengthen Zimbabwe's institutional framework for economic diplomacy, including support for inter-ministerial coordination, embassy economic functions, investment promotion agencies, and trade facilitation institutions. The finding that institutional fragmentation constrains economic diplomacy suggests the importance of targeted support for institutional strengthening.

2. Support debt resolution and macroeconomic stabilisation

International financial institutions and bilateral partners should engage constructively with Zimbabwe on debt resolution, macroeconomic stabilisation, and reforms that address structural constraints affecting economic diplomacy. The study's finding that debt arrears and macroeconomic instability limit the effectiveness of economic diplomacy underscores the need for collaborative engagement on these issues.

3. Support regional integration and trade facilitation

Development partners should support Zimbabwe's participation in regional integration through SADC and AfCFTA by providing technical assistance on trade facilitation, infrastructure development, and productive capacity building. The finding that regional platforms create opportunities but require domestic readiness suggests the importance of support for addressing supply-side constraints.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

This study has provided valuable insights into Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since 2017, but it also reveals several areas that warrant further investigation. Future research should address the following areas:

5.5.1 Comparative Studies on Economic Diplomacy in Africa

Future research should conduct comparative studies examining economic diplomacy across African countries to identify best practices, common challenges, and contextual factors that influence effectiveness. Comparative analysis with countries such as Rwanda, Kenya, Ghana, or Botswana could provide insights into how different institutional frameworks, policy

approaches, and governance contexts shape the effectiveness of economic diplomacy. Such studies would help situate Zimbabwe's experience within broader continental trends and identify lessons that could inform policy reform.

5.5.2 Quantitative Assessment of Economic Diplomacy Outcomes

While this study adopted a qualitative approach to explore stakeholder perceptions, future research should employ quantitative methods to measure the statistical impact of economic diplomacy on FDI inflows, trade performance, and economic growth. Quantitative studies could use econometric models to analyse the relationship between diplomatic engagement, investment flows, and economic outcomes, controlling for other factors such as macroeconomic conditions and global economic trends. Such studies would complement the qualitative findings by providing empirical evidence on the magnitude and significance of economic diplomacy effects.

5.5.3 Sector-Specific Studies of Economic Diplomacy Effectiveness

Future research should examine the effectiveness of economic diplomacy in specific sectors, such as mining, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and infrastructure. Sector-specific studies would provide insights into how diplomatic engagement differs across sectors, the factors that influence sectoral investment attraction, and the role of sectoral policies in complementing diplomatic efforts. Such research would be valuable for developing targeted strategies that address the unique characteristics and opportunities of each sector.

5.5.4 Institutional Coordination and Policy Coherence Studies

Future research should investigate the institutional coordination and policy coherence mechanisms that support or constrain economic diplomacy in Zimbabwe. Studies could

examine the governance structures, inter-ministerial processes, and implementation mechanisms that shape the effectiveness of diplomatic engagement. Research could also analyse the relationship between policy consistency, institutional credibility, and investor confidence, providing evidence to inform institutional reform.

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ANNEXURES

APPENDIX A: ORGANISATIONAL PERMISSION LETTER 1



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Harare, Zimbabwe

Date: 4 June 2026

To Whom It May Concern

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT ACADEMIC RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

This letter confirms that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has granted the applicant, an MSc International Relations student at Bindura University of Science Education, permission to conduct academic research interviews within the Ministry, subject to the availability and consent of selected officials.

The student is conducting a research project titled “The Successes and Challenges of Zimbabwe’s Economic Diplomacy since 2017.” The study focuses on Zimbabwe’s post-2017 economic diplomacy, including re-engagement efforts, investment promotion, trade relations, regional cooperation and the challenges affecting the translation of diplomatic engagement into measurable economic outcomes.

Permission is granted for the student to engage relevant officials whose work relates to economic diplomacy, bilateral relations, multilateral engagement, trade diplomacy or investment promotion. Participation shall remain voluntary, and officials may decline to answer any question considered confidential, sensitive or outside their mandate.

The Ministry understands that the information collected will be used only for academic purposes. The student is required to preserve confidentiality and ensure that no official statement is attributed to the Ministry or to individual officers without written authorisation.

This permission does not authorise access to classified documents, confidential diplomatic communication or restricted government records.

Yours faithfully,

For: Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

APPENDIX B: ORGANISATIONAL PERMISSION LETTER 2

ZIMBABWE INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency

Harare, Zimbabwe

Date: 1 June 2026

To Whom It May Concern

RE: PERMISSION TO ACCESS INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

This letter serves to confirm that the Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency has granted permission to student number B250323A, a MSc International Relations student at Bindura University of Science Education, to collect academic research information from the Agency.

The student's research is titled "The Successes and Challenges of Zimbabwe's Economic Diplomacy since 2017." The study examines the role of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy in attracting foreign direct investment, improving trade performance and strengthening international economic relations after the 2017 political transition.

The Agency grants the student permission to conduct interviews with selected officials and to consult publicly available documents relevant to investment promotion, investor facilitation, investment licensing and Zimbabwe's post-2017 investment climate. Access to internal records, confidential investor files and restricted institutional documents is excluded from this permission.

Participation by officials will be voluntary and subject to their availability. The student is expected to obtain informed consent from each participant before conducting interviews. The Agency also requires the student to maintain confidentiality and to ensure that the final dissertation does not attribute views to individual officials unless specific written permission is obtained.

This permission is granted for academic purposes only and should not be interpreted as institutional endorsement of the findings, arguments or conclusions of the study.

Yours faithfully,

Zimbabwe Investment and Development Agency

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Bindura University of Science Education

Department of Social Sciences and Humanities

MSc International Relations Research Project

Title of Study: The Successes and Challenges of Zimbabwe's Economic Diplomacy since 2017

Registration Number: B250323A

Supervisor:

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in an academic research study examining the successes and challenges of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since 2017. The study focuses on foreign direct investment, trade performance, re-engagement efforts, regional cooperation and the institutional, policy and structural factors affecting Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy.

Nature of Participation

Your participation will involve taking part in a semi-structured interview. The interview will ask about your professional views and experiences relating to Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy, investment promotion, trade relations, institutional coordination and international economic relations. The interview is expected to take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decline participation, refuse to answer any question, or withdraw from the study at any stage without giving a reason and without any negative consequences.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All information provided will be treated as confidential. Your name, position and organisation will not be disclosed in the final dissertation unless you give written permission. The researcher

will use codes such as Participant 1, Participant 2 and Participant 3 when presenting interview findings.

Use of Information

The information collected will be used only for academic purposes. The findings may be included in the researcher's dissertation and may also be used for academic discussion, presentation or publication, while maintaining confidentiality.

Risks and Benefits

There are no direct financial benefits for participating in this study. However, your participation may contribute to a better understanding of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy and the challenges affecting its effectiveness. The study involves minimal risk, but you may decline to answer any question that you consider sensitive.

Consent Statement

I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided above. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Permission to Audio Record Interview

Please tick one:

☐ I agree that the interview may be audio recorded for transcription and analysis purposes.

☐ I do not agree to audio recording, but I agree that written notes may be taken during the interview.

APPENDIX D: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE A RESEARCH

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION



Bindura University
of Science Education

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

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.zw

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

10 April 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce _____ **(B250323A)** is a student studying for a **Master of Science in International Relations Degree** in the Department of Peace and Governance, Bindura University of Science Education. To ensure the successful completion of this programme, the student is seeking for permission to carry out research in your organisation and also engage with relevant stakeholders within your network.

For any further details pertaining to the student, do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Your usual co-operation and assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Yours respectfully



J. KUREBWA (DR)
Chairperson

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE
CHAIRPERSON
10 APR 2026
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES
PRIVATE BAG 1020, BINDURA, ZIMBABWE

2

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Study Title:

The Success and Challenges of Zimbabwe's Economic Diplomacy since 2017

Section A: Demographic Information

(Tick ✓ where applicable)

1. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. Age Group

- ☐ 20–29
- ☐ 30–39
- ☐ 40–49
- ☐ 50–59
- ☐ 60 and above

3. Highest Level of Education

- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Doctorate (PhD)
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

4. Professional Category

- ☐ Government Official / Policymaker

- ☐ Diplomat / Foreign Affairs Personnel
- ☐ Private Sector / Business Representative
- ☐ Academic / Researcher
- ☐ International Organization Representative
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

5. Years of Experience in Relevant Field

- ☐ Less than 5 years
- ☐ 5–10 years
- ☐ 11–15 years
- ☐ 16–20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

6. Area of Specialisation / Involvement

- ☐ Trade Promotion
- ☐ Investment Promotion
- ☐ Foreign Policy / Diplomacy
- ☐ Economic Planning / Policy
- ☐ Regional Integration (SADC/AfCFTA)
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Section B: Economic Diplomacy Outcomes

(For Government Officials, Diplomats, Private Sector Representatives)

1. In your view, how have Zimbabwe's foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows changed since 2017, and what role has economic diplomacy played in these changes?
2. How would you assess the impact of economic diplomacy on Zimbabwe's trade performance, particularly in terms of exports, imports, and market access?
3. To what extent do you think initiatives such as re-engagement strategies and international partnerships have contributed to improvements in investment and trade outcomes?

4. What evidence (e.g., trends, policies, agreements, or experiences) supports your assessment of the success or limitations of economic diplomacy in enhancing Zimbabwe's economic performance?

Section C: Institutional and Structural Factors

(For Government Officials, Policymakers, Diplomats, and Private Sector Representatives)

1. What institutional factors (e.g., government coordination, capacity, or leadership) have influenced the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy?
2. How have domestic policies, including regulatory frameworks and economic reforms, affected the implementation and outcomes of economic diplomacy?
3. What structural challenges (e.g., sanctions, macroeconomic instability, infrastructure constraints) have impacted Zimbabwe's ability to effectively engage in economic diplomacy?
4. In your opinion, how have these institutional, policy, and structural factors either enabled or constrained Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy efforts?

Section D: Government Measures and International Relations

(For Government Officials, Policymakers, Diplomats, Private Sector Representatives, and International Organization Representatives)

1. What key measures or strategies has the Zimbabwean government introduced to promote economic diplomacy since 2017?
2. How have these measures influenced Zimbabwe's relationships with international partners, including bilateral and multilateral engagements?
3. To what extent have these strategies improved Zimbabwe's image and credibility in the international economic system?
4. What challenges or gaps remain in the government's approach to economic diplomacy, and how could these be addressed to strengthen international economic relations?

Section E: Academic Perspectives on Economic Diplomacy

(For Academics/Researchers)

1. How do you assess the theoretical framework of economic diplomacy used by Zimbabwe, especially in relation to Vision 2030?
2. From an academic perspective, what are the key challenges in aligning Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy with its national development strategies?
3. How effective do you think Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy has been in promoting regional integration efforts, especially through SADC and AfCFTA?
4. In your opinion, what improvements or alternative strategies could Zimbabwe employ to enhance its economic diplomacy in the future?

Closing Question

- Is there anything else you would like to add regarding Zimbabwe's economic diplomacy since 2017 that has not been covered in this interview?

APPENDIX F: TURNITIN REPORTS



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