

## Pakistan-Zimbabwe Ties

By

**Areeba Arif Khan**

*Research Associate*

*Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA), ISSI*

Edited by

**Amina Khan**

September 7, 2023

*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



Since the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, Pakistan and Zimbabwe enjoy friendly relations in terms of cultural, political, and defence ties. Given Pakistan's history of supporting numerous African nations during their struggles for independence, it is noteworthy that Islamabad has committed to "standing by Zimbabwe during its challenging times." This commitment is demonstrated through ongoing support and assistance, extended in every feasible manner. Even before Zimbabwe's independence, Pakistan trained Zimbabwean soldiers during the liberation struggle, and since 1983, both countries have been engaged in military and defence cooperation.<sup>1</sup> The "Engage Africa" policy has emerged as a pivotal component aimed at augmenting Pakistan's outreach to the African continent. This policy encompasses a range of avenues and investment prospects that facilitate robust engagement between Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

The leadership of Zimbabwe is appreciative of the assistance extended during the liberation struggle especially Pakistan's role in the establishment of its Air Force.<sup>2</sup> In 1983, Pakistan signed a defence agreement with Zimbabwe which was renewed in 2007. During this time, Pakistan also sent several senior military experts to help strengthen and train Zimbabwean's army. The experts were to be

<sup>1</sup> "Engage Africa", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan*, November 2019.

[https://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ENGAG\\_AFRICA\\_Nov\\_27-28\\_-2019.pdf](https://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ENGAG_AFRICA_Nov_27-28_-2019.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

stationed in the country for two years.<sup>3</sup> That is why defence cooperation with Zimbabwe remains an important element of bilateral relations.<sup>4</sup>

There is a sizeable Pakistani expatriate community living in Zimbabwe, consisting largely of professionals, businessmen and traders. Additionally, a large number of Indo-Zimbabwean migrants who came from South Asia and settled in Zimbabwe, originally hail from or have family connections in Pakistan.<sup>5</sup> These people are mainly employed in educational institutions and business-related ventures.

Regarding investment, there have recently been joint ventures in the field of trade development. Pakistani businessmen are also investing in the agriculture and mining sectors in Zimbabwe and are working in partnership with local companies specializing in supplying and repairing agriculture and mining machinery. These include gold milling machinery, cranes, blasting equipment, and tractors for agricultural use.<sup>6</sup> In July 2022, a team of Zimbabwean business people visited Pakistan to see the types of investments they could engage in.<sup>7</sup>

On October 5, 2022, during a meeting between the then Federal Minister for Commerce and Investments, Pakistan, Syed Naveed Qamar and Non-Resident Ambassador of Zimbabwe, Lt Gen (Retd) Martin Chedondo, the former conveyed that Pakistan was keen to have strong business ties with Zimbabwe in order to enhance trade, connectivity and cultivate a mutually beneficial partnership.<sup>8</sup> He stressed the need to increase mutual engagement between the business communities as well as the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the two countries to fully realize the potential of bilateral trade.<sup>9</sup>

According to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade, the current level of bilateral trade between Pakistan and Zimbabwe has remained at \$12.45 million during 2021, which

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ivan Zahakata, "Pakistan to deepen Relations with Zimbabwe", *The Herald*, August 09, 2022.  
<https://www.herald.co.zw/pakistan-to-deepen-relations-with-zimbabwe/>

<sup>5</sup> Asma Rashid and Anjum Ghouri, "Pakistan Trade with Africa Peculiarities and Road Ahead", Margalla Papers, Vol III, 2020.  
<https://margallapapers.ndu.edu.pk/site/index>

<sup>6</sup> Ivan Zahakata, "Pakistan too deepen Relations with Zimbabwe", *The Herald*, August 09, 2022.  
<https://www.herald.co.zw/pakistan-to-deepen-relations-with-zimbabwe/>

<sup>7</sup> "Zimbabwe investors eye big deals in Pakistan", *Spiked Media*, August 2022.  
<https://spikedmedia.co.zw/Zimbabwe-investors-eye-big-deals-in-Pakistan/>

<sup>8</sup> "Pakistan wants strong economic ties with Zimbabwe", *Pakistan Press*, Oct 06, 2022.  
<https://www.pakistanpress.pk/pakistan-wants-strong-business-ties-with-zimbabwe-naveed-qamar/>

<sup>9</sup> "Pak Zimbabwe Ties", *TechJuice*, Oct 06, 2022.  
<https://www.techjuice.pk/pakistan-wants-strong-business-ties-with-zimbabwe-naveed-qamar/>

is way below the real potential. Key exports of Pakistan to Zimbabwe include cereals, cotton, machinery, boilers, articles of leather, travel goods, special woven or tufted fabric and plastics.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, Pakistani investors can also invest in Information Technology, infrastructure technology, and satellite installations. Furthermore, since it is a member of the South African Development Community (SADC), Zimbabwe played a vital role in the third Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference and Single Country Exhibition held from November 29 to December 1, 2022, in Johannesburg, South Africa.<sup>11</sup> The business community from Zimbabwe actively participated in the exhibition which helped in exchanging business delegations and establishing joint working groups on trade and trade-related agreements.

Under its “Engage Africa” policy, Pakistan has enlarged its footprint in Africa, both economically and diplomatically. This initiative has opened avenues for Pakistani investors to tap into African markets. Pakistan and Zimbabwe should work hard to further deepen bilateral cooperation and both sides should be more focused on trade and commerce and prioritize people-to-people contacts. Furthermore, the Pakistan side should work towards introducing Pakistani brands and industries in Zimbabwean markets since these have the potential to meet each other's needs.<sup>12</sup>

Increased economic outreach will help translate Pakistan's friendly relations with African countries into a more robust partnership, besides advancing its economic diplomacy goals. As the world becomes increasingly connected, building social, cultural and economic relations with countries in different parts of the world will optimize Pakistan's ability to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships and also fortify its pivot to geo-economics. Enhanced engagement is the best way to increase diplomatic space and take benefit of the opportunities emerging in this ‘Continent of the future.’

---

<sup>10</sup> “Pakistan Exports to Zimbabwe”, *Trade Economics*, October 2022.

<https://tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/exports/zimbabwe>

<sup>11</sup> “Pakistan wants strong economic ties with Zimbabwe”, *Pakistan Press*, Oct 06, 2022.

<https://www.pakistanpress.pk/pakistan-wants-strong-business-ties-with-zimbabwe-naveed-qamar/>

<sup>12</sup> Africa Day Celebration, *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, ISSI*, May 25, 2022.

<https://issi.org.pk/celebrating-africa-day/>