

Policy Brief

The Future Of Zambia's Foreign Policy



1. Executive Summary

The Republic of Zambia should align its future foreign policy on the promotion of trade and investment to the principle objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) because the agreement will increase the volume of intra-African trade by 81% by 2035 and increase the volume of African exports by 29% thus guaranteeing economic growth for the country. Zambia stands to benefit from the agreement due to its geographic location on the continent because it is the linkage between Southern, Central and East Africa. Furthermore, the policy brief critically discusses the future of Zambia's foreign policy by recommending that the country should diversify its exports to the international markets and transition to value added products through agro processing industries. Lastly, improving the road networks of the southern-northern corridor linking the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and establishing trade consulates with strategic trading partner neighbours and having a stable political environment to boost investor confidence have been recommended.

2. Background and Significance

“A state is not an isolated island but a member of a society of states, participation in which is inescapable” – Lenin

The international system has witnessed the establishment and development of nation states after the treaty of Westphalia and the conclusions of World War I and II (Bojang 2018, p. 1). Therefore, member states in the international system have been compelled to establish and maintain diplomatic relations with state and non-state actors in international relations. Furthermore, the establishment of diplomatic relations by nations became an obligation after the end of colonialism and the establishment of the United Nations (UN). As such, sovereign states have continuously formulated and adjusted their foreign policies in order to pursue national interests.

Foreign policy is a government’s strategy to pursue its national interests through interactions with other states. The engagements can be achieved through bilateral and multilateral platforms. Furthermore, Huger Gibson’s understanding is that “foreign policy is a well-rounded comprehensive plan based on knowledge and experience for conducting the business of government with the rest of the world. It is aimed at promoting and protecting the interests of the nations.” (Bojang 2018, p. 2).

The purpose of the policy brief is to critically discuss the future of Zambia’s foreign Policy in the ever globalising and evolving world. “Zambia’s foreign Policy is premised on values and principles which safeguard the country’s social, economic, political, security and cultural interests. The policy also aims at enhancing Zambia’s interaction and cooperation with the international community at both bilateral and multilateral levels.” (Zambia’s Revised Foreign Policy 2014, p. 4). In this regard, as Zambia continues to forge ahead in establishing, altering and implementing foreign policy, its guiding values and principles ought to be adhered to because they will ensure that the country continues to develop.

International organisations such as the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) play a critical role as external factors on foreign policy since they have a profound impact on countries and no nation can conduct international affairs in isolation (Ahmed 2020, p. 789; Bojang 2018, pp. 3-4). Furthermore, Wanjohi (n.d., p. 3) explains that the geographical location of a state is one of the key determinants on its foreign policy.

2.1 The Future of Zambia's Foreign Policy

The Republic of Zambia is a landlocked country in Southern Africa and it is considered to be the gateway to Central, Southern and East Africa. Therefore, the movement of goods and services from the different regional blocs' transits through the country.

The African Union (AU) 18th Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government in January, 2012 consented to increasing intra Africa trade. The Summit concluded with an agreement to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) with the objective of boosting intra Africa trade. Zambia became party to the agreement on 10th February, 2019 and on 4th February, 2021 the National Assembly of Zambia ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (Kabwela 2020).

In cognizant of the abovementioned, the future of Zambia's foreign policy in Africa should be premised on the 2014 revised foreign policy measure 6.1, which pursues the promotion of trade and investment in securing fair trade and access to regional and international markets. Furthermore, the country's future foreign policy should be rooted and heightened on the 2014 revised foreign policy measure 6.8.2(a) to be an active player in promoting African economic growth and development through cooperation, intra-African trade and integration.

Zambia should realign its foreign policy to be in sync with the main objectives of AfCFTA which are to:

- **Create a single market, deepening the economic integration of the continent;**
- **Aid the movement of capital and people, facilitating investment;**
- **Move towards the establishment of a future continental customs union;**
- **Achieve sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic development, gender equality and structural transformations within member states;**
- **Enhance competitiveness of member states within Africa and in the global market; and**
- **Encourage industrial development through diversification and regional value chain development, agricultural development and food security.**

3. Position Statement Directing Policy

The Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should align its foreign policy on trade and investment to be harmonized with the general objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA). Apiko, Woolfrey and Byiers (2020, p. 3) explain that AfCFTA will boost productivity and create employment, further reducing poverty. It is estimated that the implementation of the agreement will increase the volume of intra-African trade by 81% by 2035 and increase the volume of African exports by 29% (World Bank 2020). Zambia should tailor its foreign policy on trade and investment on the principle objectives of AfCFTA because the country will directly benefit from the single market.

The country ought to maximize on its geographical location as the gateway to the different Regional Economic Communities (RECs) by heavily investing in the road networks of the southern-northern corridor linking Southern, Central and East Africa. “Effective modes of transport – including high-quality roads, railroads, ports, and air transport – enable entrepreneurs to get their goods and services to market in a secure and timely manner and facilitate the movement of workers to the most suitable jobs” (World Economic Forum 2016, p. 35). Therefore, the investment in the road networks will permit Zambia to export its goods, services and the movement of people to the rest of the continent thus stimulating the economy.

There is a common position on the African continent that member states cannot solely rely on the export of raw materials because it is unsustainable. Therefore, countries need to diversify their exports and transition to value added products (Apiko et.al 2020, p. 4). In this regard, the future of Zambia’s foreign policy on trade and investment should be anchored on attracting agriculture, agro processing industries, energy and infrastructure. This will increase the regional value chain development and increase domestic industrialisation. Subsequently, employment will be created for the citizens and the economic activities will spur economic development.

The inclusion of the objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) to Zambia’s future foreign policy on trade and investment can be actualised by opening trade consulates with strategic trading partner neighbours in the region to facilitate cross border trade. According to Sommer and Nshimbi (2018) informal cross border trade (ICBT) is cardinal in addressing issues of income generation, job creation and food security for the vulnerable people in Africa such as women and youth, who normally constitute the majority of informal cross-border traders.

Furthermore, in Southern Africa they represent 70% of them (Sommer & Nshimbi 2018). Therefore, it is important that Zambia includes the objectives of AfCFTA in its promotion of trade and investment to the international community, so that the nation can achieve sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic development, gender equality and structural transformation.

The Republic of Zambia is striving to have a stable political environment in order to boost investor confidence and opportunities while at the same time ensuring that section 4.3.2 of Zambia's 2014 revised foreign policy which encourages foreign nationals and other entities intending to operate in Zambia adhere to national laws. In conclusion, the Republic of Zambia through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must include the principle objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) in its foreign policy on the promotion of trade and investment by capitalising on its geographical location on the continent, diversifying exports and transitioning to value added products, improving the road networks linking the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and establishing trade consulates with strategic trading partner neighbours to guarantee cross-border trade.

Reference List

- Ahmed, J. 2020. The Theoretical Significance of Foreign Policy in International Relations – An Analyses. *Journal of Critical Reviews* 2(7):778–792. ISSN- 2394–5125.
- Apiko, P, Woolfrey, S. and Byiers, B. 2020. The promise of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) (No. 287). ECDPM Discussion paper.
- Bojang, AS. 2018. The Study of Foreign Policy in International Relations. *Journal of Political Sciences & Public Affairs*. 6(4):1–9.
- Kabwela, C. 2020. Zambia Ratifies AfCFTA, Deposits Instruments of Accession to AU. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <https://www.mofa.gov.zm/zambia-ratifies-afcfta-deposits-instruments-of-accession-to-au/>(accessed on 28 July 2021)
- Sommer, L & Nshimbi, C. 2018. The African Continental Free Trade Area: An Opportunity for Informal Cross-Border Trade. International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development.
- Wanjohi, MA. n.d. State's Foreign Policy: Determinants and Constraints.
- World Bank. 2020. The African Continental Free Trade Area: Economic and Distributional Effects. Washington DC: World Bank Group. West Africa Brief
- World Economic Forum .2016. The Global Competitiveness Report 2016–2017, World Economic Forum, Geneva. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2016-2017/05FullReport/TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2016-2017_FINAL.pdf (accessed on 28 July 2021).
- Zambia's Revised Foreign Policy .2014. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Republic of Zambia.