

# BBC World News

## Zimbabwe - China

### Robert Lawrence Kuhn

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**HOST:** Robert Kuhn is a political and economics commentator, and the author of *How China's Leaders Think*. He joins us now live from New York. Welcome to the program. Thanks very much for joining us. First I want to ask you what you made of the timing of the visit by Zimbabwe's military chief to China, just weeks before this change of government.

**RLK:** Well China says it was coincidental. It was a normal visit but I think this has to be looked at in the long view of history. We all know of China's long relationships with Zimbabwe.



RLK: China respects old friends: Zimbabwe as a country has long defended China and they have had mutual interests. But over the years China has become much more sophisticated, much more nuanced in its approach to foreign affairs, especially under President Xi Jinping - and in the 'New Era' which began at the 19th Party National Congress, in addition to the domestic transformations, and the party rule and increasing reform and rule of law, international prominence is extremely important for China. It's really remarkable: China is talking about coming to the center stage of the international community, an international community of shared future in which China would play a major role, with a very strong composite national strength heading towards mid-century.



RLK: And in this context, China-African relations are exceedingly important. China has substantial investments in countries throughout Africa, although Zimbabwe is not its most strategic partner. It doesn't get significant strategic resources from Zimbabwe, yet it symbolizes this transition that China is making from the old sort of revolutionary approach of countries that defied the West that had a relationship with China, to a much more sophisticated and nuanced approach to international relations. So I'd be very surprised if China violated its historic non-interference in the internal affairs of the nations, as China has said is its absolute certainty in terms of its foreign policy objectives.



RLK: But with this new nuanced approach, China wants a stable government. It doesn't want its hundreds of millions of investment dollars and tens of thousands of workers put at risk. China has responsibilities to these people, so China is not sorry to see Zimbabwe heading towards a new kind of stability. Even though it requires an old friend to leave, China's looking to the future and it's a much different world for China today than it was in the past.

HOST: Robert just let me ask very quickly and briefly if we can, Robert Mugabe leaving office - what does that mean for relations with China now?



RLK: I think China's very well prepared for it. I don't think there was any collusion, but China is sophisticated. They know what's going on. They know what's in its own best interest, and China is more than adequately prepared for the future - to continue its investments and continue its activities in Zimbabwe, as well as throughout Africa.

HOST: We appreciate your analysis, Robert, and we look to see you again soon.

