

# How did African actors change the Commonwealth after independence?

The impact of independent African countries on the Commonwealth of Nations, with reference to the Rhodesian crisis 1964-1969.

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January 2020

Presented to The Faculty of Humanities Leiden University  
Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations

Specialisation: Global Order in Historical Perspective

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## Abstract

This thesis presents an analysis of the impact that African actors had on the Commonwealth, after their independence. By tracing their agency during the Rhodesian crisis within the forum of the Commonwealth during 1964 to 1969, this thesis endeavours to expose a distinct perspective of its history and transformation. It reveals how those actors shaped the Commonwealth, in their demand for majority rule and the end to the racist regime in Rhodesia. Incorporating these actors into research on the Commonwealth during the crisis reveals how they guided discussions on racial equality during the Conferences in the 1960s. These actors not only managed to alter the character, debate and principles of the Commonwealth, additionally they shaped the wider agenda of international relations, to prioritise issues of race in other forums such as the United Nations.

## Introduction

The Commonwealth of Nations, created at first in 1931, comprises of fifty-three independent states from the Global ‘North’ and ‘South’ and spans across five regions.<sup>1</sup> At first designed to entrench British imperial interests after its descent from Empire, it became known as a “family of nations”, connected by their colonial history. From 1947, it began to integrate its colonial subjects into an international organisation and merged a myriad of diverse identities and experiences.<sup>2</sup> After the independence of India and Pakistan in the late 1940s, the Commonwealth entered into a new era, one in which the ‘modern’ Commonwealth transpired in a unique, unpredictable and fascinating way. With the independence of twelve African nations from 1957, it was then hailed as the “multi-racial” Commonwealth. Without a doubt, the political upheaval of the African continent in the 1960s was the “greatest single change” that the Commonwealth had witnessed.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this upheaval, there remains no explicit literature that concentrates on the role of African actors in the Commonwealth. While scholars such as Mazrui and Marshall highlight their involvement in the organisation’s transformation, many do not focus on the ‘African’ Commonwealth in its entirety and additionally often write from a British centred perspective.<sup>4</sup> Nor does much literature bring the global history of the Commonwealth into focus. Hence there appears to be an opportunity to correct the one-sided approach to the analysis of the Commonwealth, thus my thesis endeavours to focus on this understudied African dimension.

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<sup>1</sup> “About us,” The Commonwealth, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://thecommonwealth.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Communiqué, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> David McIntyre, *The Commonwealth Of Nations* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1977): 446.

<sup>4</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, *The Anglo-African Commonwealth: Political Friction and Cultural Fusion* (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd, 1967); Philip Murphy, *The Empire’s New Clothes. The Myth of the Commonwealth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

This thesis poses the research question: *How did African actors change the Commonwealth after independence?* In assessing this change, this thesis traces the actions of African Commonwealth members during the Rhodesian crisis from 1964 until 1969, to reveal the impact they had on the Commonwealth.

Once part of the British Empire and like most other colonies, Rhodesia (also known as Southern Rhodesia and later Zimbabwe) attempted to become independent of Britain from the late 1950s. Yet the path to independence was a much longer and arduous struggle when compared to others in the region. Never explicitly governed by Britain, a racist and arbitrary white population held legitimate power, ruling the native African population since its inception in 1899. After the wave of decolonisation had begun to sweep over the African continent, Rhodesia's neighbours became independent under African majorities. Concerned with the effect this might have on its white population and desire to continue ruling itself, the Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith declared a 'Universal Declaration of Independence' (UDI) from Britain in November 1965. Failing to prevent this, the British Government announced this illegal however this illegal regime would continue to hold power until 1980.

The Rhodesian crisis is often discussed by assessing the role of Britain or the United States (US). However, the following research focuses on how the crisis was handled, debated and acted upon within the Commonwealth and illuminates the agency of its African Commonwealth members in attempting to bring Rhodesia to majority rule. Additionally, it will outline how the issue of racial equality dominated the minds of African elites; this motivated them to shape not only the Commonwealth, but also the wider international relations agenda. The purpose of this research is to re-evaluate and de-Briticise the Commonwealth's history, highlighting the impact that newly independent African countries had on the very essence of the organisation.

This thesis begins with a comprehensive literature review of the Commonwealth's history and the Rhodesian crisis to date. While both are not completely overlooked topics, I argue that little has been done to facilitate a focus on the international dimensions. Following this, I will outline the context of the Rhodesian crisis and its problematic history up until the UDI in 1965. Furthermore, the thesis will proceed in analysing the impact of its African members, structured chronologically by Commonwealth meetings. These were once called the 'Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conferences', later changing to 'Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings', to cover the diverse political circumstances of its members. These were once largely unstructured meetings, held every couple of years, however during this period they were held more often than any before and after. These conferences will illuminate the actions taken by the African Commonwealth members to demand racial equality, not only for African Rhodesian, fellow Commonwealth countries but also for the entire world. This analysis sheds light on how the Commonwealth was undeniably challenged, resisted and transformed throughout this period, in many ways unthinkable when it was first created in the early twentieth century.

### *Methodology*

Using a range of archival sources, this thesis explores the understudied impact of African actors on the Commonwealth. First and foremost my analysis will focus primarily on the official "Final Communiqués" of the Commonwealth Conferences, from 1964 until 1969. I discovered these in the National Archives, as well as the useful book documented by the Commonwealth Secretariat titled *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986*. Due to the huge quantity of

documents, I have chosen to remain focused on the 1960s, since most British colonies had just become independent and because this period reveals the most conspicuous change. Prior to the 1960s, meetings were given much less significance; on average each Communiqué lasted one to three pages from 1944 until 1960, and this reflects the absence of vigorous debate. However, during the 1960s, the Communiqués were rarely below five pages and often reached more than ten. Indeed this period was the most contested, as well as the most active period for the Commonwealth; with its ‘new’ members having a greater interest in using this platform to debate international issues than its ‘old’ ones.

Relying solely on the official documents of the Commonwealth overlooks the fact that the organisation is largely structured through informal networks and consultations. Since the final Communiqués do not reflect the full level of debate, nor do they capture different reactions and emotions expressed by its members, I will also include unofficial telegrams and letters, also found at the National Archives. After the establishment of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965, members used it to contact each other and interestingly it shows how Britain’s involvement in all Commonwealth matters was often bypassed. Since the National Archives are in London, I have also used various British Foreign office sources to further uncover the actions taken by African Commonwealth members to compel Britain to act in Southern Rhodesia. In addition, I found it fascinating to understand how British prime ministers and diplomats dealt with and felt about the newer members. Undoubtedly, it is impossible to avoid bias on every source, and this is common in both the British and Commonwealth Secretariat sources. Yet combining the more impartial Commonwealth documents and personal opinions expressed in private discussions allows me to avoid a complete one-sided perspective on this period. Hence this thesis endeavours to offer a distinctive, and comprehensive account of the actions taken during the lengthy struggle for independence in Southern Rhodesia, by focusing

on the African Commonwealth members' intervention in a crisis that was intended to be the former coloniser's sole responsibility.

To trace the impact of African actors on the Commonwealth, I will use process tracing. This is described as an “analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence— often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena”.<sup>5</sup> This will enable me to trace the agency of those African members, exhibited during those meetings and beyond, and view how they managed to transform the Commonwealth during this period. This thesis attempts to correct the one sided dominance of Commonwealth studies, incorporating a wider range of actors, especially the neglected ‘African’ part of the Commonwealth. It intends to realign Commonwealth history away from the West and incorporate the perspective of African actors in its history and on the wider agenda of International Relations.

## Literature review

### *The Commonwealth*

The British Commonwealth of Nations was first announced at the Imperial Conference in 1926, although there were previous discussions about a “family of nations” during the height of the British Empire.<sup>6</sup> It stated that there are Communities within the British Empire, were “equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as

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<sup>5</sup> David Collier, “Understanding Process Tracing,” *Political Science & Politics* 44, no. 4 (2011): 823-824.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Marshall, “The Balfour Formula and the Evolution of the Commonwealth,” *The Round Table* 90, vol. 361 (2001): 545; David McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth, 1965-1990*, (Christchurch: University of Canterbury Press, 1991), 13.

members of the British Commonwealth of Nations”.<sup>7</sup> Those dominion communities were Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and would later become known as the “old” commonwealth members.<sup>8</sup> They finally joined together in what was the British Commonwealth of Nations in 1931. WWI began to disturb the “British world-system”, thus the Commonwealth was put forward as a means of to preserve Britain’s “privileged special relationship with its empire” and to promote their global and national status.<sup>9</sup> The significance given to the organisation was clear, evident as Winston Churchill envisioned the organisation as a “third force” together with the Soviet Union and the USA.<sup>10</sup> Dudley argues that the Commonwealth had a sort of coherence and stability, with a “monopolistic position”, when it was “almost the only organisation bringing together a number of nations in pursuit of shared interest”.<sup>11</sup> This was certainly the case, where the countries within the Commonwealth were countries with predominantly white populations, with the interest of maintaining links with those of a shared history and identity.

India and Pakistan’s accession would begin the development towards a modern, multi-racial organisation, with allegiance to the British monarchy no longer being a requirement for membership. This period was labelled as the “second Commonwealth”, in which its white members were still the majority and arguably brought a “deepened distrust of imperialism and common dislike for racial discrimination” to discussions.<sup>12</sup> Both countries were eager to continue links with Britain and wanted to benefit from increased connections with other

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<sup>7</sup> Her Majesty’s Government. The Imperial Conference. 1926.

[https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/cth11\\_doc\\_1926.pdf](https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/cth11_doc_1926.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Ireland was a dominion at this moment, however they chose not to be a Commonwealth member.

<sup>9</sup> John Darwin, *The Empire Project, The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 418; Krishnan Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 10.

<sup>10</sup> McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, 66.

<sup>11</sup> B. J. Dudley, “The Commonwealth and the Nigeria/Biafra conflict,” *The impact of African issues on the Commonwealth* (1969): 14-30.

<sup>12</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, *The Anglo-African Commonwealth: Political Friction and Cultural Fusion* (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd, 1967), 2.

Commonwealth members. The joining of Ghana and Nigeria marked the “third Commonwealth”, tilting the racial composition and “strengthening the principle of multi-racialism”.<sup>13</sup> It is largely debated among scholars, including Dudley and Homes, that the huge wave of independence in Africa ultimately changed the Commonwealth, in a way that made it “unrecognisable” even from the “second Commonwealth”.<sup>14</sup>

Former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan stated, “the Empire is not breaking up, it is growing up” and these imperial notions about Britain and the superiority of its old dominions would continue well into its existence, creating dissonance within the organisation.<sup>15</sup> Undoubtedly the transition between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ Commonwealth was taken with caution by British politicians. Darwin highlights how Churchill was apprehensive towards permitting newly independent members to join, largely because they felt their own relations with its older members would be impeded.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, Darwin claims Britain would hold the core until the organisation became less about British membership, and more about using it as a platform to resist British sustained attempts at “old fashioned imperialism”.<sup>17</sup> The Commonwealth first served as a “blunting tool for anti-colonial attitudes”, however it is clear that the rise in membership from the Third World would have several effects: British influence would diminish, Commonwealth solidarity would be tested and particularly the African bloc of nations would use the organisation to resist not only Britain’s authority but began to alter the Commonwealth’s principles.<sup>18</sup> In effect, decolonisation – especially on the African continent – challenged its very preservation.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Dudley, “The Commonwealth and the Nigeria/Biafra conflict,” 29; John Homes, “The Impact of the Commonwealth on the Emergence of Africa,” *International Organisation* 16, no. 2 (1962): 291-293.

<sup>15</sup> Krishnan Srinivasan, “Nobody’s Commonwealth? The Commonwealth in Britain’s post-imperial adjustment,” *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 44, vol. 2 (2006): 261.

<sup>16</sup> Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 571-562.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Discussions on the Commonwealth have continued to be dominated by the view that the organisation was exclusively this construction of British imperialism. In many ways this transpired. The fact that the British monarchy has always been the head of the Commonwealth reiterates this view.<sup>19</sup> Lawal's account also aligns with this view, where he argues that Britain devised decolonisation for Nigeria in a deliberate and well-considered manner. Britain's transfer of power to its colonial countries through the Commonwealth, was thought to be, on the one hand a way to contain colonial nationalism, and on the other, a guarantee that newly independent countries would continue to be dependent on Britain, thus maintaining the economic and political benefits of its former colony.<sup>20</sup> Lawal highlights how Britain sought not to end the formal empire, but instead transform it into something that would continue to offer the benefits of being an imperial power. Similar to many accounts on the organisation, Lawal focuses on British perceptions about Nigeria's independence, and it would have been fascinating to compare how particular Nigerian elites considered the Commonwealth at this time. This would have created a more thorough depiction of the organisation from a variety of perspectives. This position also fails to consider the reality of the situation. Decolonisation rapidly transpired, in a way that Britain did not plan, and this had many effects on the Commonwealth.

Although I agree with the fact that the Commonwealth was at first designed to safeguard British imperialism and maintain its global power, I notice that many authors elevate this when examining Commonwealth history. It is noteworthy, however a fixation of this very fact has led scholars to somewhat neglect Commonwealth studies beyond its relevance to Britain.

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<sup>19</sup> Mélanie Torrent, "A Commonwealth Approach to Decolonisation," *Études Anglaises* 65, no. 3 (2012): 349-350.

<sup>20</sup> Olakunle A. Lawal, "From Colonial Reforms to Decolonization: Britain and the Transfer of Power in Nigeria, 1947-1960", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 19 (2010): 42-55.

Moreover, failing to consider other perspectives has ensured a limited focus on the transformation of, the largely cohesive Commonwealth, to one that was internally contested (as result of the accession of newly independent countries). In addition, it largely overlooks the way that African members transformed the character, meaning and discussion within the Commonwealth. My research therefore endeavours to shed light on how newly independent African members not only reinvigorated the Commonwealth (beyond British means), as well as how they shaped the international agenda, particularly on matters of race. Nonetheless, there is some discussion on it, which I will highlight in the following section.

### *Transformation of the Commonwealth*

There is recognition in the literature that from the 1960s onwards, the character of the organisation had begun to change. This was undoubtedly due to the unparalleled development of decolonisation. The post-war period saw the increased prevalence of nationalist movements, whereby unified dialogues within the Commonwealth were “shattered by the arrival of the rest”.<sup>21</sup> Homes explores this and argues how the emergence of an independent Africa altered the very meaning of the Commonwealth, where decolonisation guided it to become a ‘new’ multiracial Commonwealth.<sup>22</sup> There was no doubt that British politicians showed scepticism to the African entry into the Commonwealth, and they largely feared that the creation of an Afro-Asian bloc would act as a hindrance to their interests. This transition also coincided with the creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat, which was widely supported by several African leaders as “a means of taking the Commonwealth conference

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<sup>21</sup> Timothy M. Shaw and Lucian M. Ashworth, “Commonwealth Perspectives on International Relations,” *International Affairs* 86, vol. 5 (2010): 1155.

<sup>22</sup> Homes, “The Impact of the Commonwealth on the Emergence of Africa,” 291-293.

machinery out of Britain's hands".<sup>23</sup> The institutionalising element of the organisation, as well as the altering of its character would present defiance within the Commonwealth, against its former colonizer.<sup>24</sup>

Torrent explores how the accession of non-white members severely curtailed the "British character that had remained central to the Commonwealth".<sup>25</sup> This is evident in the Rhodesian crisis, when matters usually carried out in a bilateral way with Britain, also had to deal with various positions from its African members, even when Britain and Southern Rhodesia constantly claimed it to be Britain's sole responsibility. Torrent argues that the Commonwealth must be positioned within the global context, in order to see how the organisation was altered by decolonisation and became much more about resistance and opposition, as it was purely a subsection of British dominance.<sup>26</sup> The strength and distinctiveness of Torrent's argument is apparent when he highlights the agency of non-British actors, like Nkrumah in Ghana, while many other accounts tend to focus on British officials and policies alone. Looking at how members outside of Britain elevated their ideas about decolonisation, and its subsequent effects offers us a different analysis about the Commonwealth; my research intends to duplicate this focus.

In contrast, Srinivasan incongruously refers to the organisation as the "British Commonwealth", and concentrates predominantly on how Britain became uninterested when it could not exert its influence, the way it had previously. He fails to accurately explore the value of the organisation to other members and ultimately takes away their agency within it. This approach rests in large because Srinivasan relies only on secondary sources and the

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<sup>23</sup> Lorna Lloyd, "'Us and Them': The Changing Nature of Commonwealth Diplomacy, 1880-1973," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 39, no. 3 (2002): 24.

<sup>24</sup> Lawal, "From Colonial Reforms to Decolonization," 50.

<sup>25</sup> Torrent, "A Commonwealth Approach to Decolonisation," 355.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 358-360.

*Round Table*, and is therefore dominated by British views. I was highly disappointed with Srinivasan's piece because I expected that his chapters called the "Nehru Commonwealth" and the "African Commonwealth" would involve voices from newly independent countries. This would have been a welcome change from Commonwealth history, however Srinivasan does not offer this. May and Mole also argue it seems the Commonwealth is only given consideration by Srinivasan when explored through British eyes.<sup>27</sup> By focusing on the impact of African members into the Commonwealth, my research endeavours to offer a concrete study on the "African Commonwealth" in its own right, which Srinivasan regrettably fails to do.

Onslow offers a more nuanced account of the Commonwealth's history, differing from Srinivasan since she takes into consideration the organisation's shift away from British command. As well she places it within the context of the geopolitical environment. She argues that in a variety of ways, the Commonwealth adopted a neutral approach and instead played a particular role in debates about state building, development and racial justice.<sup>28</sup> As a result of this, she argues that newly independent countries and smaller states saw the organisation as a platform to enhance their voice internationally and this is especially prevalent in terms of promoting racial equality.<sup>29</sup> The Commonwealth's relaxed type of diplomacy offered formal and informal networks, and allowed newly independent countries, such as the prominent case of Nigeria, to promote its own principles and goals.<sup>30</sup> Onslow does well to assess the organisation not just from a realist perspective of hard power, military

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<sup>27</sup> David McIntyre, Stuart Mole, Lucian M. Ashworth, Timothy M. Shaw and Alex, May, "Whose Commonwealth? Responses to Krishnan Srinivasan's *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth*," *The Round Table* 96, vol. 388 (2007): 58.

<sup>28</sup> Sue Onslow, "The Commonwealth and the Cold War, Neutralism, and Non-Alignment," *The International History Review* 37, no. 5 (2015): 1060.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 1071.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid* 1068; Donnelly, Elizabeth and Daragh Neville. "Nigeria and the Commonwealth: Influence by Accident or Design." in *The Oxford Handbook of Nigerian Politics* edited by Carl Levan and Patrick Ukata (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 715.

alliances and economic capabilities, but also by looking at its soft power and symbolic importance. This contribution is notable because it begins to shed a new light on how other nations viewed and acted within the Commonwealth, telling a different narrative to the familiar one, that the Commonwealth was merely Britain clutching onto its fallen Empire.

Mazrui argues that the Commonwealth had two influential cores, the British and the African, forging what he calls the “Anglo-African Commonwealth”.<sup>31</sup> The beginning of this shift was South Africa’s decision to withdraw their membership in 1961, and demonstrated the “impact of the new black states on this community of nations”. Miller, who writes an excellent chapter about how the African dimension altered the Commonwealth, also expresses an interesting interpretation. Miller argues that African Commonwealth members not only “damaged the fragile sense of unity”, but significantly challenged the principles that the Commonwealth had once stood for, in which Africa brought debates about self-determination, multi-racialism, one-man-one-vote, into the centre of Commonwealth values.<sup>32</sup> What is most notable about Miller’s discussion is the way he outlines how African independence not only changed the character of the Commonwealth, but also altered the cohesive characteristic of it. Many scholars, including Srinivasan and Mazrui highlight this change but fail to consider the exact effect of their accession. In line with Miller’s argument, I aim to explore in more detail the specific ways in which African members disrupted the Commonwealth.

Indisputably, African members bolstered diplomacy on issues, injecting them with “tone, temper and emotion”.<sup>33</sup> Diplomatic relations within the Commonwealth had moved away

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<sup>31</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, *The Anglo-African Commonwealth*, 33.

<sup>32</sup> JBD Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition, 1953-1969*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974): 247-263.

<sup>33</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, *The Anglo-African Commonwealth*, 1; Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition, 1953-1969*, 259.

being a “cosy white man’s club”, to one where its very preservation was questioned.<sup>34</sup> African nationalism undoubtedly became a nuisance for Britain during the 1960s and 1970s, where African members brought a “kind of antagonism and acrimony”, altering the very nature of the Commonwealth’s political debate.<sup>35</sup> McKinnon highlights the key role that the African continent and its leaders played in its evolution. He is an ardent advocate, holding the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs, and writing at this time he held the position of Secretary General of the Commonwealth.<sup>36</sup> It is fascinating how in multiple outlets he discusses the role of Africa in its history, not just by focusing on the fact that its membership made up a larger bloc, but how its leaders shaped political debate and altered its identity. His positive attitude on the organisation is guided by his personal experiences and his position, and in some ways embellishes it in a largely optimistic way, trying to show that there have been positive elements to the Commonwealth. He fails to consider the way members disagreed on many occasions, which led to slow action or inaction, nonetheless his analysis on the impact of African leaders is significant since they are so often omitted.

### *Limitations to Commonwealth literature*

One central issue with academic literature on the Commonwealth is that it has been labelled as an organisation with no real power, effectiveness or value to most of its members. The Commonwealth’s lack of institutional capabilities and relatively informal nature means that it does not possess the equivalent characteristics of the typical international organisation; therefore it has not been given similar attention to other international groupings like the UN or NATO. However, the global platform provided another outlet for newly independent nations

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<sup>34</sup> Lloyd, “‘Us and Them’, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth*, 48.

<sup>36</sup> Don McKinnon, “After Abuja: Africa and the Commonwealth,” *The Round Table* 93, no. 375 (2004): 403-404.

in Africa and Asia to use, as a way of promoting key issues and have their say on international problems. Donnelly and Neville highlight how the Commonwealth was also a “forum through which common positions can be negotiated and given a trial, before taken to other multilateral fora, such as the United Nations”.<sup>37</sup> Many International Relations scholars therefore overlook the importance it was given by its members, especially at the beginning of this “new” Commonwealth. My research gives focus to the Commonwealth’s position in the international system, recognising the importance it was given by its newer members. By doing this, I will highlight how it enabled members not only to shape the Commonwealth, but also the agenda of international relations.

Furthermore, limited attention on a variety of Commonwealth perspectives has, in my opinion, created two prevalent assumptions. The first is that it largely remains as the ‘British Commonwealth’, dominated principally by their interests. While it was first constructed as that, relations within the Commonwealth did not only mean relations with Britain; the fact that both Ghana and Tanzania cut diplomatic relations with the British Government but remained a Commonwealth member emphasises this point. As well, this preoccupation ensures that most literature on the Commonwealth fails to truly consider its importance to a variety of its members and the way it was drastically transformed with decolonisation, in turn offering a simplistic account of its history. This was certainly not accurate and my research endeavours to illuminate how the Commonwealth after African independence was significantly altered, and that for many newly independent African countries, it was a valued site for the promotion of key values, especially racial equality.

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<sup>37</sup> Donnelly and Neville, “Nigeria and the Commonwealth”, 715.

The second assumption is that it had very little to say about international affairs, and was largely “outside the parameter of world politics”.<sup>38</sup> Especially during the 1960s, the Commonwealth became an organisation that played a bigger role than the UN and the OAU in internal disputes of its members and on particular international affairs, including the case study I explore. Miller accurately highlights that these crises showed that issues labelled as purely inter-organisational questions “could be tossed backwards and forwards between the UN and the Commonwealth, with the OAU as intervener”.<sup>39</sup> The Commonwealth was entangled in complex international issues, especially during the process of decolonisation and around the issue of racial equality. An inadequate discussion on various Commonwealth perspectives fails to consider its bearing in international relations, but also overlooks important actions taken by non-British actors, which not only transformed the Commonwealth itself but also the way the international system was ordered.

These conclusions are inconsistent with what my research examines. My analysis will therefore attempt to illuminate a different story about the Commonwealth. Focusing on the mid-1960s, I will examine one important moment in which the Commonwealth was undoubtedly reinvigorated: the Rhodesian crisis. First however, I will explore academic literature on the Rhodesian crisis.

### *Literature on the Rhodesian crisis*

The Rhodesian crisis was a hugely divisive matter among Commonwealth members, whereby “Wilson found it extremely difficult to balance the conflicting demands of African

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<sup>38</sup> Rasheeduddin Khan, “Commonwealth and the Third World,” *India Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1984): 57.

<sup>39</sup> Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, 259.

Commonwealth leaders and the Rhodesian Government”.<sup>40</sup> Although Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith reiterated that the issue was a matter only for Britain and Rhodesia, the issue became a chronic rupture in the organisation, and for over twenty years Commonwealth meetings devoted most of their time on it. As Jamaluddin accurately points out, the CPMM served a critical purpose in allowing various actors express their views on the matter, heightening tensions and the ability to vocally criticise the illegal regime.<sup>41</sup> Donnelly *et al* assesses how the Lagos conference was a way that Nigeria attempted to direct debate on the issue. Due to its economic reliance on Britain, Nigeria urged members to sever ties with Rhodesia but not to break with Britain, instead encouraging other African members to keep debate open with its former coloniser.<sup>42</sup> The CPMM was a platform in which debate was fragmented and contested on the Rhodesian crisis, but as well it offered a chance for African voices to be elevated African against white-minority governments.

Mazrui points out the distinctiveness of the situation. No British Prime Minister had ever met with a rebel from its own colony before, and he asks why this might have been. Firstly the issue of race was prominent. Smith was a European Rhodesia, and therefore it was clear that Britain would not use force against its “kith and kin”, like it had previously against black rebels in Kenya. The way that Britain was willing to use force on Kenya, but not on Rhodesia, “heightened racial tensions”.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, the unique way Rhodesia had largely governed itself for years was another reason, but Mazrui also highlights the fact that prior to Smith’s UDI, Wilson had reassured him that force would not be used against them. This certainly made the situation much more difficult because Wilson clearly had no form of threat to make against

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 326.

<sup>41</sup> Jazliza Jamaluddin, “The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM): the United Kingdom and the Rhodesian problem, 1966-79,” *The University of Nottingham* (2016): 13.

<sup>42</sup> Donnelly and Neville, “Nigeria and the Commonwealth”, 716-717.

<sup>43</sup> Mazrui, *The Anglo-African Commonwealth*, 56.

Smith during his negotiations. This account underlines how this crisis was hugely difficult and problematic for the Commonwealth.

As one of the few academics that study the Rhodesian crisis specifically in reference to the Commonwealth, Watts' explores the relations between its old members and Britain. Tracing how differences in attitudes impacted the handling of the crisis, Watts argues that Canada was the most active member when compared to New Zealand and Australia. It found sympathies for white Europeans in Rhodesia but it was also in favour of racial equality for African Rhodesians.<sup>44</sup> This inevitably meant they were more willing to act as a mediator in discussions between Britain and Rhodesia, and Britain and the African members. As well, Canada was driven by their desire to keep the Commonwealth as a platform for debate and motivated to keep the organisation together.

Watts' argument is significant for several reasons. Firstly, he explores the underdeveloped role of other Commonwealth members during the crisis, steering away from focusing solely on British documents and their actions. In addition, it illuminates the Commonwealth as being central to the crisis, and how Canada sought to utilise the organisation to mediate relations as well boost its middle power status.<sup>45</sup> This is a unique aspect because other authors often deem the Commonwealth as meaningless in international affairs, while he claims that it was a legitimate institutional actor, alike the UN. In another piece, Watts highlights how "racial tension, engendered by the problem of Rhodesian independence, threatened the continued existence of the Commonwealth".<sup>46</sup> His analysis does not explore this further; instead he focuses predominantly on a narrowly western perspective. Looking only at the relations

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<sup>44</sup> Carl Watts, "Britain, the Old Commonwealth and the Problem of Rhodesian Independence, 1964–65," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no.1 (2008): 77-80.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Carl Watts, "Dilemmas of Intra-Commonwealth Representation during the Rhodesian Problem, 1964–65," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 45, no. 3 (2007): 323.

between old Commonwealth members, Watts ultimately fails to understand how the UDI affected Africa more generally and how decolonisation played a huge role in the diplomatic affairs of the crisis.<sup>47</sup> My thesis will avoid a Western centric focus, and offer an analysis to correct this one-sided approach.

Murphy contends that the Commonwealth developed “purpose and momentum between the 1960s and the 1990s” as a result of white-minority rule in Southern Africa.<sup>48</sup> Rhodesia made the Commonwealth a “concert of inconvenience” in which British decision-making was made more challenging because they had to contend with African opinions.<sup>49</sup> British members did not exclusively guide the Commonwealth to their particular interests, and Murphy highlights how the organisation facilitated agency of other actors, who would not necessarily grasp the same influencing capabilities in larger, more structured organisations. At the time when British public and politicians doubted the purpose and worth of the Commonwealth, African independence leaders saw it to “complete the liberation struggle they had begun in their own territories, not just in the political sphere but in the economic one as well”, especially Southern Africa.<sup>50</sup> Actions on ending racial inequality in Rhodesia was therefore at the forefront of those African Commonwealth members, who set out to bring liberation to the whole continent.

As former Head of the Commonwealth Institute in London, Murphy offers a valuable contribution to its history. While Murphy does highlight the agency of the African Commonwealth members in several of his writings, he nonetheless does not develop these

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<sup>47</sup> Kate Law, “Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence: An International History”, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 3 (2013): 533.

<sup>48</sup> Murphy, *The Empire’s New Clothes*, 66-76.

<sup>49</sup> Carl Watts, “Britain, the Old Commonwealth”, 76.

<sup>50</sup> Philip Murphy, “Britain and the Commonwealth: Confronting the Past—Imagining the Future”, *The Round Table* 100, no. 414 (2011): 271.

findings much further than a few sentences. His role and subsequent research has been predominantly focused on the relationship between Britain and Commonwealth members, which constrains thinking about the organisation beyond the British standpoint. When he discusses the most active period of the Commonwealth, he tends to concentrate still on the lack of urgency by Britain, especially during the 1960s. It would have been more illuminating to look precisely at how other actors acted during the Rhodesian crisis, therefore my thesis intends to place the actions taken by African Commonwealth members at the centre of my analysis.

Barber explores how the Rhodesian crisis created fractions between those in favour of military intervention for racial equality (the “militant idealists”), and those who supported Britain, who believed force was not the solution (the “pragmatists”).<sup>51</sup> He argues this “created the division in the Commonwealth's most vulnerable spot—the issue of race relations”.<sup>52</sup> This issue proved to make Commonwealth cohesion immensely challenging, and this was largely because of the accession of newly independent members. Interestingly Barber points out how Britain attempted to reach consensus on issues, but the Rhodesian crisis meant that “consensus politics had been abandoned”.<sup>53</sup> Not only due to the increased number of opinions, but the fact that discussions were guided by independent African nations on matters of race and attempted to move Britain’s opinion towards intervention, in a highly unforgiving and uncompromising way. Barber offers a very competent analysis and interesting insight into the issue of race during the Rhodesian crisis. However, he does downplay the impact this had on the Commonwealth. For instance, Barber states, “Rhodesia had been an important item on the agenda, but it had not dominated all else and, while there had been criticism of British policy,

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<sup>51</sup> James Barber, “The impact of the Rhodesian crisis on the commonwealth,” *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* 7, no. 2 (2008): 89.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 87.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 92.

it was relatively mild”.<sup>54</sup> I argue that this criticism was not “relatively mild”, instead the denunciation by African members was huge and this led to the complete transformation of the Commonwealth. Not only because it pushed race relations to the top of its inter-governmental agenda, but it also altered how the organisation positioned itself as a leader on racial equality in the wider international system. My thesis will therefore assess the true impact that its African members had, leading the Commonwealth into a new era of becoming more active in those particular questions.

### *Contribution to Commonwealth history, politics of race and IR*

African independence and their arrival – not only into the Commonwealth but the international system – forced the issue of racial inequality onto the global agenda. Racial distinction, once deployed as a form of subjugation and “civilisation” over territories, was still not considered an important issue in international politics prior to decolonisation.<sup>55</sup> Both colonial and former dominion actors continued to be indolent about racial discrimination across the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the construction of the UN Charter and the affirmation of rights to all peoples, racism was not taken seriously until the 1960s. The unprecedented wave of decolonisation changed the dynamics between the metropole and colonies, but it also meant that newly independent African countries did not idly observe the continuation of racial bias in other countries. Connecting their experiences with others from the Global South, African members of the Commonwealth created pressure from various angles onto those nations that preserved notions of racial superiority. Jensen cites how the UN human rights project “was fundamentally reorganised in late 1962 around the issues of race and religion”,

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Duncan Bell, “Race and international relations: Introduction,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2013): 1.

bringing those topics into the centre of international politics, where previously they had been largely negligible.<sup>56</sup> When reading through the sources from the National Archives, it becomes clear that the gravity and emphasis on racial inequality increases once decolonisation was in force. However, little academic literature traces its transformative nature. My contribution therefore attempts to show that changes within the Commonwealth were part of the wider transformation of the international system and agenda on race, headed for the most part by newly independent African nations.

The apartheid regime in South Africa is often discussed in IR, citing how African nations internationalised the racial discrimination through the transnational anti-Apartheid movement. The case of Southern Rhodesia shows parallels with resistance towards South Africa, however it is far less discussed in literature on the Commonwealth and international race relations. While the Southern Rhodesian case is given significance in studies about Commonwealth relations, the element of race is engaged with far less, in comparison to South African apartheid. My thesis will attempt to place this case within the context of the changing international system, where African actors sought to use their new independent status as a way of shaping the global agenda. Furthermore, literature on Rhodesia often omits an exhaustive account about the role and agency of African Commonwealth members. While it highlights the disparities between older and newer members, very little has gone into detail about the explicit impact of African actors. My thesis aims to enhance the position of these actors, focusing more specifically on their actions rather than the redundancy of British ones, and show *how* those actors not only impacted the Commonwealth, but were an important nexus for change in the wider international system.

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<sup>56</sup> Steven L.B. Jensen, “Embedded or Exceptional? Apartheid and the International Politics of Racial Discrimination”, *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* (2016).  
<https://zeithistorische-forschungen.de/2-2016/5364>.

## Analysis

### *Context of the Rhodesian crisis, 1889-1965*

Southern Rhodesia was very unique in comparison to other British colonies. It began as part of the wider colonial project carried out by the British South Africa Company during the late nineteenth century, to manage and benefit off the expropriation of natural resources in the region.<sup>57</sup> In 1889, the British South Africa Company received Royal Charter from the Queen, enabling them to create treaties, keep a police force, obtain enterprises and develop infrastructure.<sup>58</sup> Often ignorant and uninterested in local African politics and economics, any sign of resistance by native Africans was put down with force. During this period, large numbers of white European (mainly British) populations immigrated to the region, creating towns along the way including the future capital, Salisbury. In 1901, the number of white settlers were 11,000, increasing to 55,408 by 1936.<sup>59</sup> The impact of colonialism was therefore magnified by this influx of white settlers, exacerbating levels of violence and the imposition of forceful racist practises.<sup>60</sup>

Southern Rhodesia's path to independence was made an even greater task, in part because of its distinctive status as a British colony, since the British Government never directly governed

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<sup>57</sup> Michael O. West. "The Struggle for Zimbabwe, Then and Now: Notes Toward a Deep History of the Current Crisis", *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 8, no. 2 (2007): 139-140.

<sup>58</sup> Enocent Msindo, "Settler Rule in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1979", *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, edited by Edward Cavanagh, Lorenzo Veracini, (London, Routledge: 2016): 248.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

<sup>60</sup> West, "The Struggle for Zimbabwe, 140.

it. In 1922, Britain decided to allow a referendum in Southern Rhodesia, which would determine whether to become part of South Africa or create a ‘responsible government’. Southern Rhodesia indicated their desire to become a truly self-governing entity, transitioning to a “quasi-independent” colony in 1923, and this status ensured its ability to develop autonomous powers in defence and to freely determine its own domestic politics and laws of enfranchisement.<sup>61</sup> From this point onwards, the British Government possessed only constitutional responsibility over Southern Rhodesia. They could “negotiate, pressurize, persuade, but it could not enforce its will”, thus Britain’s power would be inevitably limited during negotiations to prevent Southern Rhodesia’s future UDI.<sup>62</sup> It was hence allowed into the Dominions Office along with the older Commonwealth members such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia, giving the white minority led government a high level of legitimacy in ruling how it desired.<sup>63</sup> Different to other British colonies in Africa, Southern Rhodesia had also been allowed to attend Commonwealth meetings, communicate with other members and participate as an equal standing dominion since 1932.<sup>64</sup>

Although the white populations dominated during much of its history, Southern Rhodesian Africans did attempt to mobilise and form an all-African alliance during the inter-war period. Elites endeavoured to create a union with peasants and workers, as well as connecting with Africans in America, France and Britain. However the repressive response by the government ensured any alliance was squashed; deporting, imprisoning and killing any person deemed to

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<sup>61</sup> J.R.T Wood, *So Far and No Further! Rhodesia’s bid for independence during the retreat from empire, 1959-1965* (South Africa, 30° South Publishers Ltd: 2005): 6-9.

<sup>62</sup> Anthony Parsons, “From Southern Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, 1965-1988,” *International Relations* (1988): 354.

<sup>63</sup> Lord Saint Brides, “The Lessons of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia,” *International Security* 4, No. 4 (1980): 177-178.

<sup>64</sup> Carl Watts, “Moments of Tension and Drama”: The Rhodesian Problem at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meetings, 1964–65’. *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 8, no. 1 (2007).

be involved.<sup>65</sup> The Second World War, damage to European Empires and the promise of self-determination expressed in the Atlantic Charter, led to greater empowerment by colonial subjects all across the Global South.<sup>66</sup> While nationalist movements produced independent nations across other parts of Africa, Southern Rhodesia's independence was further delayed as its African elites decided to enter into partnership with the white minority government. Eventually, this uneasy alliance was abandoned and in 1957 the African National Congress was created. Instead of promoting full enfranchisement as its highest priority, it was expressed as an equal demand to, for example, the redistribution of land.<sup>67</sup> Only from 1960 would the party promote "one man, one vote" as its most vital goal.<sup>68</sup> However, African nationalist parties within Southern Rhodesia continued to fall short of producing racial equality and political suffrage for all, as the government continued to imprison its members and promote its own agenda for an independent nation.

In 1953 Southern Rhodesia became part of the Central African Federation (CAF), alongside Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, lasting only ten years. From the British perspective, this was fabricated in hope of producing less confrontation between the two populations, however it was understood by most Africans that it was meant to enhance the power of white settlers. The Federation was immensely ostracised by all of its members, especially Southern Rhodesia. The then Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister Edgar Whitehead began to pursue full sovereignty in 1959, by asking the British Government to reduce their capacity to interfere in their affairs.<sup>69</sup> The sustained pressure from various colonies including these three caused Britain to question the worth of holding onto its empire for much longer, yet it continued to

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<sup>65</sup> West, "The Struggle for Zimbabwe", 141.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> John Day, "Southern Rhodesian African Nationalists and the 1961 Constitution", *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 2 (1969): 222.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Wood, *So Far and No Further*, 15.

reiterate its view that it “would not be abdicating her responsibilities, and would see justice done to all races”.<sup>70</sup> Also during this time, British Prime Minister Macmillan’s “Winds of Change” speech in 1960 seemed to hail a change of direction in Britain’s policy. It not only signalled the acceptance that Africans were now ready, or “civilized” enough for majority rule, it also cautioned the dangers of apartheid in South Africa and of racial discrimination across the continent generally. To the Southern Rhodesia Government and its supporters, this was viewed as a rejection by Britain of “dominion ideas of solidarity”, and created deep suspicion among those white settlers across the region.<sup>71</sup>

In 1961, a new Constitution was passed (although the process excluded most Africans from voting), which permitted fifteen seats for Africans and stated the promise for eventual, political parity for all races.<sup>72</sup> This was rejected by the nationalist parties and led to the beginning of violent confrontation with the government.<sup>73</sup> In response to the changing situation, the Rhodesian Front was created in 1962, enticing other white settlers from surrounding areas, forming an “imagined community of English-speaking white people”.<sup>74</sup> Political tug of war between Britain, Southern Rhodesia and the neighbouring colonies continued until the break-up of the CAF in 1963, which eventually led to Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, becoming the two independent nations of Zambia and Malawi by 1964. In contrast, Britain was unwilling to grant independence to Southern Rhodesia because of the failure to commit to the full enfranchisement of all peoples by the government. In addition,

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>71</sup> Sarah Elizabeth Stockwell, “Britain and decolonization in an Era of Global Change,” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire*, edited by Martin Thomas and Andrew S. Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 78.

<sup>72</sup> Luise White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press: 2015): 75.

<sup>73</sup> Day, “Southern Rhodesian African Nationalists and the 1961 Constitution”, 221.

<sup>74</sup> White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, 105.

opposition from Commonwealth members and the UN meant their support of the Rhodesian minority government “risked serious damage to Britain’s international reputation”.<sup>75</sup>

1964 witnessed Ian Smith becoming the leader of the Rhodesian Front, and in 1965 the party won every seat that was allocated for white voters. This hailed a turn towards an uncompromising Rhodesian Government, headed by a stubborn prime minister. Five principles were put forward to enhance Rhodesia’s transition towards majority rule, with very few being agreed on.<sup>76</sup> Also 1964 saw the Commonwealth meet without Rhodesia, and the consensus there was that independence would not be granted without majority rule. After recurrent failed negotiations and a deterioration of relations, Prime Minister Smith declared a UDI from Britain on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1965. Countering the UDI, the two nationalist parties, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) confirmed their breakaway governments, which led to violence between these two and the government armed forces.<sup>77</sup> No countries recognised Rhodesia’s independence, with Britain claiming it to be illegal against the crown, yet Rhodesian ministers defended their stance in protecting the position of white Europeans and remained committed in asserting themselves a part of the Commonwealth community. While ideas about racial superiority were slowly changing across the Western world, white Rhodesians effectively drew sympathies from Britain and previous dominions like Australia and New Zealand, making for an even more divisive and lengthy crisis.

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<sup>75</sup> Andrew Holt, “Southern Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence”, *National Archives Records and Research* (London, 2015).

<sup>76</sup> “The Issue of Southern Rhodesia”, United Nations Department of Political Affairs, *Trusteeship and Decolonization* 2, no. 5 (1975). Those five principles were: 1) unimpeded progress toward majority rule; 2) no retrogressive amendment of the Rhodesian Constitution; 3) immediate improvement in the political status of the African population; 4) progress toward ending racial discrimination; 5) the British Government would need to be satisfied that any basis for independence was acceptable to the people of Southern Rhodesia as a whole; and later a sixth added in 1966, that is “no independence before majority rule”.

<sup>77</sup> Holt, “Southern Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence”.

Only would Southern Rhodesian become the fully independent and recognised state of Zimbabwe in 1980. The impasse of fifteen years not only affected the stability, politics and people within its borders, but it also had an enormous effect on the entire international community. At different moments in time, various actors came and went – the UN, Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Commonwealth, Britain and later America – attempting to resolve the crisis. It is imperative to note the Cold War dimension of the situation. Decolonisation and the Cold War became unequivocally intertwined developments, especially on the African continent during this period. Both superpowers were interested in harnessing the support of newly independent African nations. Indeed those countries were also keen to play the USA and USSR against each other for their own benefit, whether that is financially, politically or for security measures, and this was evident in Southern Rhodesia. However, my analysis will be primarily concerned with how African Commonwealth members promoted the importance of racial equality, rather than the Cold War dimension. The Commonwealth was less a site for Cold War politics and more so about issues of race, plus as I have discussed in my previous section, little has been discussed to tie both elements together.

### *The transforming Commonwealth – a note on South Africa's membership*

Before I examine my case study, I want to illustrate the importance of another moment that I believe begins the transition into a new era for Commonwealth relations, and indeed propels race onto the forefront of the international agenda. After South Africa had voted to become a republic, Britain contacted several heads of state about it remaining a member of the Commonwealth. British Prime Minister Wilson was apprehensive to assert his view that this

was nothing more than a “constitutional technicality”, and tried to devolve it away from South Africa’s apartheid policies.<sup>78</sup> In a discussion with Nigerian Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Wilson argued that India and Pakistan had been allowed to join as republics therefore the same should follow for South Africa. While Balewa largely agreed, he emphasised how he and other members were displeased by “people who showed no sign of being influenced by the other members of the family and who seemed to be opposed to the ideals which the Commonwealth stood for”.<sup>79</sup> Wilson’s outlook failed to prevail, as South Africa was forced to withdraw their membership, and the conference illustrated an enormous conflict of ideas and priorities the Commonwealth had once espoused. Despite trying to reach an agreement, Wilson was unable to isolate the “technicality” from the issue of race.

The Prime Ministers of South Africa, Dr Verwoerd justified his withdrawal, stating he “could not place them [Britain] in the invidious position of having to choose between South Africa and a group of Afro-Asian nations”.<sup>80</sup> He claims that without his withdrawal, the next step would have been expulsion, due to the increasing number and the aggressiveness exhibited by those members, where the likes of Ghana, Malaya and Tanganyika were “decidedly and actively hostile” on all occasions.<sup>81</sup> This illustrates how African and Asian members were more than prepared to directly oppose South African’s apartheid regime since it was “inconsistent with Commonwealth ideals”.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> NAL, PREM 11/3217, Meeting between Wilson and the Tunku, March 6, 1961; NAL, PREM 11/3217, Wilson and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, 6 March, 1961; NAL, PREM 11/3217, Wilson and Sir Abubakar Balewa, March 6, 1961; NAL, PREM 11/3217, Wilson and Dr. Verwoerd, March 7, 1961.

<sup>79</sup> NAL PREM 11/3217, Wilson and Prime Minister Balewa.

<sup>80</sup> NAL, PREM 11/3217, Dr. Verwoerd personal statement, 15 March, 1961.

<sup>81</sup> NAL, PREM 11/3217, Letter from Dr. Verwoerd to Harold Wilson, 14 March, 1961.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

This case indicates the turn towards the ‘new’ Commonwealth, where independence of African states palpably altered the focus of debates, its cohesion, and to a large extent the very meaning of the Commonwealth. Most interestingly, it shows how matters of race and ultimately racism were not to be treated with a soft hand, like it had in previous years. African members not only used the Commonwealth to facilitate opposition to these policies, but also transmitted this onto the wider international agenda. Previous to decolonisation, there was very little discussion on race, as it was largely acted upon as a domestic issue. However, given the exertion by African actors onto stages like the UN, the international community was forced to intervene into states’ matters, if policies were deliberately inhibiting racial equality.

### *A “Multi-racial” Commonwealth: The July 1964 Conference*

The 1964 Commonwealth Conference marks the beginning of the highly contested nature of debates about the situation in Southern Rhodesia. Leading up to the meeting in July, there were discussions about allowing Rhodesia to join the Conference, and the level of contestation and tenacity parallels the rejection of South Africa’s attendance and membership of the Commonwealth. Ghanaian President Nkrumah reiterated his stance, as he did previously, that a government who had “been criticised for its racial policies” should not be allowed to attend.<sup>83</sup> The majority consensus was to prohibit Rhodesia from joining, with much of the pressure coming from its ‘coloured’ members. While Southern Rhodesia had been able to attend meetings for over thirty years, African members were largely successful in pushing it to the fringes of the Commonwealth. Subsequently their pressure facilitated a new criterion for membership; the organisation should now seek to reject any member who advocates racial prejudice and inequality. This distinction certainly did not exist prior to African independence, where it was uncommon for members to individually confront one another. A

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<sup>83</sup> NAL, PREM 11/4633, Outward Telegram from Nkrumah to Sir Alec Douglas Home, June 5, 1964.

quote by the Canadian Prime Minister epitomizes this: “in the old days, a Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference used to be a pleasant occasion. One met old friends and discussed business and whilst the latter discussion might not perhaps be very serious, the ties between countries were strengthened by the social contacts”.<sup>84</sup> In contrast, meetings were now characterised by members openly criticising the domestic policies of others; becoming less about mutual bonds to one another and more about promoting Commonwealth principles for all its members to share, such as racial equality.

It is interesting to see how the media perceived the changes the Commonwealth was going through and an article reported by the Sydney Morning Herald offers this point of view.<sup>85</sup> The editorial emphasises how the organisation “enters a new phase” and takes on a “new shape”, in which London was no longer dominating its meetings.<sup>86</sup> It also highlights how the debates within meetings were evolving. It reported that African members now prevailed in “speaking plainly and bluntly”, forcefully demonstrating their emotion on the Rhodesian issue. Fascinating is the way the author highlights specific characteristics of African leaders such as Ghana’s Nkrumah, and their ability to eradicate the customs which existed around the meetings, in order to get deep into the debate about Rhodesia. The article claims, “this time it was a marathon session with emissaries coming out to cancel Ministers’ dinner engagements...frantically trying to get out the final document”. This reveals the huge restraint exhibited by the African leaders, altering not only the content of discussions in the Conference, but moreover the general atmosphere surrounding it. In addition, this article exposes the impression of the Australian media, that the Commonwealth was this new,

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<sup>84</sup> NAL, PREM 11/4633, Meeting between Canadian PM Pearson and British PM, June 6, 1964.

<sup>85</sup> T. S. Monks, “Brisk Vitality in Prime Minister’s Conference”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 17 1964.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160418071124/https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=7fpjAAAIBAJ&sjid=yuUDAAAIBAJ&pg=6916,5554738&dq=commonwealth+prime+ministers&hl=en>.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

unrecognisable organisation, which was blatantly as a result of the newly independent African members.

From the outset, African members were effective in making race relations a central concern for the Commonwealth. The final Communiqué of 1964 affirmed that Commonwealth Governments should pursue policies that would build a society offering, “equal opportunity and non-discrimination for all its people, irrespective of race colour or creed”.<sup>87</sup> Promoting racial equality was not entirely new to the Commonwealth, evident in Barber’s description of how Pakistan criticised South Africa for racial policies that violated the UN Charter in 1954.<sup>88</sup> However its significance was taken much more seriously when the Commonwealth became truly “multi-racial” after African independence. Not only due to the fact that the ‘coloured’ members now outweighed the ‘non-coloured’ members, but also due to the way that African members elevated their pan-African principles. While Tanzania and Ghana had only become independent nations a couple of years earlier, Tanzania’s President Nyerere and Ghana’s President Nkrumah were hugely concerned with how race continued to manifest in regional and global power relations.<sup>89</sup> They had already begun attempting to unite African nations within the Commonwealth, hence they were all the more willing to create blocs of influence in pushing for independence for Southern Rhodesia only when racial distinction within the colony was abolished. Guided by these principles, but also the concern that race was still a huge detriment to not only Southern Rhodesians but the entire continent, racial issues were to be taken much more seriously within the Commonwealth and the wider international system.

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<sup>87</sup> The Commonwealth Secretariat, *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986*, (London: Marlborough House London, 1987): 85.

<sup>88</sup> Barber, “The Impact of the Rhodesian crisis on the Commonwealth”, 86.

<sup>89</sup> Jesse Benjamin (2011) "Decolonizing Nationalism: Reading Nkrumah and Nyerere’s Pan-African Epistemology," *Journal of Emerging Knowledge on Emerging Markets* 3, no. 14 (2011): 229; David Matthew Chacha, “Julius Nyerere: The Intellectual Pan-Africanist and the Question of African Unity”, *African Journal of International Affairs* 5, no. 1 (2002): 20.

*The Conference before Rhodesia's UDI: June 1965*

The year 1965 proved an even more difficult one for the British Government, after failing to negotiate the terms of independence with Southern Rhodesia's Prime Minister Ian Smith and there were now whispers of a decree of a UDI. In June of 1965, another Commonwealth Conference assembled, and there were undoubtedly lengthier and even more disputed discussions about the transpiring situation between its members. The British Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Commonwealth Relations Office Saville Garner states, "on the whole, Africans are in a chastened mood...and have not been altogether immoderate".<sup>90</sup> His personal telegram describes the unsympathetic temperament of the African members towards Britain's position, and it should be noted of the explicit bias of Garner, who faced considerable constraints due to the demands made by those actors. Another telegram from a day later describes how Ghanaian Nkrumah "led the African attack" against Britain's ineffective efforts in bringing Rhodesia to independence, where he emphasised the desire to end the racist regime rather than focusing on averting the UDI.<sup>91</sup> For Nkrumah, and supported by the majority of other African members, bringing discrimination to a halt and guaranteeing equality for all races was the most important goal here, rather than conceding independence to the racist government. The position on how to achieve this was indifferent to the British one, who would have let independence occur in line with the 1961 Constitution, if it was not for the pressure exerted onto them.

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<sup>90</sup> NAL, PREM 13/186, Personal Telegram No.897 from Saville Garner at the Commonwealth Relations Office to Salisbury, 21 June 1965.

<sup>91</sup> NAL, PREM 13/186, Telegram No. 906 from the Commonwealth Relations Office to Salisbury, 22 June 1965.

The substance of the “African attack” demanded for the current constitution to be suspended, pushed for a Constitutional Conference, alongside the release of political prisoners in order to participate in elections with universal suffrage. The notion of a Constitutional Conference was first raised in 1964, yet this time Commonwealth members universally supported it, as a means of peaceful transition towards independence. African members were forceful in pushing for full, immediate independence whereas the older members were more willing to allow for gradual progress. Unified with Nkrumah was Zambia’s president Kaunda, arguing that “one man, one vote” should be immediately granted, so that other racist regimes in the region (South Africa and the Portuguese territories) would not “develop into a solid bloc who would raise a threat to peace of the whole world”.<sup>92</sup> Murrumba – the Kenyan Minister of Foreign Affairs – questions why Britain are unwilling to act firmly with this particular colony, when they had responded so brutally with the rebellion in Kenya years before; seeming to confront its former colony on its own preferential treatment by race.<sup>93</sup> While Britain was often reluctant to fully concede in its language to the demands made by the African members, the Commonwealth conferences ensure they must reckon with this these various voices. The language of the Communiqué and the transcripts adjacent to it offers an insight into how the African members tried to translate the gravity of the crisis, constantly pushing for racial equality above everything else. In this way, these actors guide the direction of policies to push for action now rather than somewhere in the future. They remained a constant force on Britain to keep in line with their promise of independence only when everyone in Rhodesia is fully represented.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

In a letter after the 1965 Conference, Nyerere writes to Prime Minister Wilson reminding him, how important this issue is to the “future of Africa and Africa’s relations with Britain”.<sup>94</sup> The universal (illegal) declaration of independence by Smith in November 1965 meant that diplomatic relations between the two countries would indeed contravene by December, after the OAU held a Council meeting session in Ethiopia. This meeting released a resolution calling on all members to break relations with Britain, if the illegal rebellion led by Smith was not crushed. Alongside Tanzania, Ghana was the only other Commonwealth member to sever diplomatic relations with Britain, and the reasoning behind these positions was that Britain had failed to show an absolute commitment to the full enfranchisement of Africans. It was proclaimed that the organisation was “no longer a British Commonwealth” but “a Commonwealth of free nations”, revealing that British ascendancy over the association was no longer pertinent.<sup>95</sup> Arguably taking British power out of the organisation meant that it was transformed into a platform in which African Commonwealth members demanded greater participation and debate about issues that were not just endorsed by Britain. Unavoidably then, the 1960s became a period in which the Commonwealth was dominated by debates about racial inequality.

The breaking of ties between members and lessening of British authority coincides with the expression of condemnation elsewhere. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1965, as British Prime Minister Wilson was addressing the UN General Assembly on the situation in Southern Rhodesia, one hundred OAU delegates organised a walk out in protest.<sup>96</sup> Internal criticism in the Commonwealth was making Britain’s dealings with the crisis a much more arduous task, and taking it to the UN created even more international pressure on them. As well as forming

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<sup>94</sup> NAL, PREM 13/186, Letter from Nyerere to Prime Minister Wilson, 14 August 1965.

<sup>95</sup> Julius Nyerere quote, found in Arnold Smith, *Stiches in Time: The Commonwealth in World Politics* (Ontario: General Publishing Co. Limited, 1981).

<sup>96</sup> Wellington W. Nyangoni, “Africa in the United Nations System”, (London: Associated University Press, 1985): 118.

an “Afro-Asian” bloc in the UN, both parties attempted to facilitate demands that could not be ignored, by forming together to call out the continuation of colonial and imperial domination by former European powers. African members often attached the Rhodesian issue of independence to the wider anti-colonial project. This reveals how African leaders made sure their views on continued racial distinction were expressed in a way unavoidable to the British Government. The effect of shifting an “internal” matter for the British Government onto the broader anti-colonialist movement was the increased involvement by the UN, which would help in bringing greater international attention to the crisis.

First testing out their views on Southern Rhodesia at the Commonwealth, African members vigorously participated in the UN’s forum, actively pushing for resolutions and injected African issues onto the international agenda. In turn, this shaped debates about decolonisation, economic progress and the development of equal rights. The 1960s witnessed the overhaul of the UN General Assembly, after an overwhelming number of states became independent (especially from the African continent). African Commonwealth members endeavoured to organise themselves together in their “crusade against white racism”.<sup>97</sup> One example of this is the 1963 Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, leading to the adoption of the International Convention in 1965. Passing with eighty-nine votes in the General Assembly, it affirmed “the necessity of speedily eliminating racial discrimination throughout the world, in all its forms and manifestations”.<sup>98</sup> For the first time this seriously dealt with racial prejudice, and as a result of this pressure, racism was now deemed intolerable by international law. It is therefore evident that African members not only impacted the debate about racism within Commonwealth, but they were also actively shaping the agenda of

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<sup>97</sup> Marilyn Lake, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 349.

<sup>98</sup> United Nations General Assembly, “International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: Resolution 2106”, UNHR: The Office of High Commissioner.  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx>

international relations. They viewed the UN and the Charter as a safeguard for their independence and rights, but this had previously been insufficient in preventing such prejudice. Thus they enthusiastically used the forum to “participate in world diplomacy”, in turn shaping the Commonwealth and transforming the international system.<sup>99</sup>

### *From Lagos to London: The January and September 1966 Conferences*

The Commonwealth Conference in Lagos, Nigeria in 1966 would be the first one held outside of London, and it additionally signified the organisation being taken out of British hands. One difference between the Commonwealth and other international organisations was its explicit informality. Rules and conventions could quickly and easily change to suit a particular crisis, and this was how the Lagos Conference was achieved. At the end of 1965 and Smith’s illegal UDI, Nigerian Prime Minister Abubakar put a proposal forward to chair an emergency meeting. In various unofficial telegrams and meetings, Abubakar urges for the meeting to include a single-issue agenda, so that it could facilitate reasonable and thorough discussions about the progress of the Rhodesian situation. Consequently, Wilson was “summoned to Africa to answer charges against his handling of an issue on which all black Africans felt incensed”, where he faced pressure and arguments in favour of military engagement from those members.<sup>100</sup> During this meeting and evident in the Communiqué, African Commonwealth members individually criticised Britain’s sluggish engagement in allowing the situation to transpire when many Rhodesian Africans were continually discriminated against by the white government led by Smith. This Conference was the pinnacle of political

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<sup>99</sup> Nyangoni, “Africa in the United Nations System”, 21.

<sup>100</sup> Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970: A Personal Record*, (London: Penguin Books, 1971).

attacks against Britain; once a ‘British’ organisation turned into a platform on which to attack its former colonial power.

How to end the rebellion and restore order in Rhodesia was heavily contested, and solving this debate was centred around the question on whether to use military force or not. During negotiations with Smith and just weeks before the UDI, British Prime Minister Wilson publicly announced that Britain would not use force if Rhodesia did intend to declare independence.<sup>101</sup> Britain continually expressed this outlook, fearing it would lead to full-scale war. It was hugely unnerving for Britain to use force against its “kith and kin”, and a proportion of the British public as well as the older Commonwealth members generally believed this. In addition, the use of force was also considered to be useless if it would force Rhodesia into closer relations with other racist governments in Southern Africa, but also from the British point of view, they did not want to hinder their already fragile relations with South Africa. Therefore it was largely in favour of continuing the push for economic sanctions. The previous November saw the Security Council pass Resolution 217; calling for countries to cease economic relations with Rhodesia, and for the most part, many countries followed. In addition, Britain proclaimed to have cut 97% of British exports to its former colony. During the 1996 Lagos Conference, Wilson stated that he had received expert advice that “the cumulative effects of the economic and financial sanctions might well bring the rebellion to an end within a matter of weeks not months”.<sup>102</sup> The emphasis on economic sanctions coincides with the unwillingness of Britain and the older members of the Commonwealth to the use of force in ending the rebellion.

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<sup>101</sup> Phillip Murphy, “‘An Intricate and Distasteful Subject’: British Planning for the Use of Force against the European Settlers of Central Africa, 1952-65,” *The English Historical Review* 121, no. 492 (2006): 746-777.

<sup>102</sup> 1966 Communique, in The Commonwealth Secretariat, *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986*, (London: Marlborough House London, 1987).

Although Wilson continually reiterated it was unacceptable to use, the 1966 Communiqué managed to state that military force could not be ruled out “if this proved necessary to restore law and order”.<sup>103</sup> In the meantime there was a Commonwealth Sanctions Committee created to ensure that the economic sanctions were being carried out fully and efficiently, as there was suspicion that Britain was even bypassing those. Another Security Council resolution (232) was passed in 1966, creating a more concrete list of economic sanctions on Rhodesia, however this failed to prevent the collapse of the illegal regime. After re-entering into negotiations with Smith on board the *Tiger* at the end of 1966 failed, the African Commonwealth members urged Britain to take definitive action to end the white rebellion, insisting again on the necessity of military force, since all other peaceful means had been explored.

The majority of African members were in favour of using military force. Since Zambia bordered Rhodesia and it was economically reliant on it, the government’s actions and subsequent handling of the crisis hugely affected Zambia, and thus Prime Minister Kaunda was not shy in expressing his disturbance with the developments. He did not attend the 1966 Conference and used the threat of leaving the Commonwealth to emphasise his frustration with the contradictory and worrisome nature of British policy.<sup>104</sup> Straight after the 1966 Lagos Conference, the Zambian diplomat Kapwepwe who attended instead of the Prime Minister, labelled Wilson a racist hypocrite over the handling of Rhodesia.<sup>105</sup> The constant attacks on Britain showed the contrasting position that African Commonwealth members exhibited, compared to other members. The difference in leadership styles, modes of diplomacy and militant backgrounds meant that members belligerently lobbied for all measures to be taken in

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> NAL, PREM 13/777, British Diplomat visit to Zambia, 20 August, 1966

<sup>105</sup> Barber, “The Impact of the Rhodesian crisis on the Commonwealth”, 87.

order to end the regime. In comparison to Britain's focus on avoiding full-scale war, the eradication of racial discrimination was their most crucial goal. The impact of this was that it created a recognised international demand for the use of force, evident in the Security Council resolution 253 in May 1968, calling upon Britain "to take urgently all effective measures to bring to an end the rebellion".<sup>106</sup> After two years of political impasse and an increase in violence targeted at African Rhodesians, Britain now faced an increased demand from the international community to take a serious thought about the use of military force against its "own".

### *A Matter of Years, Not Weeks: The January 1969 Conference*

While discussions about the acceptability of using force were not translated into actual policy, African members did succeed in altering the British view about 'no independence before majority rule' (NIBMR). In late 1966, during a speech in the House of Commons, Wilson finally conceded to this view. However, entering into further negotiations with Smith on-board the *Fearless* in October 1968, NIMBAR was seen by many Commonwealth members to have been replaced with the acceptance of "unimpeded progress to majority African rule".<sup>107</sup> This appalled the African Commonwealth members, who saw it as a reverse to NIBMR. In a private meeting, President Nyerere candidly suggested to the British Prime Minister that he thought the *Fearless* proposals were a sell-out, and that he could not understand how it could be aligned with full democracy.<sup>108</sup> Prime Minister Wilson attempts to convince Nyerere to accept that Britain has continually stood by NIBMR, however for most of the meeting it is

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<sup>106</sup> United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 253*, May 1968. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/253>.

<sup>107</sup> Walter Darnell Jacobs, "Rhodesian Independence After the *Fearless*", *World Affairs* 131, no. 3 (1968): 162.

<sup>108</sup> NAL, PREM 13/ 2359, Meeting between President Nyerere and PM Wilson, 7 January 1969.

clear Nyerere is hugely indifferent to this. President Nyerere takes these views to the 1969 Conference, and it seems the African caucus successfully encourages most Commonwealth members that this position by Britain was unacceptable. The Communiqué stated, “Most heads of Government emphasised their view that these proposals were unacceptable as the constitution of an independent Rhodesia and should be withdrawn”.<sup>109</sup> In this regard, the British Government are seen to be at the margins of the collective view and it highlights how effective the African members were at ensuring full suffrage and fighting racism remained the most important element of the Commonwealth ethos. The 1969 Conference was much less forceful than the previous years, however it is clear that African actors continued to guide the debate, held the former colonial power to account for their inaction and demanded racial equality for Southern Rhodesia and the African continent.

## Conclusion

By the turn of the 1970s, the struggle for racial equality and full suffrage in Southern Rhodesia was far from being complete. The white minority government led by Ian Smith would eventually cease to exist by 1980, due to the continued pressure created by economic sanctions and the international community. Although this thesis was not concerned with the clout of African Commonwealth members in ending the Rhodesian crisis, their involvement sheds a light on how they impacted both the Commonwealth and the agenda of international relations. It is undeniable that the period of the 1960s witnessed the transformation of the Commonwealth of Nations, and that the African members within it had a significant impact on this change. Yet academic scholarship on the organisation focuses on the British

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<sup>109</sup> Communiqué 1969, in The Commonwealth Secretariat, *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986*, (London: Marlborough House London, 1987).

perspective, concentrating on the evolution of British sentiment about the Commonwealth, Britain's policies and actions, as well as their declining authority within it. What is evident is that this is only one component of an organisation, and while at one point it dominated the organisation, after African independence this significantly changed.

There are few academics that write about the Commonwealth from an alternative vantage point. This includes Carl Watts' assessments of the "old" Commonwealth members and their relevance during the Rhodesian crisis, however his focus creates a western dominated perspective.<sup>110</sup> As well, there have been some notable exceptions on the organisation's history. This includes Sue Onslow's analysis of the role it played during the Cold War era, where she argues it took the lead in issues outside of the bipolar power politics, such as racial justice.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, JBD Miller offers a comprehensive and extensive study of the Commonwealth, in which one chapter highlights the 'African dimension'.<sup>112</sup> Nonetheless, it remains that there is no comprehensive study on the impact that African members had on the Commonwealth, hence my thesis endeavoured to focus this aspect. Tracing the agency of those members during the Rhodesian crisis enables an assessment of the Commonwealth from a different perspective, and begins to engage with its unquestionably global history.

The 1960s saw the reinvigoration of the Commonwealth in several ways. Firstly, it transpired as a platform in which its members could openly and willingly critique each other. By the end of the 1960s, the "old" Commonwealth members seemed more willing to critique Britain's position on the handling of Rhodesian and NIBMR, whereas it was often unwilling to previously. However this level of criticism was very different to the way that its African members impacted the meetings. What was clear then was that the Commonwealth moved

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<sup>110</sup> Watts, "Britain, the Old Commonwealth", 75.

<sup>111</sup> Onslow, "The Commonwealth and the Cold War", 1059.

<sup>112</sup> Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, 259.

from a largely homogenous, cohesive organisation with very little restraint to a global multi-racial one. While at times it was hugely fragmented and compromise proved difficult, it facilitated much more ardent and meaningful considerations. During Commonwealth meetings, cooperation on the Rhodesian situation was hugely problematic, and this in itself could be seen as a detrimental impact caused by the admission of newly independent African members. Nonetheless this African dimension injected new issues and questions into the Commonwealth; once indifferent to racism, the agenda and its ethos now promoted racial egalitarianism. Guided by a strong sense of pan-Africanism, African Commonwealth members revealed their commitment in the “fight against the colonial and imperial forces”.<sup>113</sup>

Secondly, it became clear that the Commonwealth after African independence would indeed play an increased part in the international system. The 1964 Communiqué stated, “The Commonwealth has a particular role to play in the search for solutions to the inter-racial problems which are threatening the orderly development of mankind in general.”<sup>114</sup> The demands and pressure exerted from within the organisation by its African members empowered it to perform a bigger international role on racial equality. Not only regarding the situation in Rhodesia, but across Southern Africa and Africa generally, the Commonwealth increased their involvement in international concerns on race relations, a role that is unlikely to have become so prominent without the actions of its African members.

Additionally, African members seemed to have an effect beyond the realm of the Commonwealth. At the beginning of the crisis, the use of force was completely ruled out by most countries (not including African ones), however by the end of the 1960s, the UN had argued for all possible means to be used to bring an end to the illegal regime. Furthermore,

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<sup>113</sup> Vijay Prishad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007): xvii.

<sup>114</sup> 1964 Communiqué.

African Commonwealth members often moved in between the two forums, pushing for the debate to remain focused on the global equality for all races and took part in resolutions to make sure international law was also in line with removing the viability of racial discrimination. In this way, they were not only shaping the agenda of the Commonwealth, but they also made changes to the international agenda.

Looking beyond this thesis, future research on the Commonwealth bares a fascinating task, since there is a considerable amount of room to uncover different perspectives. One interesting element that arose was the political unity, dialogue and difficulties between the African and Asian members of the Commonwealth. The prominence of the Afro-Asian movement coincides with this period, and while the likes of David Kimche and Vijay Prishad detail its understudied impact; they do not consider how this was further facilitated within the forum of the Commonwealth.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, it would be interesting to assess how African resistance against southern Rhodesia fit within the broader liberation of the region of Southern African during this period. Nonetheless, this thesis endeavoured to trace the agency of the African members within the Commonwealth, exposing the explicit impact they had on the Commonwealth after their independence. Looking back to the 1960s now reveals how the Commonwealth transformed into an organisation unimaginable from its inception, yet it proved to be a much more prominent forum and actor in the history of decolonisation and the struggle for racial equality.

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<sup>115</sup> David Kimche, *The Afro-Asian Movement: Ideology and Foreign Policy of the Third World* (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1973): 238.

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