

# **Tracing African ideas in British foreign policy: The Anglo-Zambian relationship 1979-1989**

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## **Abstract**

Histories of Britain's foreign policy in the latter half of the twentieth-century are plentiful, often documenting a state in flux as it struggles with its place in the world in the context of its imperial decline. Comparatively, histories of Britain's relationships with its former African territories are few and far between. This thesis aims to bridge this apparent conceptual gap and analyse how Britain interacted with a former colonial territory in the era of its diminished international role. It will do this by using Anglo-Zambian relations in the period 1979-1989 as a case study. It argues that African ideas were a potent and salient force in this diplomatic exchange, and that British foreign policy was demonstrably adaptive and even occasionally directly malleable to Zambian ideological diplomacy. The conclusion of the Rhodesian affair in 1979 constituted the end of Britain's colonial hangover, and the subsequent relationship embarked upon with Zambia came in tandem with a reimagination of Britain's place in the world. British diplomatic doctrine and attitudes were forced to undergo revisions as 'declining empire' made way for 'post-empire'. Consequently, Britain no-longer possessed the monopoly on ideas it once had, and it was forced to interpret and understand the often opposing worldviews of its diplomatic partners. Zambia was therefore able to exercise agency in a seemingly unequal relationship by utilising Britain's diminished position, and project upon Britain its own postcolonial, modernising ideology of Humanism. An exploration of the role of ideas in the Anglo-Zambian relationship of the 1980s reveals the new realities that Britain was forced to contend with in the era of its diminished international role.

## **List of abbreviations**

African National Congress - ANC

British Diplomatic Oral History Programme - BDOHP

British High Commission - BHC

British National Archives (The National Archives) - TNA

British Overseas Citizen - BOC

Central Africa Department - CAD

Commonwealth Eminent Persons' Group - EPG

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting - CHOGM

European Union - EU

Foreign and Commonwealth Office - FCO

Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Liberation Front of Mozambique) - FRELIMO

Front Line States - FLS

International Monetary Fund - IMF

Non-Aligned Movement - NAM

Organisation of African Unity - OAU

Patriotic Front - PF

Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance) - RENAMO

Royal Air Force - RAF

South Africa - SA

South-West Africa People's Organisation - SWAPO

União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (Union for the Total Independence of Angola) - UNITA

Unilateral Declaration of Independence - UDI

United Nations Security Council - UNSC

Zimbabwe African National Union - ZANU

Zimbabwe African People's Union - ZAPU

Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army - ZIPRA

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## **Introduction**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 1983, British Foreign Secretary Francis Pym received a personal briefing on the President of Zambia in advance of his State Visit that March. *“What kind of man is it, then, who can ride these storms for 18 years and still remain, if a little tarnished, the father of the nation?”* it read.<sup>1</sup> British colonial authorities had imprisoned the man as a nationalist agitator prior to Zambia’s independence in 1964. Less than twenty years later he would be welcomed into 10 Downing Street as President. The line in the briefing neatly encapsulated an introduction befitting President Kenneth Kaunda, who led one of southern Africa’s first independent black-majority states for almost thirty years. He inherited a landlocked country which had to contend with hostile, white-minority controlled states as neighbours. Despite this, Kaunda projected an amplified, internationalist version of Zambia characterised by his frequent international trips and magniloquent diplomacy, holding at one point simultaneously the roles of secretary-general of the Organisation of African Unity and the Chair of the Non-Aligned movement. He vigorously pursued political stability under the slogan of “One Zambia One Nation”. Son of a Christian missionary, Kaunda championed ‘humanism’ – his own brand of modernising postcolonial African ideology which pursued an egalitarian, fair and moral domestic and foreign policy. The United Kingdom recognised in Kaunda a man of serious stature, and foreign relations with Zambia were as much a personal relationship with the president and his ideas as they were diplomacy between two sovereign states.

### **Anglo-Zambian relations**

To what extent did African ideas play a role in British policymaking in Anglo-Zambian relations between 1979-1989? This thesis will make a case study of Anglo-Zambian relations to argue that British foreign policy became adaptive and even malleable to African ideas through the 1980s. In the era of Britain’s reduced international role, British doctrine toward Africa and its ex-colonial territories was forced to undergo significant and demonstrable changes. This study aims to conceptualise the Anglo-Zambian relationship of the 1980s in a way that takes a step beyond the conventional diplomatic history by underscoring the salience of ideas and worldviews in the course of international relations. It will engage with pre-existing themes and motifs in the literature such as African agency, the ‘Global Cold War’ and the British relationship with the Commonwealth. The paper seeks to make a meaningful contribution to a historiography on Britain’s ‘international role’ in the wake of decolonisation, as well as scholarly discussion of Zambian foreign policy.

In the aftermath of decolonisation, Britain had to embark upon new relations with its former ex-colonial territories. This required in turn a re-imagining of a foreign policy doctrine which had

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Letter from John Johnson to Francis Pym, briefing on Kenneth Kaunda’ 4 February 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 4

germinated under and been sustained by Britain's great power status. The loss of this was not immediately understood or recognised by anyone within the British diplomatic establishment, and an exploration of bilateral relations with Zambia over the course of a decade reveals the dissonance this caused. Britain was forced to interpret and understand Zambia's worldviews and ideas that were often in total contention with its own. By the late 1970s, decolonisation had long-been the accepted reality in Britain. The question was how British politicians, diplomats and officials went about engaging in diplomacy with states whose very existence they had challenged and denied only a few decades prior. This thesis therefore sets out to bridge a conceptual gap between 'declining empire' and 'post-empire', exploring how doctrine, attitudes and diplomacy between the metropole and ex-colony changed in the late twentieth-century.

The thesis also sets out to disprove popular misconceptions that often cite structuralist, neo-colonial arguments which reduce the agency of postcolonial states in guiding their international affairs. Britain's changing international role provided its ex-colonial territories with opportunities to exercise agency over their own international affairs. Zambia is an example of one of these states who sought a continued close relationship with the former metropole. This was a partnership often built on unequal terms, but it was nonetheless consensually sought out by either partner. Just as the UK envisioned potential benefits in continued relations with a former colony, so too did Zambia recognise and actively seek out the advantages that came with a British partnership. Recognising this should be the first step in returning some agency to postcolonial states that were led by individuals or groups with their own worldviews and ideas.

The thesis however concerns itself primarily with British foreign policy, and does not profess itself to be a holistic overview of the Anglo-Zambian relations. As such, it uses primary source material collected from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) at the National Archives in Kew, as well as transcripts from the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme (BDOHP) at Churchill College, Cambridge. It will assess the personal relationships between British diplomats and Zambian officials, institutional disagreement within the British diplomatic establishment, and British anxieties over its 'place in the world' as mediums by which to demonstrate how African ideas played a noteworthy role in guiding British policymaking toward Zambia and beyond between 1979-1989.

The Anglo-Zambian relationship began in earnest in 1964, when Northern Rhodesia became Zambia after achieving independence from Britain following the collapse of the ill-fated Central African Federation a year prior. The relationship was tested almost immediately, with Zambia having to contend with the rebellious settler state of Rhodesia to their South following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. With British military intervention not forthcoming from a hesitant Harold Wilson, President Kaunda pursued a multilateral approach which sought to end the

Rhodesian rebellion through pressure brought about by economic sanctions from other African states and beyond, in a demonstration of diplomacy that would cement him for the rest of his Presidential tenure as one of Africa's notable statesmen. When the Rhodesian issue was eventually settled at the Lancaster House conference of 1979, Kaunda was personally invited to London for consultation on the peace process - a demonstration of the respect that he had earned from the British diplomatic establishment. This paper sets out to explore this relationship in the decade following – a period notably absent from existing scholarship on Zambia and southern Africa.

## **Literature Review**

This thesis will contribute to a pre-existing literature on both British foreign relations in the post-imperial era, as well as Zambian foreign policy. This section will provide an overview of some of the main schools of thought within this literature, with justification as to how the paper will seek to reflect on as well as advance these discussions.

### **Post-imperial anxiety, informal empire and the British 'place in the world'**

By writing about British foreign policy toward a former African colony, this thesis seeks to contribute to a historiography that has thus far been considerably underdeveloped. Current scholarship on Britain's foreign policy toward Africa can broadly be divided into two distinct periods: Africa's importance to Britain in the years immediately after independence, and its sudden irrelevance only a few decades later. This thesis wishes to address this problematic by bridging this conceptual gap in the historiography.

Much has been written about the British desire to maintain some form of influence in Africa in the years immediately after independence. Writing in the 1990s, David Sanders refers to a 'great power syndrome' that existed within the British halls of power.<sup>2</sup> Ronald Robinson writes of a British conceptualisation of African independence as one which "maintained imperial sway"<sup>3</sup>: a steady, moderate pathway to independence which secured British economic and strategic assets. This is a common theme throughout much scholarly discussion of Britain's post-imperial international relations. This theme concerns itself with Britain's struggle to find a new 'place in the world'. In the aftermath of the Second World War, many within the British diplomatic establishment expected to retain their colonial possessions. By 1957, it seemed that this would be an exercise in delaying the inevitable, and scholars have written extensively on the way in which British officials went about trying to maximalise the benefits of decolonisation for themselves. Cooper writes about Britain's initial imagination of relations with its ex-colonies as a dilemma: whether holding onto them for

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<sup>2</sup> Sanders, David. 1990. *Losing an empire, finding a role: an introduction to British foreign policy since 1945*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 291.

<sup>3</sup> Louis, WM. Roger, and Ronald Robinson. 1994. "The imperialism of decolonization". *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*. 22 (3): 485

longer would bring benefits that would outweigh the long-term detriment to relations once independence was inevitably given.<sup>4</sup> The need to maintain ‘informal empire’ essentially meant trading political independence for some form of continued influence in whatever way possible. Informal empire is a theme often referred to in the context of continued economic and political links with African states. Ludlow writes on the desire to maintain influence after decolonisation as a European-wide phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> Officials within Western European states believed that in founding the European Community they could also expect the admission of French West Africa, which would provide the burgeoning international organisation with raw resources and the capability to punch above its weight.<sup>6</sup> In an era of diminished international power, Western European states sought to maintain their great power status through the continuation of influence with former colonial territories. Post-imperial anxiety over what would happen next was therefore not exceptional to Britain.

The problematic which presents itself in the historiography is that as the decades go by, Britain’s concern with its ‘place in the world’ persists, but Africa’s place in that all but disappears. Some scholars have sought simple explanations for this. Writing in 1993, Rouvez refers to a marginalization of Africa in British foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> Darwin points to Britain’s conceptualisation of its relations with the wider world as one which left no room for Africa at all. He writes of a ‘maelstrom of uncertainties’ which left British opinion concerned with only two pathways: a partnership with the United States that was increasingly one-sided, or a European Economic Community that promised prosperity but would not let Britain join.<sup>8</sup> Britain’s post-imperial place in the world meant a reconsideration of its international commitments. It no-longer had the strategic bandwidth to ‘maintain imperial sway’ in Africa whilst at the same time forge itself a new pathway with either Europe or America. This is a theme echoed in recent scholarship. Holt writes in 2014 of the ‘post-empire realities’ of the Douglas-Home government. While it is clear that Africa’s relevance to British policymakers diminished, questions should be raised as to what exactly Africa’s place was vis-à-vis Britain’s wish to find a ‘new place in the world’. This is something referred to by Ashley Jackson, writing in 2007 as to scholars’ poor conceptualisation of links between the ‘declining’ and ‘post’ empire periods.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cooper, Frederick. 2002. *Africa since 1940: the past of the present*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 77

<sup>5</sup> Ludlow, N. Piers. 2007. *European Integration and the Cold War: Ostpolitik-Westpolitik, 1965-1973*. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis. 4

<sup>6</sup> Farrell, Mary. 2005 "A Triumph of Realism over Idealism? Cooperation Between the European Union and Africa". *Journal of European Integration*. 27 (3). 267

<sup>7</sup> Rouvez, Alain. 1993 ‘French, British, and Belgian military involvement’, in *Making War and Waging Peace: Foreign Intervention in Africa*, ed. David R. Smock. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press. 38

<sup>8</sup> Darwin, John. 2009. *The empire project: the rise and fall of the British world-system, 1830-1970*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 647

<sup>9</sup> Ashley Jackson. 2007 ‘Review: Empire and beyond: The pursuit of overseas national interests in the late twentieth century’, *English Historical Review*

This is not a problem exclusive to histories concerned with Britain's post-imperial relationship with Africa. A further issue within the scholarship lies in the fact that foreign relations between Africa and the West in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century are usually situated by scholars within the Cold War framework. The 'Global Cold War' is a theme that essentially serves to entrench and exacerbate this conceptual gap between declining and post empire. Cold War historiographies point to Africa's strategic irrelevance in the era of decolonisation, its existence within a 'geopolitical niche'.<sup>10</sup> Africa only returns to 'relevance' in the eyes of the West once it becomes a theatre of the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> In considering Britain's bilateral relationship with a former colonial territory, this thesis seeks to detach from the Cold War discourse which often obfuscates both histories of Britain's post-imperial relationships as well as Africa's 'relevance' in the era.

It is only as recently as 2017 however that this problematic has properly been addressed. In *Kenya and Britain after Independence*, Poppy Cullen writes extensively as to this emergent issue in writings on British foreign policy. Ex-colonies depart from the 'narrative' of Britain's foreign relations until or unless they become particularly relevant, such as Rhodesia and South Africa.<sup>12</sup> Cullen's book assesses Britain's relationship with a former African territory from an institutional-personal perspective, arguing that the notably close relationship Britain shared with Kenya was often characterised by the close relationships between diplomats themselves. Pragmatic concerns such as security, economic, trade and military interests are recurrent, overarching themes that come to define a relationship tested in an era where Britain still strove to maintain global influence despite the decreasing means to do so. The book essentially serves as a first step in marrying the conceptual gap: Britain's position on Africa in the era of 'declining' versus 'post' empire.

Whilst Cullen's literature serves as an excellent conventional diplomatic history, one aspect of the literature which is comparatively understudied is a focus on attitudes and ideas. Cullen does point to continuities in institutional culture within British diplomacy, referring to an 'ingrained bias': a sense of superiority amongst British diplomats, many of whom came from especially similar Oxbridge, upper-class backgrounds. This sense of superiority manifested itself in the retained sense that Britain still knew best for its former colonies despite their ostensible independence.<sup>13</sup> This focus on attitudes is refreshing, but it does require further interrogation. How did British diplomatic officials reconcile this retained sense of superiority with the much-diminished capabilities of the country they represented? And how was the former African territory in question able to co-opt or otherwise exploit these attitudes to amplify its own position in bilateral relations?

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122, no. 499: 1350.

<sup>10</sup> Darwin, John. 2009. *The empire project*. 612

<sup>11</sup> Wyss, Marco. 2021. *Postcolonial Security*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 16

<sup>12</sup> Cullen, Poppy. 2017. *Kenya and Britain after independence: beyond neo-colonialism*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. 2

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 264

Even within scholarship which focuses on the British approach to Africa in the ‘declining’ empire stage, there is a lack of focus on the attitudes and interpretations of these diplomats. Whilst Holt’s writings on the Douglas-Home government serve as an enlightening conventional history of Britain’s international relations, it remains analytically aloof in its conceptualisation of attitudes and approaches of British diplomats to emergent African political movements. How did colonial officials go from administering territories they believed unready for independence at one moment, to treating with them diplomatically as a separate state in the next?

This failure within the historiography means that broader themes are missed. There are few works which bridge the conceptual gap between post-imperial anxiety and Britain’s relations with these new states. Darwin’s discussion of British attitudes to African nationalist movements points to a belief among colonial officials that Africans remain in a sort of ‘political innocence’.<sup>14</sup> Africa’s strategic insulation from the early Cold War in the 1940s and 1950s coupled with the belief that decolonisation was decades away led many in the West to conceptualise Africans as unready for the trials and tribulations of politics and state-making. Metropolitan responses to African nationalist movements and political ideologies are well-documented, how did these attitudes change once nationalist agitators became presidents and prime-ministers? This thesis sets out to provide answers to this problematic, and document the ‘wake-up call’ that many within the British diplomatic establishment had, particularly from 1979.

This thesis therefore sets out to advance the historiography by reconciling scholarly discussion on Britain’s diminished international status in the aftermath of decolonisation with its attitudes to former colonial territories. It also wishes to escape the historiographical pitfalls that generally consider Africa’s relevance to the system of international relations in the Cold War framework. This is an effort to bridge a gap in the literature that discounts continuities or changes in British attitudes to their ex-colonies. The Anglo-Zambian relationship can be used as a case study to analyse how in the era of a diminished international role, Britain sought continued influence by whatever means necessary with Zambia.

### **African ideas in Zambian foreign policy**

What exactly is meant by African ideas? Scholarly discussion of Zambian international relations ultimately seeks to answer this question in discussions over the primary motivation of Kenneth Kaunda’s foreign policy. What constitutes ‘African ideas’ can be answered through an interpretation of Zambian foreign policy as idealist – guided by the principles of Kaunda’s humanist ideology, or ‘realist’ – a multi-faceted interpretation which stresses Zambia’s acceptance of its limitations, reliance on international institutions, and desire to protect its national security. From a

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<sup>14</sup> Darwin, John. 2009. *The empire project*. 613

British perspective, bilateral relations with Zambia meant an interpretation of and concession to these very motivations and actions. Steven Pinkney makes the important point that postcolonial relationships between metropole and ex-colony were clearly unequal, yet did not represent complete subordination.<sup>15</sup> How Britain came to understand these motivations – these African ideas – is the central question of the thesis. Addressing the historiography of Zambian foreign policy here, then, elucidates the ways in which the country was able to demonstrate agency and guide its own affairs in its first decades of independence.

Taylor describes the idealist school of thought on Zambian foreign policy, at least in its first iteration in the 1960s and 1970s, as having its roots among the liberal intelligentsia in Britain in the 1960s.<sup>16</sup> Original idealist schools of thought are totally intertwined with the character and perspective of Kenneth Kaunda, with some going as far as calling this school hagiographic.<sup>17</sup> A central focus is on Kaunda the individual, particularly the non-violent, moralistic approach he took before and after independence. Contrasted with some of the bloodier paths to independence as seen in Kenya, Kaunda's projection of himself as an eloquent (Stephen Chan writes that there was a belief by some in the British establishment that Kaunda was an Oxford alumnus<sup>18</sup>), Christian, morally righteous African leader clearly resonated with those who wrote on him and Zambia in this early period. The idealist perspective puts Kaunda front and centre, with a focus specifically on his ideological and moral beliefs – the idea of 'humanism' and its deployment in Kaunda's foreign policy: the pursuit of non-violent solutions as the 'right thing to do'. Some wrote incredibly highly of Kaunda's role in the southern African 'détente' of the mid-1970s, arguing that he risked his own political credibility to arrange a meeting with South African president Vorster in order to find some solution to the war in Rhodesia.<sup>19</sup> Overall, idealist depictions of Kaunda and Zambian foreign policy contend that a distinct, morally righteous set of ideals were the prime drivers of Zambian foreign policy: anti-racism, anti-colonialism and the belief in universal human rights.

Taylor characterises the realist perspective as considering Zambian behaviour to be "multi-causal, essentially reactive and centred around the personality of Kaunda". Realist literature on Zambian foreign policy often pays some recognition to the idea of ideology in foreign policy, but often substitutes this for the overarching and overbearing role of pragmatism in policy-formulation. Stephen Chan's numerous writings on Kaunda, Zambia and southern Africa are fundamental reading for the topic. Lacking access to many of the Zambian archives in Lusaka, Chan's depiction of Kaunda as fundamentally a mediator who works best in situations of the high-octane is found largely in parallel with how the President was perceived by Britain and others internationally. Chan engages

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<sup>15</sup> Pinkney, Robert. 2001. *The International Politics of East Africa*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, Ian. 1997 "Zambia's foreign policy: themes and approaches" *Politikon*, 24 (2), 58

<sup>17</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. Bloomsbury Academic. 105

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 23

<sup>19</sup> Anglin, Douglas G. 1975 "Zambia and Southern African 'Détente.'" *International Journal* 30 (3): 472

with the idealist literature of the 60s and 70s from a realist perspective, describing Kaunda primarily as a moral, ‘good’ man, which explains his position as South Africa’s ‘entry-point’ for diplomacy with the other Front Line States (FLS) for South Africa in the period. While Chan’s writing on Kaunda shouldn’t be considered anywhere near hagiographic or even totally positive, he is still reluctant to criticise him, often chalking up policy-failures to naivete or ignorance of the bigger picture.

Whereas Chan recognises where ideology may be utilised to achieve pragmatic ends, other scholars depict Zambian foreign policy as far more dynamic. At times pragmatic, at other times far too idealistic, even to the point of Zambia’s own detriment. Schler’s writings on Israeli-Zambian relations in the 1960s and 1970s are an excellent insight into this dual, far more flexible approach. Zambia welcomed with open arms a warm relationship with Israel, accepting a number of Israeli agricultural experts who reformed numerous failing farming collectives into productive, more efficient projects. Yet Zambia was equally quick to criticise Israeli actions against its Arab neighbours on the international scene, eventually going as far as breaking off diplomatic relations with Israel in 1973 alongside most of the OAU and sending the experts home.<sup>20</sup> Explanations as to the dynamic nature of Zambian foreign policy are surely tied to the importance that realist accounts place on Kaunda in Zambian policy-making. Ultimately with one individual at the head of government essentially responsible for formulating and articulating foreign policy, the conflicting pressures of actualising your ideology in foreign policy alongside what is most pragmatic and best for the country manifest themselves in seemingly inconsistent diplomacy.

The theme of pragmatism versus idealism is discernible within most realist literature. Chongo’s doctoral thesis on Zambian assistance to the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe in the 1970s also skirts between idealist and pragmatic viewpoints, most notably in the argument that despite assisting Zimbabwean nationalist forces on anti-colonial and moralistic grounds, Kaunda looked to détente with South Africa – and by extension its temporary expulsion of many ZANU men from their bases in Zambia – as a result of economic difficulties which made a continued pursuit of ideological-based foreign policy too difficult.<sup>21</sup> Scholars within the realist school of thought on Zambian foreign policy thus recognise some influence of ideology, yet are very quick to point out that the pragmatic concerns of the nation supersede all.

Some realist accounts however have gone so far as to discount ideology entirely from their writings on Zambian foreign policy. DeRoche’s perspective emphasizes the role of ‘national security’ in foreign policy formulation. A form of extreme pragmatism, this argument discounts ideology as

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<sup>20</sup> Schler, Lynn 2018. “Dilemmas of Postcolonial Diplomacy: Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, and the Middle East Crisis, 1964–73.” *The Journal of African History* 59 (1). Cambridge University Press: 113

<sup>21</sup> Chongo, Clarence. 2015. "Decolonising Southern Africa: A history of Zambia's role in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle 1964-1979," PhD Diss., University of Pretoria. 355

having any real influence on foreign policy in favour of a sort of ‘path of least resistance’ to actualising Zambian national security goals. Borne out of the idea that Zambia faced an existential threat in the form of Rhodesian UDI in 1965, the national security argument suggests that Kaunda’s steps on the international stage were undertaken with Zambia’s domestic and international security considered first and foremost. To explain this, DeRoche points to Kaunda’s overtures to just about any foreign power that promised it developmental or military aid. Numerous failed attempts to obtain hi-tech weaponry from the United States, including ballistic missiles equipped with nuclear warheads, suggest that Kaunda was prepared to make even the most outlandish requests to protect Zambian sovereignty. The role of ideology is minimal, according to DeRoche. The fact that Zambia sought out assistance from governments spanning “the entire spectrum of global politics” demonstrate that national security was of paramount importance in policy-formulation over any decidedly ideological reason.

A further, and particularly notable scholar for the purposes of this study, is Kenneth Good. Who wrote in 1987, at which point Lusaka was regularly experiencing food riots, of Kaunda’s foreign policy as muddled, incompetent and incoherent.<sup>22</sup> This damning assertion reflects an emergent view of a weakened Kaunda who at the time was regularly accused of seeking solace in international diplomacy and foreign policy in order to avoid the multitude of domestic problems in Zambia at the time. A study of Anglo-Zambian relations in this period will provide a good insight into testing Good’s assertion.

There have been attempts at a revival of idealist-style literature on African foreign policy, though it is important to note that it has decisively shifted away from the near-sycophantic portrayals of noble statesmen as seen in the 60s and 70s. Instead, new idealist literature attempts to recentre ideology in its assessments of motivations behind African foreign policy. Frank Gerits’ *The Ideological Scramble for Africa* argues for a new perspective in literature on African diplomacy that divests from an over-relied upon narrative of two competing Cold War ideologies in Africa, with focus more-so on the fact that these new African leaders tried, at least at first, to walk their own ideological path (which Gerits broadly describes as the pursuit of anticolonial modernity).<sup>23</sup> This perspective overall leaves the lasting impression that African diplomacy must be considered in African terms, with recognition paid to the fact that diplomats from these states came to summits and policy-meetings with their own goals and ambitions rather than simply reacting to the pressures of external powers.

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<sup>22</sup> Good, Kenneth. 1987. “Zambia and the Liberation of South Africa.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 25 (3). Cambridge University Press: 505

<sup>23</sup> Gerits, Frank. 2023 *The Ideological Scramble for Africa: How the pursuit of Anti-Colonial Modernity shaped the Postcolonial Order, 1945-1966.*, Cornell University Press. 10

This thesis seeks to contribute to discussions within this historiography by demonstrating the salience of Zambian ideas within British policymaking, thereby showing how Zambia was able to exert other forms of agency. Ideology was used not only by Zambia in actualising its foreign policy goals, but also by the United Kingdom. Diplomatic exchanges were predicated on an understanding of what Zambia stood for, what it sought out in its foreign policy goals. As such, the United Kingdom had to interpret and react to the ideas that Zambia projected upon it. This is an exercise in demonstrating where Zambia was able to exercise agency on account of Britain's newfound international limitations in the wake of decolonisation.

The literature on Zambian foreign policy has over the years shifted decisively in favour of realist perspectives, which have done much to illuminate where the country exercised agency in its navigation of foreign affairs through the 1960s and 1970s. Little room has been left for some of the more idealist interpretations of Kaunda's foreign policy as one driven by his Humanist ideology. A consideration of Zambia's relations with the UK aims to contribute to the ongoing debates over Zambia's foreign policy by recentring the role of ideology in Zambian foreign affairs. Chapter 1 and 2 will seek to demonstrate the salience of ideas and worldviews in the relationship, whilst Chapter 3 will reflect on Zambia's historic inclination to rely on the backing of international institutions to actualise its foreign policy goals.

### **Source Material and Methodology**

This study has utilised material obtained from the National Archives in Kew, London in December of 2021. Primary source material from the BNA includes almost every document related to Zambia within the archived material from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In total this is around 700 pages of documents, which were assessed through during the period January-February 2022. Further primary source material comes from the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme at Churchill College, Cambridge, which has helpfully supplied two transcripts from interviews from British High Commissioners Leonard Allinson and John Michael Willson. These High Commissioners served between 1978-1980 and 1988-1990 respectively, and their interviews give insights into some of the personal relationships between diplomatic officials, interesting anecdotes alongside more general reflections and analysis of their tenures in Lusaka. With the United Independence Party archives in Lusaka inaccessible to the author, the research question concerns itself primarily with the British perspective of affairs. As such, the paper is not an overall assessment of Anglo-Zambian relations. It concerns itself primarily with how British officials' attitudes and interpretations of Zambian foreign policy came to influence their policymaking decisions. Though within the FCO documents at Kew there are a few Zambian documents, these are limited primarily to a select few attached letters or notes from Zambian officials.

This paper will employ a methodology which considers African agency in terms of the role played by ideas. African agency is a topic well-discussed by Africanist historians and scholars of the late twentieth century alike. African agency considers the ability of these postcolonial states and their leaders to choose their own path, and make meaningful choices uninhibited by the wishes of other states or institutions, particularly in the Global North. In a sense the idea of African agency challenges neo-colonial assertions that independence constituted no fundamental change to the economic and political dominance of Western states over Africa. However, there are several existing issues with the idea of African agency which the novel methodology of this paper seeks to overcome.

African agency is a topic often framed in the bipolarity of the Cold War: how might these states best co-opt or otherwise utilise the standoff between superpowers for their own ends? In this sense any real agency of African countries and leaders is already compromised, as they find themselves unable to escape the all-encompassing reality of the Global Cold War. Even when African leaders are portrayed as independent agents, capable of cleverly playing one side off of the other to maximise their own benefits, they are still acting within the bounds set by the Global North.<sup>24</sup> Their proto-ideologies find themselves crushed in the inescapable binary of siding with ‘capitalism’ or ‘communism’. Furthermore, it reduces the idea of agency to winners and losers: whether an African leader has successfully played the Cold War game and won a concession from one of the superpowers or they have lost and find themselves assassinated or ousted from power. Framing things in this way: who has ‘won’ and who has ‘lost’ in a diplomatic exchange – might be a tempting way of writing a conventional diplomatic history. Ultimately however, limiting assessments of where small states exercised agency simply to where they achieved tangible concessions from larger powers is a reductionist way of considering small-state agency in international relations. It ignores the reality that these were states led by people that sought to choose their own path governed by their own worldview. Of course, these were small states that were definitely limited in the means to actualise their own path. Some realist scholars contend that smaller states like Zambia exercised agency through a tacit acceptance of their limitations as single states, falling back on institutions and multilateralism to actualise their diplomatic goals.<sup>25</sup> While this may be true, what exactly can be said about these states in bilateral situations? Did they find themselves completely helpless?

This thesis thus sets out to challenge existing notions of African agency and the idea of the ‘global cold war’ by employing a methodology which considers agency in terms of the role played by ideas in bilateral relations. Agency will be observed in the ways that Britain was forced to interpret and understand African ideas. Exploring to what extent an African country had agency in a bilateral environment enables one to conceptually de-couple agency with the Cold War. States had relations

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<sup>24</sup> Wyss, Marco. 2021. *Postcolonial Security*. 16

<sup>25</sup> DeRoche, Andy. 2019 "Attempting to Assert African Agency: Kenneth Kaunda, the Nixon Administration, and Southern Africa, 1968–1973", *South African Historical Journal* 71 (3). 477

that existed outside of the strict bipolarity of the Cold War international system – and this methodology aims to demonstrate how Zambia could exercise considerable agency over their affairs with the UK through the projection of their ideas. An ideas-based assessment of Britain and Zambia's relations in the 1980s will demonstrate the arena in which smaller states were able to exercise agency in bilateral situations which ostensibly afforded them no diplomatic flexibility. Larger states were forced to contend with and interpret the ideas of smaller states. Not only were smaller states able to project their ideas in the foreign policy realm to actualise what they wanted, but it also worked the other way round. Larger states recognised the ideological and moral positions of smaller states, and appealed to them on these terms to facilitate their own foreign policy objectives.

### **Chapter Outline**

This paper will organise itself into three chronological chapters that orbit broadly around three significant issues of interest to the Anglo-Zambian relationship between the period 1979-1989: Rhodesia, South Africa and the Commonwealth. Each chapter ultimately sets out to conceptualise the Anglo-Zambian relationship in a way that reframes the importance of ideas and worldviews in bilateral relations. The relationship was dynamic, and this dynamism often impacted the salience of ideas and their power in effecting diplomatic change. Anglo-Zambian relations in the 1980s show that in the era of its diminished international role, British foreign policy had to actively engage with and adapt to African ideas.

Chapter 1 explores the conclusion of the Rhodesian crisis in Anglo-Zambian relations. The format of this chapter takes a close-analysis view of President Kenneth Kaunda's 1979 visit to London. Ongoing negotiations in London between the Rhodesian government and nationalist forces had reached a stalemate, and the British invited Kaunda out of a belief that he could help actualise an agreement from either side. The close-analysis format will demonstrate how the British strategy in dealing with Kaunda changed over the course of the visit. Britain was forced to abandon a strategy predicated on a presumed sense of superiority in negotiations, and contend with Kaunda's own worldview and ideas in order to facilitate his cooperation. Britain learned to speak the language of Humanism, instrumentalising Kaunda's own ideas in order to actualise their own diplomatic objectives.

Chapter 2 looks at the process of 'normalisation' that occurred in the immediate aftermath of Lancaster House, but also at how the Anglo-Zambian relationship was tested by the issue of South Africa, which exercised an increasingly hostile regional foreign policy in the 1980s. It will discuss 'normalisation' at length, and what that meant to either party. It engages directly with the theme of Britain's diminished international role, arguing that normalisation constituted a means of maintaining a British presence in southern African regional affairs. There were limits to normalisation, however. Incontrovertible differences in opinion regarding the issue of apartheid and South Africa forced

Britain and Zambia to confront one another with totally opposed worldviews. However, normalisation constituted a reversal in some aspects of Britain's diminished international role, enabling a projection of British influence in southern Africa. Opposed worldviews would be circumvented in favour of the practical partnership that normalisation had brought, and ideas became less salient as a result.

Chapter 3 looks toward the end of the decade, wherein the changing political and economic realities of Southern Africa undermined much of the foundations on which normalisation had been built. The Anglo-Zambian relationship suffered as a result, and Zambia diminished in importance to the United Kingdom. The chapter concerns itself with how the relationship diminished, but also at the revival of the Commonwealth's pre-eminence in the relationship. Zambia was to exploit a historic British anxiety over 'Commonwealth opinion' in order to exert considerable diplomatic pressure on its former international partner. With a diminished bilateral relationship, Zambia returned to its historic reliance on international institutions and inter-African solidarity in order to exert pressure on the former metropole within the Commonwealth.

Taken together, these three chapters will illustrate that the Anglo-Zambian relationship of the 1980s was demonstrably influenced by African ideas. In the context of Britain's diminished international position, attitudes toward its ex-colonial territories were forced to undergo a re-imagination. Consequently, British foreign policy found itself adaptive and even malleable to the projected force of African ideas, as the UK pursued relations with a state which possessed a worldview often in total contention to its own.

# Chapter 1 – Rhodesia: Britain learns to speak the language of Humanism

## 1979

### Introduction – Lancaster House

In August of 1979, 27 heads of state and government convened in Lusaka, Zambia for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). The conference was held at the Mulungushi Village compound, a space with a history which succinctly encapsulates the character of Zambian foreign policy. It had been built in 1970 by the Yugoslavians in time for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, arguably the high water-mark of Zambia's international clout. The building was thrown in as a 'sweetener' to a much larger agreement which committed the Yugoslavians to building the 900-megawatt Kafue Hydroelectric Dam.<sup>26</sup> This was just one of many infrastructure deals that Kaunda had obtained through numerous foreign trips - friendly Yugoslavia would also train Zambian pilots and supply fighter planes, anti-aircraft batteries and small arms. Mulungushi stood as a testament to the non-discriminatory, multilateral approach Zambia often took with its foreign policy, and in 1979 it was the site of a key decision on the most notorious regional issue of the time: Rhodesia.<sup>27</sup>

High on the agenda for that year's CHOGM was finding a negotiated end to the conflict there between government and nationalist forces that had been raging for fifteen years. The CHOGM at Mulungushi in 1979 saw the agreement to the nine-point programme for Rhodesia, which committed the new moderate Rhodesian government of Bishop Muzorewa to negotiations with the Patriotic Front – a joint faction of two nationalist forces - at Lancaster House, London in November of that year. Within the nine-point programme for Rhodesia was a commitment from the United Kingdom that they would assume direct constitutional responsibility for the territory in order to administer a ceasefire and oversee elections. Kaunda had sought direct UK involvement in Rhodesia since 1965. How fitting that this goal should be achieved in his temple to multilateral Zambian foreign policy. Negotiations regarding the Rhodesian ceasefire began in Lancaster House on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September. Two months later they were close to collapse. The British invited Kaunda for consultation on how to prevent the collapse and breach the impasse. This chapter will concern itself with Kaunda's 1979 visit to London, and demonstrate the potent role played by African ideology in guiding British diplomatic strategy toward the Zambian president.

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<sup>26</sup> DeRoche, Andy. 2019 "Attempting to Assert African Agency: Kenneth Kaunda, the Nixon Administration, and Southern Africa, 1968–1973". 475

<sup>27</sup> DeRoche, Andy "You can't fight guns with knives: National Security and Zambian responses to UDI, 1965-1973" in *One Zambia, Many Histories Towards a History of Post-colonial Zambia*, ed. Macola, Giacomo, Giacomo Macola, Jan-Bart Gewald, and Marja Hinfelaar, Michigan: Leiden Brill Ann Arbor: 2008. 94

The chapter will use the chronology of Kaunda's meetings with members of the British government in November 1979 to illustrate a clear and decisive shift in the British strategy. The British were forced to move from an initial strategy of emphasizing the urgency of the situation, to a strategy that utilised the Zambian worldview in order to best appeal to Kaunda and actualise their goals. The British invited Kaunda out of an expectation that he would assume the role of wilful facilitator for their own plans regarding Rhodesia, however Kaunda was able to impress upon the British his own worldview, which enabled him to exert considerable agency over affairs. That Kaunda was able to do this speaks not only to the British relationship with Zambia, but also to the British diplomatic doctrine with its former colonial holdings more broadly. It shows the pre-eminence of ideas in guiding the direction of negotiations, exemplifying ways in which smaller states are able to exert agency over larger powers.

This first chapter therefore seeks to question an existing historiography which is often dismissive of the role of African political ideology in postcolonial diplomacy. Scholars of international relations – particularly in terms of the West and its ex-colonies – have often tended to conceptualise post-imperial relations through the lens of empire.<sup>28</sup> 'Neo-colonialism' is a well-discussed topic which is characterised by the notion that Africa was forced to remain economically dependent on the West. Built into much of the existing historiography is the assumption that in the years after independence, the metropole sought a continuation of their influence over the former colony. This was often premised on the idea that Africans remained in a stage of "political innocence".<sup>29</sup> While it has been argued and effectively demonstrated that many colonial officials did not expect, much less want independence for their colonies when it occurred, some scholars are all-too-quick to assume continuities in political relationships between newly independent African states and the former metropole. As such, postcolonial diplomatic relationships between metropole and ex-colony can often be conceptualised within the existing historiography as an exercise in strongarming, with the backdrop of empire neatly justifying these assertions.<sup>30</sup>

The chapter demonstrates that at a bilateral level, British policymakers actively engaged with and understood African ideology in order to pursue diplomatic objectives. This is not to say that a presumed sense of superiority was non-existent within the British diplomatic establishment. 'Colonial' attitudes and a sense of knowing what's best were prevalent and demonstrable within British diplomatic goals toward Zambia. And yet, in this example of Anglo-Zambian diplomacy, total subordination was far from the truth. Furthermore, the chapter seeks to also challenge notions of neo-colonialism which too-often negate African agency by arguing that Zambia actively used its political

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<sup>28</sup> Cullen, Poppy. 2017. *Kenya and Britain after independence*. 7

<sup>29</sup> Darwin, John. 2009. *The empire project*. 613

<sup>30</sup> Robert J McMahon. 2013 "Introduction," in *The Cold War in the Third World*, ed. Robert J McMahon, New York: Oxford University Press, 9

ideology as a tactic towards actualising its own objectives. African political ideologies were an exercise in crafting a new modernity, and the modernity imagined by Kaunda's Zambia would be one of equal and fair diplomacy between nations.<sup>31</sup> An examination of Britain and Zambia's bilateral relations, undertaken through close-analysis of Kaunda's visit to London in November 1979, seeks to reject the neo-colonial notions of 'continued domination' through a demonstration of African diplomacy through ideology.

## **1. An ideal partnership on unequal terms: the reasons behind Kaunda's 1979 invitation to London**

The reasons behind Britain's initial invitation of Kaunda demonstrate a British attitude that is consistent with some historiographical interpretations of postcolonial relationships between metropole and ex-colony. Built into the British attitude at the outset of Kaunda's invitation is a presumed sense of superiority in diplomatic affairs – an attitude that found itself prevalent among British diplomats in other African countries.<sup>32</sup> Britain may have sought a willing and reliable partner to assist with ending the war in Rhodesia, and Zambia may have offered this to Britain on clear grounds. Yet the British were not at all prepared to deal with Kaunda as an equal. Rather, he was to be invited to actualise exactly what the British wanted: no more, no less. The British were also prepared to exercise considerable leverage in the form of withholding economic aid in order to facilitate this. Britain was thus preparing to invite Kaunda as an ideal partner on unequal terms; he possessed the exact criteria required for Britain to actualise their diplomatic goals, and yet Britain was unprepared to offer Kaunda any input in negotiations himself. This foundational hypocrisy in the reasons for Kaunda's invitation sets the scene for the eventual pivot in the British strategy toward dealing with Kaunda.

The criteria that made Kaunda best placed to assist the British was as follows: his regional clout believed capable of legitimising a peace agreement, a stake in the war's timely end and privileged access to information the British needed. These reasons will be discussed in turn, with a view to demonstrating how the British desired the ideal partnership on unequal terms.

### **1a. The ideal partnership**

The first reason for Kaunda's invitation revolved around the frangible state of negotiations that existed between the Rhodesian government and the Patriotic Front. Immediately prior to Kaunda's invitation, Muzorewa's government had been tentatively persuaded to accept terms which they had initially rejected outright. What was then crucial to the British was the Patriotic Front also accepting the terms and not – as the British feared they might – push for more now that they had won

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<sup>31</sup> Gerits, Frank. 2023 *The Ideological Scramble for Africa*. 12

<sup>32</sup> Cullen, Poppy. 2017. *Kenya and Britain after independence*. 264

hard-fought concessions from Muzorewa.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately for the British, this is exactly what the Patriotic Front did. It is clear from communications between the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's office and the Foreign Office that by the 8<sup>th</sup> of November anxieties over the likelihood of an agreement not being reached are in full flow.<sup>34</sup> This provided a context for Kaunda's invitation that gave the British much-needed optics for the agreement. Running the agreement by Kaunda and essentially gaining his 'blessing' – or at the very least the perception that he had been consulted – was an important legitimising step for the agreement, demonstrating that as it stands it is acceptable to broader regional actors in southern Africa and thus acceptable to the PF.

The second reason for Britain's invitation to Kaunda lay in Zambia's close association with the 15-year long conflict in Rhodesia. Zambia was a belligerent in everything but name, and a natural partner for the British in any negotiation regarding the conflicts' end. As conflict broke out in Rhodesia between the government and liberationist forces, Kaunda hosted Joshua Nkomo's ZIPRA (the military arm of his political faction ZAPU) in encampments spread across his country, a factor that led the Rhodesians to conduct their own military incursions into Zambia throughout the 1970s.<sup>35</sup> In October of 1979, the Rhodesians staged an enormous raid into Zambian territory, blowing up rail and road bridges in Northern Zambia in order to immobilise ZIPRA troop movements, an event which overshadowed Kaunda's visit a month later. Communications between the British High Commission (BHC) in Lusaka and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in London preceding the visit point to Kaunda's 'preoccupation' with Rhodesia, whose attacks on Zambia are believed by the British to have taken an increasing toll on the Zambian economy.<sup>36</sup> Though Kaunda hosted liberationist movements, he was exceedingly reluctant to involve Zambia militarily in any southern African conflict. Rhodesian raids in Zambia would be allowed to happen unopposed, as Kaunda specifically instructed his armed forces to not retaliate or shoot back.<sup>37</sup> Kaunda's invitation to London for consultation on Rhodesia should therefore be considered in the context that Zambia had existed on the 'front line' of the Rhodesian issue since UDI in 1965, his consultation on the wars end made sense from an information perspective. He both knew about the war as much as he did the primary actors within it.

Thirdly, the CHOGM meeting in Lusaka earlier that summer established the diplomatic environment in which Zambia was already an active participant. This environment placed Zambia as a more than willing partner for Britain to engage with diplomatically to assist in not only bringing the

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<sup>33</sup> "Confidential: Rhodesia briefing from CAD, FCO" 8 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117, TNA. 2

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Allinson, Leonard. "An interview between Sir Leonard Allinson and Jane Barder" By Jane Barder. 5<sup>th</sup> March 1996 BDOHP, Churchill College, Cambridge. 14

<sup>36</sup> "Visit of President Kaunda to the UK: 8/11 November from CAD, FCO" 12 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117, TNA

<sup>37</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. 80

war to an end, but also pursue closer relations with in the foreseeable future. Not long after the conclusion of the CHOGM that summer, Kaunda was already being suggested for a State Visit to the UK within British diplomatic circles, indicative of the favourable winds which blew the Anglo-Zambian relationship in the months preceding November.<sup>38</sup> A briefing from the Central Africa Department (CAD) produced in advance of Kaunda's visit pays recognition to the Lusaka agreement made in August as instrumental to the new pathway to potential peace in Rhodesia.<sup>39</sup> Not only were they the hosting party to the agreement, but the Zambian's also sat-in on the 'group of six' discussion on the third day of the CHOGM, in which the nine-point programme committing Rhodesia to negotiations was developed over the course of only an hour.<sup>40</sup> Of the group of six, there were three African countries. Of the two other African countries in the group of six, Nigeria didn't have as much a stake in the Rhodesian issue, and Tanzania's Julius Nyerere was notoriously uncooperative with the UK (A telegram from British foreign secretary Carrington to the BHC in Lusaka stresses that Kaunda is only to come to London unaccompanied by Nyerere)<sup>41</sup>. Zambia was the preferred partner for Britain to work closely with on the Rhodesian issue. Zambia's domestic problems were well understood by the British, who viewed Kaunda as eager to find a solution for his own sake as much as his countries'. Kaunda's consultation on the Lancaster House agreement in November should thus be considered in the immediate context of CHOGM that August. Kaunda's invitation was made as a natural continuation of the diplomacy that had begun in August, where his willing partnership and alignment on Rhodesia became apparent to the UK.

### **1b. On unequal terms**

Though Zambia represented Britain's ideal partner to consult with on Lancaster House, the British were not prepared to deal with Kaunda as an equal. The UK prepared leverage to ensure Kaunda actualised exactly what they required of him. The British were well-aware that Zambia hosted Patriotic Front forces in camps across the country, a fact which informed their belief that Kaunda held considerable influence with Nkomo, who represented one half of the Patriotic Front.<sup>42</sup> The belief existed that Kaunda could at the very least convince Nkomo to accept the agreement as it stood. He may have been considered a high value partner in negotiations – but that did not in any way guarantee him the sort of good-faith treatment one might expect in an equal partnership. The British made themselves exceedingly well-prepared to deal with any cold feet or reluctance on the part of Kaunda to facilitate exactly the terms they wanted from Nkomo.

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<sup>38</sup> "Royal Visits, letter from John A Sankey, CAD to Mr Aspin" 15 October 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA

<sup>39</sup> "Confidential: Rhodesia briefing from CAD, FCO" 8 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117, TNA. 2

<sup>40</sup> Ingram, Derek. 1979. Lusaka 1979: A significant commonwealth meeting, *The Round Table*, 69:(276). 278

<sup>41</sup> "Telno 916: Rhodesia" 6 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117, TNA

<sup>42</sup> Allinson, Leonard. "An interview between Sir Leonard Allinson and Jane Barder" By Jane Barder. 5<sup>th</sup> March 1996 BDOHP, Churchill College, Cambridge. 13

This preparation came in the form of readiness to use subtle coercion in order to get the Zambians to work toward British goals. Across numerous briefings posted between the BHC in Lusaka, CAD and the Prime Minister's private secretary is a £10 million 'agricultural loan' which was deliberately delayed in delivery to the Zambians under the guise of bureaucratic and administrative hold-ups. It was the intention of the British to maintain this guise, and thus continue to withhold the loan, if the Zambians were uncooperative in the British efforts at Lancaster House. The loan agreement was first discussed a year prior, with negotiations leading to a draft ready by July 1979. Though the plan was to sign the document with the Zambians at CHOGM that summer, this did not occur. A confidential briefing document points to the fact that though the specificities of the loan were agreed between the Lusaka High Commission and the Zambian officials there, signature of the loan was to be deliberately delayed at CHOGM in the summer, so as to maintain leverage "in the context of Lancaster House"<sup>43</sup>. Delays were made under the impression that multiple minor technical points of the loan still need to be agreed upon, something which at that stage the Zambians were beginning to get impatient about. The same document argues for the PM to wait until the conclusion of the conference in mid-November before signature of the loan.<sup>44</sup>

Other documents regarding the loan prepared Thatcher with two separate possibilities which were to inform her strategy when discussing with Kaunda: one was to be used if discussions on Rhodesia were going well, and a second 'defensive' point: if discussions on Rhodesia were going badly and Kaunda was to bring up the delayed loan signature. The former invited Thatcher to mention the loan, and to state that the technical points had now been clarified and that the BHC in Lusaka had been instructed to proceed with a signature. The latter, the defensive option, was to tell Kaunda that the technical points were still being ironed out, and that the signature would see further delay.<sup>45</sup> This is a really fascinating insight into the hard diplomacy the UK was preparing to undertake should Zambia not cooperate as the UK would have liked. It directly politicises aid in a way that was very symptomatic of a neo-colonial relationship. The British hoped that Kaunda will cooperate, as there is a distinct fear that "the technical reasons for continuing to stall are in danger of losing credibility, but there are strong arguments for delaying signature until mid-November".<sup>46</sup> The British thus invited Kaunda out of the belief that he could use his "considerable" influence to persuade Nkomo to accept the settlement as it stood, but were considerably prepared to more-than gently press his cooperation on the matter. That the British believed they could guide their relationship with a former African

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<sup>43</sup> "Zambia: Signature of the £10million project loan agreement, Rhodesia Department, FCO". 6 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> "Call by President Kaunda on the Prime Minister: points to make (pink paper)" 7 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA

<sup>46</sup> "Zambia: Signature of the £10million project loan agreement, Rhodesia Department, FCO". 6 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA

colony using the pressures of economic aid agreements demonstrates a relationship based on a fundamentally unequal partnership.

There was therefore a fundamental hypocrisy on the part of the British attitude which lay the foundation for their eventual pivot in strategy toward dealing with Kaunda. The Zambian President was ultimately required by the British to facilitate something that could not have been done without him. However, the British were overtly steadfast in their belief that Kaunda should be the junior, even subservient, partner in actualising this. The British mentality around Kaunda's invitation revolved around the fact that he would be easily made to actualise what the British wanted. Yet at the same time, it was the British who ultimately required something that Kaunda had. It also demonstrates continuities regarding the British diplomatic establishment's attitudes toward Africa: their doctrine is still totally founded on a retained sense of superiority and the belief that they can govern Zambia's fate.

Britain's invitation of Kaunda and expectation that he would prove a pliable and useful asset demonstrate an attitude consistent with the neo-colonial archetype that has often been suggested by scholars of post-imperial history. They are prepared to withhold economic aid in order to utilise Kaunda – a factor which is arguably a 'smoking gun' to the idea of continuities in the West's domination of Africa via economic means. From the outset of negotiations, Britain still possessed a 'presumed sense of superiority' toward Zambia, and this would become increasingly challenged as it became apparent that dealing with Kaunda would not prove the walk-over that many within the British diplomatic establishment believed it would be. As Pinkney argues, the form that postcolonial relationships took were often clearly unequal, but not one of complete subordination.<sup>47</sup>

## **2. The urgency strategy – Britain's initial negotiation with Kaunda**

Britain initially pursued the first of two strategies in negotiating with Kaunda: the 'urgency' strategy. This strategy was predicated on the British belief that Kaunda's visit was only to serve one purpose: actualising exactly what the British wanted, which was Nkomo's agreement to the terms that had been negotiated thus far. The urgency strategy emphasized the crisis of the present situation for all parties involved. Negotiations were to be described as at a 'crunch point', liable to collapse at any moment and undo months of progress. With the collapse of negotiations, conflict was to resume and Zambia's present situation – with the blockade of Maize maintained – was to worsen. As such, Kaunda was to be encouraged to persuade Nkomo to accept the agreement as soon as possible. This strategy was an attempt at providing Britain the advantage through the meeting, essentially strong-arming Kaunda into quickly acquiescing to whatever was required of him. Conceptualising Britain's initial approach to Kaunda in this way demonstrates the relationship that the UK envisioned with

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<sup>47</sup> Pinkney, Robert. 2001. *The International Politics of East Africa*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2

Zambia: one predicated on an unequal partnership based on a British monopoly of information, agency and control over their ex-colonial territory. The failure of this strategy would show how African ideas became a salient factor in Anglo-Zambian diplomacy.

Kaunda's visit to the UK lasted just over three days, from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of November. Kaunda was invited to meet with the Queen prior to meeting Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on the first day of his visit. The meeting with the Queen was the second time Kaunda had met with the British monarch that year, following on from an earlier visit by the Queen to Zambia in the summer of that year, prior to the CHOGM. A 1997 interview with Leonard Allinson, the British High Commissioner in Lusaka at the time, reveals diplomatic intricacies of this visit which illuminate the often insincere attitudes within the Anglo-Zambian relationship at the time. Upon the Queen's arrival to Lusaka that summer, the Zambians had planned for Joshua Nkomo of the Patriotic Front to be part of the line-up which waited on the tarmac to greet her and her party on their exit from the aeroplane. ZIPRA had just been responsible for shooting down a civilian airliner earlier that year, and so Allinson made considerable efforts to have Nkomo dropped from this list. After these efforts, Nkomo was eventually dropped, though the Zambians still tried to sneak in a mention to 'Nkomo's freedom fighters' in the Queen's banquet speech later that evening.<sup>48</sup> With all of this diplomatic effort expended in keeping Nkomo at arms' length only a few months earlier, Kaunda was invited to London with the specific reason in mind to convince Nkomo to accept a British agreement.

The first British strategy to negotiating with Kaunda – the 'urgency' strategy – took centre-stage in the first half of dealing with him. Scholars of Zambian foreign policy often stress Kaunda's reputation as a man who worked best in situations of crisis.<sup>49</sup> Britain's initial emphasis as to the urgency of the situation corroborates the idea that this was something well-understood by his contemporaries. The British believed that Kaunda had a great stake in a speedy resolution to the Rhodesian problem, a fact which underpinned this specific strategy.

Repeated in briefings prior to the visit is the fact that Rhodesia had in October of that year suspended exports of maize, while also intensifying their campaign of raids into Zambia. Maize was and is still the staple food of many Zambians, and the briefings illustrate that the FCO were aware of the Zambian desperation to try and make up an emergent shortfall in the crop. Zambia had contracted with South Africa to send the bulk of this from the south – a considerable step for a member of the Front Line States.<sup>50</sup> Briefing documents prior to Kaunda's arrival on the 8<sup>th</sup> make it clear in informing that there would be no solution to the Maize crisis without Lancaster House reaching an agreement

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<sup>48</sup> Allinson, Leonard. "An interview between Sir Leonard Allinson and Jane Barder" By Jane Barder. 5<sup>th</sup> March 1996 BDOHP, Churchill College, Cambridge. 17

<sup>49</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. 146

<sup>50</sup> "Visit of President Kaunda to the UK: 8/11 November, CAD, FCO" 12 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA. 2

first. In one such document supplied to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher prior to the 8<sup>th</sup> November meeting, this is stated explicitly as a “point to make”, something that British diplomats at the FCO wish to get across to Kaunda from the very first meeting during his visit. Kaunda was to be told that the Rhodesian government of Bishop Muzorewa had been “Pushed as far as possible during the negotiations” already, and that until a settlement was made, their hands are tied as far as assisting Zambia was concerned.<sup>51</sup> Only once the Rhodesian issue was settled could all countries in the area live in peace and cooperate for their economic well-being. This illustrates the general strategic position that the UK are taking in as far as Kaunda is concerned, which essentially boils down to: we can only help you if you help us (first).

## **2a. Meeting Kaunda: the urgency strategy stalls**

Over the course of the 1979 visit, Kaunda met with Thatcher three times. This section will look at each meeting in turn, using details taken in turn from letters and transcripts produced by those who were present. This close-analysis style, combined with the briefings assessed in the previous section of this chapter, provides an insight into the style of diplomacy the UK conducted with Kaunda, which further elucidates the unequal partnership dynamic which was present in the early half of the visit. It will also examine to a lesser extent the language used by the British in order to trace any ‘continued sense of superiority’ that may have existed in the relationship. Furthermore, an analysis of the meetings demonstrates the ability for smaller states to exercise agency in situations that seem less-than-optimal. These three meetings show how the British diplomatic strategy switched over the course of the few days that Kaunda was present in London. There was a decisive shift from the focus on the urgency of Zambia’s present situation, to appealing to Zambian ideas, in order to get what they wished.

An analysis of the phrasing used in British reports describing meetings with Kaunda illustrates the initial emphasis on the first strategy from the British. Prior to meeting with Thatcher on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, the British foreign secretary Lord Carrington accompanied Kaunda for a 45-minute car journey from the airport to London. The meeting was summarised in a brief document circulated among various departments of the FCO. The tone of the conversation underscores the direction in which the British see the next few days going. Carrington’s opening salvo in this meeting is a neat demonstration of the British strategy to the visit as outlined earlier. It suggested that the agreement (the “British proposal for a settlement”) represents the best compromise available and the only course likely considered effective. He underlined that the Rhodesian’s have already made ‘tremendous’ concessions. And finally, he suggested that it “was now up to President Kaunda to

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<sup>51</sup> “Visit of President Kaunda, 8/9 November: Points to make. CAD, FCO” 8<sup>th</sup> November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA. 1

persuade the Patriotic Front also to compromise”.<sup>52</sup> From the very outset of the 1979 visit, the British suggested an implacable approach to the situation. Kaunda was not to be allowed to in any way co-opt the agreement or facilitate much change for the PF. The only thing he will be made to facilitate is Nkomo’s consent to the agreement.

A language analysis of these reports also exemplifies the sort of unequal partnership imagined by the British. When the report is referring to Carrington, he is always “explaining”, “stressing” or “referring”. Words which suggest a British monopoly on information – and by extension the direction of negotiations - as far as this agreement is concerned. When referring to Kaunda, he is “expressing”, “asking”, “enquiring” and even “not reacting strongly”.<sup>53</sup> He is clearly considered the junior, perhaps even under-rehearsed, party to these negotiations. When Kaunda “enquires” who the potential governor for interim-period Rhodesia might be and whether he could meet them while in London, Carrington suggests that he knows who it is, but won’t tell Kaunda until the PF agree to the proposals.<sup>54</sup> Without wishing to infer too much from this short conversation, it certainly gives the reader an early sense of the dynamic of the relationship in this 1979 context. Of course, it’s important to point out that by itself an analysis of language may come across as irrelevant or inadmissible to an assessment of international relations. However, it corresponds greatly with tenets of the initial urgency strategy the British take in both their briefing documents, as well as in the first few meetings with Kaunda.

In the first meeting between Kaunda and Thatcher on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, the British deploy the urgency strategy, and began to try and get Kaunda to convince Nkomo to accept the settlement. Thatcher emphasised that in the negotiations, the “Moment of decision” had come, that any delay to this decision would be costly, that the British government had already come up with the most effective compromise available, and finally – but most importantly – that Kaunda needed to bring his influence to bear on the Patriotic Front to accept this.<sup>55</sup> These four points underscore the ‘urgency’ strategy by which the British initially want to approach and deal with Kaunda. As far as the British are concerned, Kaunda’s contribution to matters as they stand could only be in actualising what the British want, and they want to dispel any notion that he might be able to change things on the basis of what he, or the PF, wanted. The first meeting is illustrative of the first few cracks of hypocrisy beginning to show in the initial strategy taken by the British throughout the 1979 visit by Kaunda. For all their unwillingness to budge on the contents of the treaty, the British ultimately did need Kaunda to actualise what they wanted: facilitating an agreement by the Patriotic Front. As such, the urgency

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<sup>52</sup> Discussion between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and President Kaunda: 8 November, FCO” 8 November 1979. PREM19/3591. TNA.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>55</sup> “President Kaunda’s visit, letter from Richard Alexander PS to G.H Walden, FCO” 8 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA

strategy was in danger of completely stalling on account of Britain's need to effectively balance between not completely alienating Kaunda while also not allowing him to make any meaningful change to the agreement.

As one-sided as this meeting sounds so far, Kaunda made no effort to argue for much on the contents of the Lancaster House agreement, and instead caught the British by surprise by discussing a matter completely unexpected to them.<sup>56</sup> As outlined in British briefing documents prior to Kaunda's arrival, there was an expectation that Kaunda would argue primarily for an extension to the 2-month interim period between the ceasefire and the holding of elections in Rhodesia, which meant in practice that the British would maintain formal control of Rhodesia for longer. Instead, Kaunda "seemed to be principally preoccupied with the question of the status of Bishop Muzorewa and of the Patriotic Front leaders during the interim period and the election campaign"<sup>57</sup>. The British, unprepared for Kaunda to discuss this in their meeting, agreed that each leader would indeed have equal status and treatment under the interim government. Kaunda does not take the opportunity to immediately discuss with the British what it is the Patriotic Front want, as the British almost certainly expected him to. What makes this worth mentioning is that it shows that the British strategy is endangered from the beginning. Kaunda is seemingly in no rush – and is taking the time to discuss paltry matters that the British themselves had not even considered. The first meeting concluded with Thatcher personally requesting that the Patriotic Front come to a decision over the course of the following day – seemingly putting the pressure on Kaunda to get results during his stay.

To Kaunda, the invitation to London to consult on the Rhodesian crisis was incredibly prestigious, and should be considered in the context of the time. The Rhodesian raids on Zambian infrastructure led Kaunda to call for British compensation (with the logic being that the Rhodesians were still rebellious British subjects, and as such the British held responsibility for their actions). The British refusal to do this resulted in the British high commissioner Leonard Allinson covering the pages of the Zambian press, which called him "Arrogant, irrelevant and insolent". He was not long after chased out of Lusaka, being officially recalled and replaced within the year.<sup>58</sup> For Kaunda to have been invited to London in the context of this diplomatic incident would have given him legitimacy with his own domestic constituency. Despite the diplomatic pleasantries afforded by both sides in the meetings of 8-11<sup>th</sup> November, the context of Kaunda's visit provides a lens which enables one to trace why the initial British strategy failed. While it is important for Kaunda to return home from London with some degree of success, the British effectively need 'more': a compliant Patriotic Front which only Kaunda can grant them. Both require something of the other, yet Kaunda arguably

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<sup>56</sup> "President Kaunda's visit, letter from Richard Alexander PS to G.H Walden, FCO" 8 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA. 2

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>58</sup> Allinson, Leonard. "An interview between Sir Leonard Allinson and Jane Barder" By Jane Barder. 5th March 1996 BDOHP, Churchill College, Cambridge. 19

has the upper-hand. With the British already committed to assuming direct responsibility for Rhodesia, Kaunda had already ‘won’, in a sense. As much as the British argue that it is not, time is on Kaunda’s side, and Kaunda’s reluctance to contribute anything meaningful to the first meeting evidenced his attitude in this regard.

## **2b. Reaching an impasse – the British rethink their strategy**

With the urgency strategy already stalled on account of seemingly no rush on the part of Kaunda to simply do as the British ask, the next two meetings were to seal its fate. The unequal partnership that Britain had envisaged which is premised on an obedient Zambia did not work, and Kaunda required more than just a projected sense of urgency in order to do as the British ask of him. Abandoning the passive position taken in the first meeting, Kaunda arrived to the second and third with the intention of co-opting the meeting and securing changes for the PF – exactly what the British did not intend to happen. This section will elucidate how the urgency strategy came to an end and how the British arrived at their second strategy: appealing to Humanism. The British were to learn that in dealing with a former African territory, they would have to engage with and instrumentalise African ideas in order to conduct diplomacy.

In contrast to the meeting the previous day, Kaunda returned to Downing Street with a comprehensive set of what initially seemed to be his own concerns with the agreement that the British have so far got the Rhodesian government to agree to. For simplicities’ sake, negotiations at Lancaster House can essentially be boiled down to two distinct aspects: the ceasefire, and the following interim period and election arrangements. For the purposes of this study, the specificities of this agreement are not all too relevant, what are however are the problems that Kaunda had with the agreement and how the British government responded to them. The meeting cannot be said to have been very productive. Though the British had been prepared to deal with a Kaunda that had a series of problems with the agreement, Kaunda’s declaration the day before that he had come to London to listen meant that the British party in the meeting were considerably disappointed that Kaunda had now returned the next day with a series of problems with the agreement. The problems identified by Kaunda regarded the length of the interim period, the status of the combatants in the ceasefire, the status of the leaders of both the Rhodesian government and Patriotic Front, as well as those who make up the police forces in the interim period.<sup>59</sup>

To the British, Kaunda’s ‘problems’, which had been painstakingly negotiated with the Rhodesian government over the previous months, were not up for debate at all. The tone of the British foreign minister Lord Carrington was polite and disarming at first, calling Kaunda’s requests “logical but not negotiable”. Over the course of the meeting, with patience seemingly wearing thin, Carrington

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<sup>59</sup> “Zimbabwe Constitutional Conference: Proposals by President Kaunda” 10 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA

pointed out that no arrangements would be wholly acceptable to both sides, and that there was already a considerable risk of losing the Rhodesian government on what had been agreed so far.<sup>60</sup> In private, the British delegation called much of what Kaunda asked for “unrealistic”, with the prospect of peace unachievable should he continue making such suggestions.<sup>61</sup> This second meeting is illuminating certainly to the extent of influence that Kaunda believed he held over matters. His conduct in the meeting, especially when contrasted with the relative passivity he displayed the day before, showed a willingness to test the boundaries that the British had set on what exactly he was in London to do. This undermined the imagined partnership which Britain had envisaged with Zambia prior to Kaunda’s arrival. Instead of finding in Zambia a partner that had a stake in a speedy resolution to a conflict whatever the terms, Britain needed to deal with a Kaunda that was using the prestige brought by the meeting to play the role of equal statesman and totally reject any notion of a ‘retained sense of tutelage’ among the British.

The final meeting between Kaunda and Thatcher constituted the final unravelment of the urgency strategy, and thus set the stage for a change in the style of partnership that Britain had imagined with Zambia upon Kaunda’s initial invitation. The working papers exchanged by the two premiers prior to the meeting illustrate how the partnership between Britain and Zambia had changed even over the course of a few days, evidenced especially by the linguistic style Kaunda chooses. Kaunda’s paper began with “I am now in the position to put forward specific proposals which I sincerely believe would assist in resolving the present impasse and facilitate forward movement in the Lancaster House talks on Zimbabwe”. To consider this for a moment: Kaunda had been invited to London on the pretence of being consulted on Lancaster House, while in actuality the British essentially needed him to win over the Patriotic Front on the agreement as it stood. In total reverse of this, Kaunda instead co-opted his visit to London to take on the role of unofficial mediator between the British and Patriotic Front, which was exactly what the British did not want, and what the ‘urgency strategy’ had been crafted to prevent. The British frustration with this was evident in the meeting. Thatcher continually stressed to Kaunda that time was critical, and that room for further negotiation was very limited. Despite stonewalling Kaunda – emphasizing the precious little time left to actualise an agreement - and making it clear that nothing in the agreement was up for discussion, Kaunda was unphased.

One concession the British did make was in extending the interim period from two to three months. Thatcher’s paper to Kaunda reads “But they have taken account of the strongly held views that it should be longer, in eventually deciding that it should run for two months from the date when

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<sup>60</sup> “Record of a conversation between the Prime Minister and President Kaunda of Zambia at 10 Downing Street on 9 November at 1030”. 9 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA

<sup>61</sup> “Meeting with President Kaunda 8 November: Points to Make, from Rhodesia Department”. 8 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA. 4

the cease fire becomes effective.”<sup>62</sup> Concessions on the part of the British demonstrate that the urgency strategy had by that point been abandoned completely, and that Kaunda must be impressed in some other way in order to guarantee his cooperation in delivering Nkomo. The failure of impressing a sense of urgency over Kaunda is underscored by a continued British anxiety over the Patriotic Front’s acceptance of the deal. In a final letter from Michael Alexander reporting the events of the third meeting, he wrote “President Kaunda left the impression with the PM that he thought Mr. Nkomo genuinely wanted a settlement. The PM herself tried to leave the President with the impression that HMG (Her Majesty’s Government) did not look with disfavour on Mr. Nkomo”<sup>63</sup>. It’s clear that in the throughout Kaunda’s visit, it was not entirely certain to the British whether Kaunda had convinced the Patriotic Front to come onboard or not. Kaunda gave some impression that Nkomo was receptive, but he was never definitive in guaranteeing their support.

The urgency strategy failed because it was built upon false assumptions on the part of the British, which are illustrative broader flaws in the British foreign policy doctrine toward their former African territory. Firstly, the British greatly overestimated Kaunda’s willingness to see a speedy end to the war. It became apparent during his visit that Kaunda was in no rush, as he even took the time to provide Thatcher with his own paper on how the agreement can be modified. The second failing of the strategy lies in Kaunda’s refusal to interpret any sense of urgency at all. Rather, it likely gave Kaunda the impression that the British were especially anxious to see speedy success at Lancaster House. The hypocrisy of the British urgency strategy: that Kaunda is both essential to negotiations yet cannot be allowed agency over negotiations, ultimately exposed itself over the course of the visit. This hypocrisy was based in a retained sense of tutelage among the British – that as arbiters of the agreement they should maintain a monopoly on information and proceedings. With the failure of the urgency strategy, the British were required to effectively hear Kaunda out, forcing them to engage with his worldview and ideas. How they did this demonstrates a salience of ideas in the Anglo-Zambian relationship.

### **3. Appealing to humanism – the second British strategy**

The initial reliance that the British had on emphasizing urgency and stonewalling Kaunda did not result in what they wanted, and in fact gave Kaunda the room to do the opposite: instead of gaining a wilful facilitator of their wishes, Kaunda had co-opted the invitation to become a mediator. The British attitude at the outset of negotiations was largely consistent with some of the dominant themes in the historiography: A presumption of superiority on the part of the British, and the belief that Zambia could offer nothing to negotiations beyond actualising what the British diplomatic

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<sup>62</sup> “Working paper on British proposals, under ‘Length of the interim period’” No date. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA. 1

<sup>63</sup> “President Kaunda’s Call, letter from Richard Alexander PS to G. H Walden, FCO” 10 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA. 2

establishment want. This section will use the pivot in British strategy to illustrate how British diplomatic efforts were forced to contend with and utilise Zambian political ideology in order to achieve their aims. This section will explore the role of humanism – the ideology of Kaunda and ‘national philosophy’ of Zambia – in the 1979 London visit. It will show that humanism was a present factor in negotiations both from the Zambian side and British. From the Zambian side, the negotiations were an opportunity to show the triumph of humanism as a modernising, African ideology guiding the principles of international justice. For the British, humanism was perceived as something that needed to be appealed to in order to best instrumentalise Kaunda.

Humanism was made a salient factor of negotiations by Kaunda even prior to the man’s arrival. The invitation to London in the very first place was framed as a triumph of humanistic ideas. The appearance of being a statesman is invaluable to politicians who potentially face trouble domestically. Rhodesia’s raids and the blockade of maize had made Zambia’s domestic situation increasingly unstable. British High Commissioner Allinson’s interview about his time in Lusaka prior to Kaunda’s visit illustrates this. The Rhodesian raids were blamed on the British, and Kaunda had publicly said that the British should pay for all damages.<sup>64</sup> A ‘crisis’ existed. It was both in one sense very real, and yet also rhetorically inflated by Kaunda, the very man who shined as a ‘crisis manager’.<sup>65</sup> To effectively bully the British high commissioner out of Lusaka at one minute, only to be invited to London for consultation on Lancaster House the next, was excellent optics for someone like Kaunda, who was able to use the moralistic language of Humanism to chalk it up as a success for Zambia.

Furthermore, an invitation to London offered Kaunda something invaluable to his own style of diplomacy: access. Much of Zambia’s foreign policy in the first republic years (1964-1973) relied on a projection of a state that was larger than its borders. Zambia’s presence in international institutions, Kaunda’s occupation of Chair at the Organisation of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement (hosting the third NAM conference in 1970) demonstrate a tacit acceptance of Zambia’s limitations as a single country. But lesser discussed is the ideological aspect to Zambia’s multilateral style of international diplomacy. Access was an inherent feature of the Zambian approach to foreign policy – it offered the state, and by extension the state ideology, a privileged position in international affairs. Furthermore, it presented Kaunda with the ability to promote the moralistic tokens of humanism and secure status internationally as a sensible moderate. He was able to lean on his ideological foundations for confidence internationally despite Zambia’s ailing economic situation.<sup>66</sup> Though the first republic was long over, an invitation to London for consultation on Lancaster House

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<sup>64</sup> Allinson, Leonard. “An interview between Sir Leonard Allinson and Jane Barder” By Jane Barder. 5th March 1996 BDOHP, Churchill College, Cambridge. 19

<sup>65</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. 107

<sup>66</sup> Schler, Lynn 2018. “Dilemmas of Postcolonial Diplomacy: Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, and the Middle East Crisis, 1964–73.” 115

was co-opted by Kaunda as an ideological success: a triumph of sensible humanism in the international order. Kaunda envisioned a partnership with Britain which provided him with the privilege of access, which in turn offered him the ability to demonstrate Zambia's international success, and by extension the importance of Humanism.

What Kaunda sought out in London demonstrates the prevalence of both Zambian and also African ideas-at-large in his diplomacy. There are elements of humanism, but also broader themes of anti-colonial modernity in the ideas that Kaunda projects in London. Kaunda consistently pointed to Britain's moral responsibility to ensure that peace is obtained and maintained in Rhodesia.<sup>67</sup> A great deal can be inferred from the fact that an anti-colonial African leader is promoting the return of direct rule from a colonial power in the name of 'moral responsibility'. The irony to this was well-understood by Kaunda, who underscored Britain's moral responsibility by invoking the situation in the Congo in 1960. At one stage in his meeting with Thatcher, he instructed her that should Britain like to leave Rhodesia as soon as possible, they should "look no further than the reputations that the Belgians enjoy in Africa"<sup>68</sup>. Kaunda was in a sense invoking the same ideology used by colonisers to actualise his own anti-colonial foreign policy objectives. Anti-colonial foreign policy objectives were also pursued and actualised by ex-colonial states through multilateral means. In the British context, this was the Commonwealth. The insistence upon multilateralism in Zambian ideas was also seen in Kaunda's diplomacy with the British. His requests for changes to the agreement include a police force made up of auxiliaries from many Commonwealth nations, as well as Commonwealth observers deployed to Rhodesia.<sup>69</sup> Close working with the Commonwealth was characteristic of Zambian foreign policy, and in this context shows how Zambia sought to bolster its own position in directing Rhodesia's future by relying on Commonwealth allies.<sup>70</sup> Kaunda's close relationship with Shridath Ramphal, who served for 15 years as Commonwealth Secretary General was just another part of Zambia projecting a larger version of itself internationally.

There is also evidence to show that the British directly sought to engage with Zambian ideas in order to obtain their own diplomatic objectives. What exactly is meant by Zambian or African ideas – and how exactly can British elites 'engage' with them? In this context, it's important to recall the historiography surrounding Zambian foreign policy. 'Idealist' writings on Zambian foreign policy considered the primary motivations and goals of Zambia internationally to broadly sit within the moral, Christian and egalitarian views of Kenneth Kaunda – who developed the ideology of 'humanism' as essentially a manifestation of this. The rejection of the idealist viewpoint on the grounds that it came across as too sycophantic or otherwise hagiographic of Kaunda resulted in

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<sup>67</sup> "Record of a conversation between the Prime Minister and President Kaunda of Zambia at 10 Downing Street on 9 November at 1030". 9 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA. 6

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 6

<sup>69</sup> "Letter from President Kaunda to Margaret Thatcher" 10 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA

<sup>70</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. 94

considerations of Zambian policy to sit almost entirely within a realist school. By questioning to what extent ‘African ideas’ influenced British policy, the question being asked really concerns itself with how humanism was interpreted by British policymakers. How were these ideas understood and engaged with? Answering this question is an exercise in returning agency to Zambian diplomats and policy-makers, whose motivations in the realm of international relations are too-often boiled down to maximalising foreign assistance from the next most-willing great power.

British documents from Kaunda’s visit to London demonstrate the strategy of appealing to Kaunda’s worldview in order to properly instrumentalise him. In fact, it is arguably the British interpretation of Zambian ideology that instructed their entire diplomatic strategy when talking with Kaunda. Stephen Chan has discussed different interpretations of Kaunda in his numerous writings on Zambia, and one such interpretation is that of the ‘mediator’, the most important attribute of which is that of predictability. Kaunda’s consistent position as a stubborn pacifist in international affairs makes him a predictable and reliable partner for diplomacy, which assists Zambia in projecting the largest version of itself internationally.<sup>71</sup>

What is important here is that this consistent pacific approach is predicated on Zambia’s entire ideological foundation under Kenneth Kaunda. Zambia’s projection of these ideas makes them an accessible partner in international relations. While humanism has been referred to by scholars as wishy-washy and not as codified perhaps as other postcolonial African ideologies, it’s worth paying brief recognition to aspects of it which were particularly salient to the British. Kaunda integrated the enlightenment ideas of radical equality and Christian universalism within his vision of the postcolonial order.<sup>72</sup> In this way, Kaunda’s humanism distinguished itself from other African ideologies in that it was an application of typically ‘European’ ideas to Africa – rather than an attempt at forging something new by questioning these ideas. This made him a marketable and accessible partner to the British. He was far-and-away considered the most workable partner in southern Africa<sup>73</sup>, and Humanism provided more than enough common ground with which the British could appeal to Kaunda on. The British themselves interpret Zambian ideas through recognising them to be the most assured way of getting what they need from Kaunda; they thus appealed to his humanistic vision of society and the international order. “We should appeal to his strong (and at times emotional) desire for a peaceful settlement. We should emphasize that Kaunda probably has it in his power to persuade Joshua Nkomo to accept a settlement”<sup>74</sup>. The British were eventually convinced that a pursuit of a strategy which appealed best to the Zambian worldview would be far more effective than that which they had pursued previously. It also shows how a consideration of ideas in diplomatic

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<sup>71</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. 136

<sup>72</sup> Gerits, Frank. 2023. *The Ideological Scramble for Africa*. 129

<sup>73</sup> “Telno 916: Rhodesia” 6 November 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117, TNA

<sup>74</sup> JC2026/4, FCO106/117 “Letter from R M Lyne, FCO, to Michael Alexander, PS 10 Downing Street” 8 November 1979. PREM 19/3591. TNA

history is an exercise which returns agency to those who might otherwise not be considered to have much flexibility.

The Patriotic Front would eventually agree to the proposals made by the British, signing off on the Lancaster House Agreement with the Rhodesian government on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1979. Much of the historiography surrounding this agreement points to the excellent diplomatic and managerial skills of the British secretary Lord Carrington in bringing together two sides of a conflict that had been ongoing for 15 years. Much less is said about the role of Kaunda. Zambia was both a natural and deeply necessary partner of the British in actualising an agreement from the Patriotic Front. The British ultimately required Kaunda due to his influence with Nkomo, and were eventually prepared to offer concessions despite initial reluctance in order to bring him on board. Diplomacy is bargaining, and it is of course no great surprise that the British were ‘talked down’ from their initial position. But equally, recognition of Kaunda’s efforts in successfully navigating the British diplomatic establishment that anticipated far greater acquiescence on the part of the Zambian is necessary.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to conceptualise Anglo-Zambian relations in 1979 as one of re-imagined partnership. It has used the Lancaster House consultation between Thatcher and Kaunda to elucidate the sort of relationship the British initially envisioned with the southern African state, emphasizing how their initial strategy was representative of this. The conceptualisation of two different strategies embarked upon by the British show how Zambian ideas became a salient factor in the Anglo-Zambian partnership. With Zambia best positioned to actualise what the British wanted out of the Patriotic Front, there was a belief by the diplomatic establishment that Zambia would simply do as was asked of them, and the initial strategy of emphasizing urgency supports this. However, once it became apparent that Zambia would not be such a willing partner, the British were forced to pivot their strategy, appealing to a vision of the world which was developed and propagated by Kaunda. The chapter has set out to provide a more nuanced interpretation of diplomacy between metropole and ex-colony. While it has agreed that ‘colonial attitudes’ persisted in much of the British diplomatic establishment, the British were prepared to engage with Kaunda’s humanistic worldview in order to try to accomplish some of their own diplomatic goals. This enables us to conceptualise the Anglo-Zambian relationship as one where ideas held purchase, and despite ostensible inflexibility on the part of such a disparity in power, Zambia was still able to exercise agency through the powerful projection of its European-inspired Humanism.

With the Rhodesian crisis solved after the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, the primary obstacle to closer relations between the UK and Zambia had been removed. The next chapter will explore the ‘normalisation’ process undertaken by the UK and Zambia in the years following the

Rhodesian affair, exploring the foundations, mechanisms and limitations of the Anglo-Zambian partnership that developed in the early 1980s.

## **Chapter 2 – South Africa: normalisation and its limits 1980-1985**

### **Introduction – the move to a warmer bilateral climate**

The second chapter of this thesis will explore the way African ideas were interpreted by the United Kingdom in the period immediately following Rhodesia. It will concern itself with analysing what exactly ‘normalisation’ meant for both the United Kingdom and Zambia, and argue that African ideas became a less salient force in the relationship as a result of the normalisation process. In the aftermath of Rhodesia, Britain and Zambia managed to reforge a new partnership. The chapter will explore this partnership in depth, conceptualising the British relationship with Zambia as one that provided a dependable and accessible partner in projecting their presence in Southern Africa in the context of Britain’s diminished international role. Britain utilised a number of mechanisms to maintain this bilateral relationship, including hosting Kaunda in 1983 on a State Visit, alongside the provision of economic aid and political legitimacy.

The partnership had its limits, however. The chapter conceptualises this as an ideological ‘dead-heat’ partnership – in which both partners maximised the pragmatic benefits that the partnership brought, but found themselves in a stalemate as far as their worldviews were concerned. Fundamental disagreements on regional matters occurring in southern Africa at the time meant the relationship would stay at arms-length. The UK no longer expected Kaunda to play fiddle as they certainly did in 1979. Neither could Kaunda expect the British to comply with his own requests for sanctions on South Africa. It was a maximalist relationship at its most utilitarian, in which each party got the most that was possible from one another. These disagreements manifested themselves in Britain no-longer feeling the need as it once did to appeal to humanist ideas. ‘Normalisation’ of relations between Zambia and the United Kingdom created a ‘normal’ in which relations were cordial and pragmatic but lacked true depth, and ideas lost the salience that they might have once had.

In arguing this, the chapter seeks to contribute to an existing historiography on Britain and its former colonial territories, particularly in the apartheid context. Scholars have discussed at length Britain’s diminished role from the mid-1970s onwards. Despite Britain only relinquishing control of Hong Kong in 1997, the withdrawal of all forces ‘East of Suez’ as per the 1970 directive has been often characterised as the decisive moment of Britain’s effective world power status ceasing to exist. The diminished international role for Britain led to innovations in new ways of maintaining influence and power ‘on-the-cheap’. This chapter essentially characterises normalisation between the United Kingdom and Zambia within this lens. The foundations and mechanisms by which normalisation came to pass in the Anglo-Zambian partnership are tied up in the British wish to maintain influence, access and agency in the regional affairs where they might have had interests. The Zambian partnership will be considered in light of the ‘diminished international role’ that Britain struggled to grapple with in this period. This argument seeks to address a second theme in the historiography: that

of the 'global cold war'. In assessing this bilateral relationship between Britain and Zambia, the chapter will divest from this seemingly all-encompassing concept. In their construction of a partnership with Zambia, the UK was not pushing the democratising, liberalising mission of capitalist world order but promoting their own acute interests. These interests were wrapped up in the idea of 'potential' influence – maintaining partners like Zambia who might one day be 'useful' to Britain's diplomatic objectives in the region. One such objective which will be discussed in this chapter lay in the issue of South Africa and apartheid.

Furthermore, in discussion of the United Kingdom's views of apartheid, this chapter will seek to engage with an existing historiography on anti-apartheid activism within Britain. Much of the existing literature on anti-apartheid and Britain focuses on transnational activism within Britain itself: South African exiles who used the imperial links between their country and Britain to raise awareness and fight apartheid from within the UK. In addressing how the issue of apartheid was navigated by Britain and Zambia, this chapter will provide a much-lacking international relations perspective on the efforts of Front Line States' like Zambia to convince the UK of the anti-apartheid mission.

This chapter will organise itself as such. Firstly, it will discuss the foundational pillars of the new bilateral relationship that the British sought out with Zambia. These include the centrality of Kaunda, Zambia's domestic environment, and the access element of the relationship. Secondly, it will cover the diplomatic mechanisms that maintained the new normal, including the provision of a State Visit as well as political and economic support for Zambia. After the context of normalisation has been explored, the chapter will move to discussion on the conflicting worldviews held by either party as regards South Africa. It will explain the escalation of tensions in southern Africa at the time as caused by the South African policy of 'total strategy', before closing an assessment of the limitations of normalisation, exploring the 'elephants in the room' of the relationship, such as how both parties navigated issues regarding South Africa and the US-backed linkage policy in Namibia. This chapter aims to address the thesis' central questions of conceptualising Anglo-Zambian relations within the broader historiographical themes of Britain's reduced international role and Zambia's foreign policy. As the relationship moved to a more pragmatic understanding, contentious worldviews regarding the South African issue were circumvented. Ideas thus became less salient in Anglo-Zambian relations as a result.

### **1. Foundations of normalisation – a partnership in the era of Britain's diminished international role**

The conclusion of the Lancaster House conference in late November 1980 had paved the way for Zimbabwe's independence the following year, with Robert Mugabe as Prime Minister and Kaunda's ally Nkomo taking a post within the cabinet. For the United Kingdom, the issue that had been the most persistent in frustrating relations with Zambia had been settled. Rhodesia, which had

long outlasted its colonial sell-by date, was a thing of the past, and the UK could set about normalising its relations with both Rhodesia's replacement and its surrounding neighbours. Of these neighbours, Zambia had perhaps the most to gain from the demise of what had been an incredibly hostile neighbour. Zambia still faced immense problems – domestic economic troubles had led to attempted coups, food riots and stringent IMF packages for bailouts. Regionally, South Africa had embarked upon a 'total strategy' which saw the apartheid-state pursue an aggressive containment strategy of black-majority states. Zambia, which hosted the African National Congress in Lusaka, often found itself at the sharp end of this strategy. Pursuing normalised relations with the United Kingdom constituted a continuation of Zambia's policy of projecting a larger version of itself internationally, and represented to Kaunda a potential solution to South African aggression.

Normalisation was something eagerly welcomed by both parties - multiple British documents referred to Kaunda's own relief that relations with the former metropole had returned to a warmer climate<sup>75</sup> - but on what pillars was 'normalisation' constructed? Why did Britain seek a closer relationship with Zambia in the first place? And what from this can be inferred as to the way the British diplomatic doctrine toward southern Africa developed from 1979?

The concept of 'normalisation' can best be understood through an interrogation of existing historiography on Britain's diminished international role in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars have discussed at length Ted Heath's government white paper in 1971 as a turning-point in the history of British foreign policy. Darwin writes in the language of world systems, arguing that the repudiation of the old British system – the imperial idea – forced a scaling back of British foreign policy beyond Europe and the Americas.<sup>76</sup> He points to the development of British foreign policy thereafter as one focused primarily on European-orientated economic recovery. This left little room for diplomatic excursions in what had constituted Britain's old sphere. The emergence of 'influence-on-the-cheap' called for the Foreign Office to tighten the belt, and limit partnerships with countries' thought to best maximalise Britain's interests. In regard to Africa, scholars have pointed to continuities in the sense that diplomats still sought willing African intermediaries to work with.<sup>77</sup> The policy of 'normalisation' in the Zambian context was thus a coalescence of Britain's interests in the era of the diminished international role. It offered a means of projecting Britain's influence in the southern Africa region and a willing intermediary in the form of relatively Anglophilic Kenneth Kaunda, all accomplishable via relatively inexpensive political and economic aid.

Three key factors underscored the 'normalisation' of relations between Britain and Zambia from 1979 onward. These three key factors were the importance of Kaunda, Zambia's relative

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<sup>75</sup> 'Letter from John Johnson to Francis Pym, briefing on Kenneth Kaunda' 4 February 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 1

<sup>76</sup> Darwin, John. 2009. *The empire project*. 647

<sup>77</sup> Cullen, Poppy. 2017. *Kenya and Britain after independence*. 240

stability vis-à-vis southern African states and the benefit of access to information. Discussion of these factors in turn will illustrate why Britain sought to develop and maintain a pragmatic relationship with Zambia in spite of incontrovertible differences of opinion on the issues of South Africa and apartheid.

### **1a. Kaunda**

Perhaps the most salient factor for Britain's pursuit of normalisation with Zambia lies in what one could term a 'respect' for Kenneth Kaunda. Kaunda had personified himself as Zambia – its ambitions, means and philosophy were extensions of Kaunda's own. As such, discussions of Zambian foreign policy in the historiography are inseparable from discussion on the personality and style of Kaunda.<sup>78</sup> To states that treated with Zambia at the time, they were dealing with a partner that they could understand and characterise very easily. Kaunda's predictability and reliability is something referred to in this thesis in the previous chapter – but it must not be understated that Britain seriously favoured Zambia on the basis of Kaunda and aspects of his character. Britain's thoughts on Kaunda can be boiled down into three distinct factors: his longevity, the perception of him as a moderate and his perceived influence in the southern Africa region.

The British diplomatic establishment associate Kaunda most with his longevity. Kaunda was well-known to the British, who had had him arrested and imprisoned as an agitator prior to Zambia's independence in 1964. His emotional oratory and tendency to wax lyrical on philosophical matters appealed to many sitting members of the British parliament, particularly in the Labour party. Zambia's early years of independence were characterised by the expansion of government into public life, acquisition of prestige internationally and strong economic growth on the back of copper exports. Yet matters would deteriorate as the copper market suffered in the early 1970s, and the Zambian economy would never quite recover the growth levels seen in the years of the 'first republic'. Furthermore, political freedoms were curbed as Zambia was declared a one-party state in 1973 under Kaunda's United National Independence Party. Yet to the United Kingdom, the diplomatic establishment held Kaunda's navigation of troubled waters in very high esteem indeed. A description of Kaunda in a British High Commission briefing prior to his 1983 state visit is demonstrative perhaps of the sway he held among establishment figures who had watched Kaunda in his years as Zambia's president. It reads "What kind of a man is it then who can ride these storms for 18 years and still remain, if a little tarnished, the father of the nation?"<sup>79</sup> Longevity provided the British with a partner who was a tidy collection of experienced, predictable and respected. He was a known quantity with whom the British were comfortable dealing with.

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<sup>78</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. 98

<sup>79</sup> 'Letter from John Johnson to Francis Pym, briefing on Kenneth Kaunda' 4 February 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 4

Kaunda enjoyed an international reputation as ‘Africa’s statesman’. He came across to the British as a man who was both influential and – most importantly – a moderate. Compared to his colleagues in the Front Line States, Kaunda was far-and-away considered the most workable by the British. British diplomatic documents refer to his views concerning South Africa as a “strange mix of idealism and political necessity”.<sup>80</sup> Kaunda is referred to consistently in contrast of his FLS colleagues, generally as the more ‘realistic’ face of the organisation who exerts a “mostly helpful” influence southern African issues.<sup>81</sup> Kaunda’s decision to differ his approach to South Africa – meeting PM Vorster in 1975 and P.W Botha in 1982 – from others in the FLS assisted in constructing an international version of himself that caused many around the world to associate him with dialogue and diplomacy over agitation. Scholars have referred to this as one of the few means that Kaunda was able to exert Zambia’s agency in international affairs – as building international alliances and relationships through dialogue was seen to be far more constructive than the main actions of the FLS: harbouring and providing support to liberationist groups who opposed South Africa.<sup>82</sup> Perversely then, he was able to project a version of himself as a moderate while more-or-less still providing assistance and support to the ‘extreme side’ of anti-apartheid forces. Just as Nkomo’s ZIPRA were quartered all across Zambia in the 1970s, so too did the ANC find a home in Zambia, with their official headquarters being set up in Lusaka – making the capital the target of South African incursions in 1986. Moderation was seen as reasonable, and reasonable was far more appealing a trait in a regional partner. To the United Kingdom, there was recognition of Kaunda as a moderate force to be consulted with in southern Africa across every level of the UK diplomatic establishment, from the High Commission in Lusaka, all the way to the PM.

Kaunda was also believed by the UK to hold considerable regional influence. This was a view that had germinated in UK diplomatic circles thanks to Kaunda’s aforementioned policy of projecting a larger version of Zambia internationally. Communication between the UK Prime Minister and Kaunda in the mid-1980s regarding a deployment of UK troops to Mozambique illustrates how the UK considered and believed they could utilise Kaunda’s influence in the region. Kaunda wrote to Thatcher in 1985 to voice his support for Robert Mugabe’s request that the UK deploy armed forces to Mozambique. Notes exchanged between the private secretaries regarding this letter reveal how layers of inter-departmental intrigue worked to ensure that Kaunda’s request – though ultimately denied – was appeased. Tim Flesher, Thatcher’s political advisor, initially suggests that Kaunda’s letter needs no reply<sup>83</sup> – though as the letter is passed through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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<sup>80</sup> ‘Letter from John Johnson to Francis Pym, briefing on Kenneth Kaunda’ 4 February 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 5

<sup>81</sup> ‘State Visit of President Kaunda of Zambia: 22-25 March. General Steering Brief no1’ 22 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 1

<sup>82</sup> DeRoche, Andy. 2019 "Attempting to Assert African Agency: Kenneth Kaunda, the Nixon Administration, and Southern Africa, 1968–1973". 492.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Letter from Timothy Flesher to Peter Ricketts, FCO’ 7 August 1985. FCO106/1565. TNA.

it is increasingly suggested that at the very least the Prime Minister's appreciation of the letter should be conveyed to Kaunda, "not least because of [his] influential role over Southern African questions".<sup>84</sup> A reply, drafted by the diplomats at the FCO, is telegraphed to the Lusaka High Commission not long after, reassuring Kaunda that the UK is working on implementing their offer of assistance to Mozambique. Though the UK never deployed soldiers to Mozambique as requested by Mugabe, they did assist in the training of FRELIMO officers in the capacity of an advisor. Politicking by those in the establishment of British diplomacy ensured that Kaunda was never alienated or estranged by the British government, as there was a perception that he was a high-priority partner in the region on account of his influence.

Kaunda's longevity, moderation and influence each contributed to the image of him as the ideal, workable partner in southern Africa for the British. What about the Zambia he had built and what could this provide the British? Closely tied to Kaunda's personality was the sort of state that he had built up and maintained despite being almost surrounded by hostile or unstable powers.

### **1b. Zambia as stable**

Stability was a particularly important asset for a British diplomatic establishment who were concerned in ensuring that their time and fiscal investments in a partnership were returned. With the reduction of political and economic resources in Britain's era of reduced international role, it was important for the FCO to choose their partners wisely. Zambia was perhaps the most obvious choice in the southern Africa region.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office produced an enormous amount of documentation on the Zambian economy and political system in preparation for Kaunda's visit in 1983. It was clearly important for the FCO to convey to the PM in their briefing documents that the state Kaunda had cultivated in Zambia was worthy of recognition, primarily on account of its impressive stability, especially relative to those states around him. Documents note that despite Zambia's economic trouble and earlier rumblings of discontent (a 1980 coup attempt against him failed), much of the Zambian population would rather the known quantity in Kaunda than whomever might replace him.<sup>85</sup> His likelihood of winning his upcoming fifth Presidential election is underscored. In other documents – particularly those for the eyes of Margaret Thatcher – his defeat of a week-long general strike in January 1981 courtesy of Zambia's powerful trade unions has been highlighted.<sup>86</sup> There is considerable respect among the British diplomatic establishment for the country that Kaunda has

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<sup>84</sup> 'Military assistance to Mozambique, letter by Stewart Eldon PS to Baroness Young' 14 August 1985. FCO106/1565. TNA.

<sup>85</sup> 'Letter from John Johnson to Francis Pym, briefing on Kenneth Kaunda' 4 February 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 6

<sup>86</sup> 'State visit of the President of Zambia: 22-24 March 1983. Brief no.3 Background brief' 17 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA.

steered in relation to those that seem to have emerged around him. Zimbabwe, which had reached independence with much fanfare just three years prior to many of these briefing documents, was undergoing a wave of inter-party violence in 1983. Joshua Nkomo had been chased out of the country, and was actually residing in London during Kaunda's 1983 visit. Mugabe's men were sent to the Matabeleland province in Zimbabwe to root out 'Nkomoite' elements. What resulted was the Gukurahundi Genocide in which 20,000 people lost their lives.<sup>87</sup> It was under the auspices of violence in the neighbouring state that Kaunda could quite easily present himself as an architect of peace and stability under Zambia's one-party state system.

### **1c. Privilege of access**

Thus far, the foundations of 'normalisation' that have been covered constitute a sort of fertile ground for a positive partnership. But close relations between states are also built on utilitarian grounds – what tangible benefits did a partnership with Zambia bring the United Kingdom? Access was perhaps the most identifiable benefit that Zambia brought to the table in any partnership: access to information and the inner-workings of regional actors' motivations that the UK considered vital to its interests in the region. This access that Zambia brought was precluded on the stable foundation it brought to its partnership with the UK. Zambia had emerged as a stable actor in the region, whose interests were identifiable and predictable, and thus was ideal in providing information to the UK that it could trust. Furthermore, the UK believed that it could use the information that Zambia provided to it to facilitate its own diplomatic goals in the region.

A close relationship with Kaunda provided the British with a source of information on neighbouring countries; the most important of which was Zimbabwe, a country in which the UK continued to maintain a significant stake. Kaunda had demonstrated his utility in the realm of information in 1979, where he positioned himself carefully as an arbiter between Southern African actors and the UK. Britain's normalisation of relations with Zambia was built on an access element which developed in the immediate aftermath of Lancaster House. The British stake in Zimbabwe came as both a natural interest in seeing the country thrive after Lancaster House, but also because in early 1983 political unrest had turned into countryside violence led to the flight of Nkomo to London. Kaunda – who of course shared the British interest in a successful Zimbabwe for much the same reasons – provided the British on multiple occasions the opportunity of access, granting both his 'two cents' as well as better-founded information on the situation in Zimbabwe. During Kaunda's state visit in 1983, discussion of South Africa and Namibia came alongside a lengthy chat about Zimbabwean issues. Indeed, briefing documents supplied by the FCO instruct Thatcher to specifically

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<sup>87</sup> Doran, Stuart. "New documents claim to prove Mugabe ordered Gukurahundi killings" 19 May 2015. The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/19/mugabe-zimbabwe-gukurahundi-massacre-matabeleland>

ask Kaunda about these issues: whether reconciliation is possible in Zimbabwe, whether Nkomo has any role within that, and to what extent Zambia might be able to help.<sup>88</sup> Kaunda willingly obliged Thatcher's questioning when they met as part of the state visit, going a step further and explaining some of the intricacies of the conflict that were lesser known to the British government. For example, when asked as to whether Nkomo and Mugabe were reconcilable personalities, Kaunda responded that the conflict should be considered in broader terms, and that the origin of tensions lay in tribal divisions.<sup>89</sup> The value in a partnership with Zambia was built on access to information about matters on which Britain and Zambia shared a mutual interest. But what about matters on which they were opposed?

The access element of the relationship extended to issues on which there was seemingly no common ground between the UK and Zambia, a matter wholly indicative of Kaunda's general tendency to play mediator. South Africa was the issue of most contention within Anglo-Zambian relations, and yet Kaunda continued to supply important information to the United Kingdom, which the British diplomatic establishment used in order to try to facilitate their own diplomatic objectives. Though Kaunda matched his Frontline States colleagues in calling for extensive sanctions on the apartheid regime, the United Kingdom were opposed to this policy and this much was more-or-less clear within the partnership. Kaunda's state visit in 1983 demonstrates however that the United Kingdom wished to appease Kaunda and use the information aspect of their relationship in order to try and get him to change strategy in-as-far as South Africa was concerned. Briefing documents instruct Thatcher to ask questions of Kaunda about South Africa in much the same way that they do about Zimbabwe: "How did your meeting go with Botha last year? How did you assess your results?" They underscore the fact that Kaunda's dialogue with South African leadership suggests that Zambia may be influential in promoting wider dialogue with South Africa generally.<sup>90</sup> This is a recurrent theme throughout British dealings with Kaunda in this early 1980s period – the idea that though Kaunda's ability to influence affairs at present may be limited, it was worthwhile to keep him on-side in case he one day may be able to be utilised to his fullest.<sup>91</sup>

Britain's partnership with Zambia in the 1980s was thus constructed on three clear pragmatic platforms. The most important of these was Kaunda, who the UK viewed as a dependable, if not predictable, partner in international affairs. Kaunda had successfully curated the image of a statesman long before the 1980s, and this image continued to hold up despite increasing domestic difficulties.

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<sup>88</sup> 'State visit of the President of Zambia: 22-24 March 1983. Brief no.6 Points to make' 17 March 1983 PREM19/3591. TNA.

<sup>89</sup> 'Record of discussion between PM and President of Zambia at Noon on Wednesday at 10 Downing Street'. 23 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 2

<sup>90</sup> 'State visit of the President of Zambia: 22-24 March 1983. Brief no.5 South Africa(a) Internal points to make' 17 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA.

<sup>91</sup> 'Telno 107 Lusaka to FCO: President Kaunda's state visit. 15 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 2

Yet these domestic difficulties paled in comparison to the serious upheavals occurring in Zambia's neighbouring states at the time, and thus Zambia's relative political stability further cemented it as a workable partner for the United Kingdom. Furthermore, access was a critical element of the relationship, and a mechanism by which the British believed they could exert their own form of indirect influence on the region. With a diminished role and responsibility for southern Africa with the conclusion of the Rhodesian affair, Zambia represented the more-than ideal partner by which the UK could still maintain a diplomatic presence in the region. The pillars of normalisation were wholly pragmatic – and set the stage for the utilitarian partnership in which ideas lost the potency they once had in affecting policy-making.

## **2. Mechanisms of normalisation – maintaining the partnership**

Thus far, this chapter has covered the context and foundations for the normalisation of relations between the UK and Zambia. With limited political and economic resources for foreign policy initiatives in southern Africa, Zambia constituted an ideal partner, offering the UK a stable, predictable and worthwhile investment. But by what means did the UK seek to maintain and curate their partnership with the Zambians? And how do these 'mechanisms of normalisation' demonstrate the limits which characterised this 'dead-heat' partnership? This section will explore the 1983 state visit in further detail, as well as other soft-power means by which the UK supported Zambia in the 1980s.

### **2a. 1983 state visit**

State visits are perhaps the most explicit examples of bilateral diplomacy. They are certainly the eldest, with roots traceable to medieval times, where meetings between Kings were exceedingly rare on account of the logistical difficulties and likelihood of violence. The infrequency of these meetings made them special affairs, and meetings between rulers are lengthily documented by medieval chroniclers. Robert de Torigni dedicated many pages to the meeting between Henry II and Louis VII in 1158, during which the former paid homage to Louis in Paris despite immense tension between them.<sup>92</sup> Modern state visits are far easier to conduct, and fraught with decidedly less danger. The United Kingdom aims to offer two state visits a year as a means of "strengthening Britain's relationship with other countries"<sup>93</sup>. State visits to the United Kingdom are often characterised by much pomp and revelry, processions and demonstrations of ancient ceremony. Academic debate on state visits often concerns itself with questions as to what extent they actually constitute meaningful diplomacy.<sup>94</sup> Are they limited to simple demonstrations of closeness, overshadowed by meaningless

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<sup>92</sup> William, Ordericus Vitalis, Robert, and Elisabeth M. C. Van Houts. 2019. *The gesta Normannorum ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*. Vol. 2, Vol. 2. 748

<sup>93</sup> <https://www.householddivision.org.uk/state-visits>

<sup>94</sup> Johnson, Gaynor. 2021 'Royal diplomacy: British preparations for the State Visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to the United States, June 1939.', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 32 (2),

pageantry? Or do they constitute something more? An exploration of the 1983 state visit by Kaunda to the UK argues for a synthesis of both viewpoints. Kaunda's visit demonstrated that the UK wished to invest all its symbols of state to demonstrate the value of its relationship with Zambia. Furthermore, though the state visit is decisively less goals-orientated than a 'working' visit (Kaunda's 1983 trip consisted of only 1 'proper' sit-down discussion with Thatcher), the state visit is a powerful symbol that can be capitalised upon by the invited party, a factor that the host country recognises and uses itself.

Kaunda had long been considered for a state visit by the UK diplomatic establishment. Recommendations made in 1979 by the Central Africa department of the FCO were to invite Kaunda on a state visit in 1981 at the very latest<sup>95</sup> – and this was even before his visit to London in that year. As covered in the previous chapter, the queen had visited Zambia in the summer of 1979 for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, and it's clear that both those within the FCO as well as the British High Commission in Lusaka believed that this had generated a momentum worth capitalising on. It's worth pointing out at this stage that a state visit should be differentiated from a 'working visit'. The former – at least in a United Kingdom context – is characterised by a meeting with the monarch, an address to British business within the London Chamber of Commerce, and a state banquet with ministers and royals. The latter however is a meeting usually between the British head of government – the Prime Minister – and their guest, and usually far less concerned with the pageantry just described and far more concerned with actualising a diplomatic result. For the United Kingdom, the invitation to Kaunda set out to invoke all these powerful symbols of state in order to demonstrate just how much the British valued the relationship with Zambia. Kaunda's state visit in 1983 should be considered as part of a broader range of state visits by postcolonial African leaders to the UK in this period. Invites were extended to the heads of state in Sudan in 1964, Tanzania in 1975, Kenya in 1979. Zambia was the fourth ex-British colony in Africa to receive an invitation. The UK recognised that the provision of state visits to its ex-territories in Africa came with tangible benefits.

State visits are mechanisms of diplomacy that have mutual benefits. To the United Kingdom, they demonstrated a desire to continue good relations, even maintain some form of soft influence, with ex-territories. To the invitees however, they represented something far more. Alongside opportunities to obtain much-needed economic assistance in the form of aid packages, grants or loans, state visits can be distinguished from 'working visits' in providing a value to postcolonial African states that was specific to the sort of symbolism and pageantry that they invoked. In Illife's *Africans*, he points to the international order as one of the three means by which African elites drew their power.<sup>96</sup> A state visit constituted perhaps the surest indicator of support from the international order

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<sup>95</sup> 'Royal Visits, letter from John Sankey CAD to Mr Aspin PS' 15 October 1979. JC2026/4, FCO106/117. TNA.

<sup>96</sup> Illife, John. 2008. *Africans: the history of a continent*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 287

than an African elite could hope for. Wrapped up in pomp and revelry, symbols of state and power, state visits constituted processes of legitimation for African leaders and their states. They represented a successful integration into the international order for postcolonial African states. Zambia had of course been independent for almost twenty years in 1983 – but the state visit to the former metropole was something seized upon by the Zambian diplomatic establishment perhaps as keenly as it was the British. Pamphlets produced for publication in Zambia by the High Commission detail the state visit exceedingly precisely as a “LANDMARK IN ZAMBIA-ANGLO RELATIONS”, and are plastered with images of Kaunda shaking hands with Thatcher, the queen and other members of the Royal Household. The pamphlet also contains an entire article covering Kaunda’s speech to members of the British press, in which he forecasts imminent catastrophe in South Africa.<sup>97</sup> The benefits of a state visit were thus seized upon too by Zambia, who could use the invite not only as a means of legitimation in the international order, but also to demonstrate to a domestic audience that their ideas and views were being projected within the partnership.

Of course, the British did not extend the state visit invitation on purely charitable terms. Normalisation was a utilitarian policy, and the British expected something in return for what they considered a ‘favour’ to Kaunda. This is evident in some of the more furtive reasons that the British had for extending an invitation to Kaunda in the first place. Within internal Foreign Office communications is a belief that Kaunda would be encouraged to return the favour by proving a more malleable partner in any diplomacy. In a brief submitted by the British High Commission in Lusaka to the FCO in advance of Kaunda’s arrival, much is made of an upcoming presidential election in Zambia. There is an explicit suggestion that the timing of the state visit is ‘propitious for Kaunda in political terms’, and so “we should seek to secure some of our own requirements”<sup>98</sup>. The UK believed that in return for providing Kaunda with a political boost in advance of the presidential election in Zambia, they were in a position to extract some of their own aims from him. This transactional nature of diplomacy the UK seeks to conduct is demonstrative as to the limitations of the normalisation policy. Furthermore, this ‘transaction’ that the British diplomatic establishment believe in is premised on a retained sense of superiority. Ultimately, though the British may wish to show publicly the warmth of relations, there is a clear recognition that something must be gained in order to make all of this worthwhile.

The 1983 state visit in many ways perfectly encapsulates the move to ‘normalisation’ between Britain and Zambia in this decade. It is both parts symbolic and yet deeply material in demonstrating what either partner saw in the relationship. To the UK it constituted a mechanism of ‘normalisation’, being in one part a genuine demonstration of commitment to a future Anglo-Zambian partnership, whilst at the same time a clear reflection of the limits that the UK was itself imposing on that

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<sup>97</sup> Zambia newsletter: May 1983’ May 1983. JEZ027/1, FCO106/1087. TNA. 1-5

<sup>98</sup> ‘Telno 107 Lusaka to FCO: President Kaunda’s state visit. 15 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 2

partnership. They believed they were doing the Zambians a favour, offering them – specifically Kaunda – a sure-fire means of legitimisation in the eyes of the international, as well as his own domestic, community at a tricky time for Zambia.

## **2b. Economic assistance**

A further mechanism of normalisation with which the UK used to hasten a new period in Anglo-Zambian relations was an expansion in economic aid programmes. Emergent economic problems in Zambia from the 1970s placed the country in an exceedingly precarious position, and Kaunda made numerous overtures made to the IMF for assistance. In the early 1980s, this provided Britain with an opportunity to exert a relatively inexpensive means of developing and maintaining a closer economic relationship with its new southern African partner. Britain saw its economic assistance as a soft power tool to maintain a pliable and close partner in Zambia. However, Britain also had significant interests in Zambian economic security on account of its own historical and economic ties with the country.

Zambian independence in 1964 saw the new country sit upon some of the largest reserves of copper in the world. The export of copper constituted the foundation of the early Zambian economy, with profits going to an expansion in education, healthcare and infrastructure across the country. With the collapse of the world copper market in the early 1970s however – a consequence of the global recession at the time – Zambia found itself in a position much the same as many other African countries at the time. ‘Cap in hand’ trips to the IMF made Zambia a susceptible target for soft power influence, something the UK took advantage of. During Kaunda’s 1983 state visit, Britain and Zambia signed two economic aid agreements. Both of these aid agreements were demonstrative of the consequences that normalisation had for deepening economic ties between the UK and Zambia. The first loan was a £4.5 million loan to finance importation of spare parts from Britain that could assist in maintaining productive capacity in both the agricultural and private sector industries in Zambia. The second agreement was a £4.8 million grant which would go toward sending Zambians to the UK for training in various industrial and bureaucratic capacities.<sup>99</sup> Britain promised the delivery of this money on the condition that Zambia received approval from the executive board of the IMF on account of its adherence to some of the stringent measures it had agreed to in previous years. Britain agreed to lend political support to Zambia in this regard, further demonstrating a commitment to Zambian economic security.

Britain had its own stake in Zambian economic security and success. On account of what is described as ‘deep historical and personal ties’ with Zambia, British briefing documents describe a network of support and affinity with the Zambian economy which underscored their economic

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<sup>99</sup> ‘Letter from R Bone, FCO to A J Coles PS: President Kaunda’s State Visit’ 11 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA.

interests in the country. Zambia was home to a British community of around 25,000 people in 1983, as well as a further 600 personnel (experts and civil service) which the British government supplemented to Zambian authorities. Britain exported £61.7 million worth of goods and provided around £15 million in aid a year.<sup>100</sup> Briefing documents take pains to remind Thatcher and her aids to underscore this to Kaunda upon his visit. Normalisation was built on a pre-existing economic relationship that had its origins in the commonwealth context.

### **3. The limits of Anglo-Zambian normalisation – South Africa, apartheid and ‘total strategy’ in the 1980s**

With normalised relations established in the early part of the decade, this section will seek to explore the problematic: how, despite a close pragmatic partnership, could Britain and Zambia find no common ground on the predominant issue of southern Africa at the time? Normalisation had established a working foundation for either power to convey to the other their totally opposed ideas for confronting the South African issue. But at the same time, it would be the inability to find common ground on this issue which would set the limits of normalisation, preventing any closer partnership from being reached. This section provides context to the regional situation in Southern Africa in the early 1980s so as to give background to the issue of South Africa in Anglo-Zambian relations. It will set out that the United Kingdom and Zambia possessed totally different conceptualisations of the South African issue, a fact that is critical to why they persisted in trying to convince the other of their viewpoint. Ultimately, different conceptualisations of this issue meant that the UK and Zambia were able to maintain their pragmatic partnership whilst at the same time possessing clashing worldviews.

With the issue of Rhodesia set to one side with Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980, the predominant issues in southern Africa – certainly as far as Anglo-Zambian relations were concerned – naturally changed. The emergence of a new foreign policy initiative from the apartheid state of South Africa, one which was predicated on a hostile, containment policy backed up with subterfuge and military action, became perhaps the greatest point of contention for southern African states. South Africa fought SWAPO liberationist forces in their province of South-West Africa (known today as Namibia after its independence in 1991), while backing up the anti-communist UNITA militants in Angola and supporting similarly aligned RENAMO in Mozambique. ‘Total strategy’ was the South African conceptual combination of its domestic security with its national security, leading to a centralisation of powers in the South African executive which was combined with a new campaign of violent regional interventionism under the auspices of anti-communism.<sup>101</sup> With direct South African

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<sup>100</sup> ‘Telno 107 Lusaka to FCO: President Kaunda’s state visit. 15 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 2

<sup>101</sup> Miller, Jamie. 2016. *An African Volk: the apartheid regime and its search for survival*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 280

involvement in military conflicts in Namibia, Angola and Mozambique, Zambia felt that the issue of South Africa shared many fundamental similarities with what had been the issue of Rhodesia. A hostile, white-minority led state with significant military and economic power constituted to Zambia an existential threat. Zambia was a member of the Front Line States, an organisation made up of black-majority states in southern Africa with the purpose of opposing and taking steps to combat South African apartheid. With 'total strategy' in full swing from 1980, the FLS were divided on how best to approach South African aggression. Kenneth Kaunda's approach would set Zambia apart from its FLS colleagues, as he pursued a diplomatic path with South Africa, going as far to meet with the South African premier John Vorster in 1975. This alienated Kaunda from the other Front Line States leaders, who saw the move as borderline treachery<sup>102</sup>, but did much to set Kaunda apart from his fellow African leaders in the Western imagination as a sensible moderate who would be open to negotiation.

As far as Anglo-Zambian relations were concerned, Britain did not consider the South African issue to constitute the same existential threat to Zambia that Rhodesia had done. Britain occupied this position as part of a doctrine of diminished responsibility for the region generally. For Rhodesia, Britain assuming direct responsibility in order to oversee Zimbabwe's elections was supposed to be extraordinary, and the UK was keen to avoid entangling itself in southern Africa in such a way again. The Rhodesian crisis was a colonial hangover, an anomaly that had persisted despite the diplomatic reality of Britain's reduced international role. As a result, Britain had interacted with Zambia on the issue of Rhodesia in a far more interventionist way. Within the British diplomatic establishment communications, there was a conceptual link between the protection of Zambian national security and the solution of the Rhodesian problem. Diplomatic briefing documents refer to Rhodesia as Zambia's 'trauma', something which had been dealt with in a manner that it would no longer 'bedevil' Anglo-Zambian relations.<sup>103</sup> The issue of national security – national survival perhaps – for Zambia was well-understood by the British as regards Rhodesia. Following UDI in 1965, the United Kingdom deployed a squad of RAF Javelin jets just outside of Lusaka to ward off any Rhodesian incursion following successful lobbying by Kaunda.<sup>104</sup> With the Rhodesian affair concluded and no longer 'bedevilling' Anglo-Zambian relations, Britain embraced the diminished international role in the region. As a result, the British view of the South Africa situation – particularly the issue of apartheid – was decisively passive. So much so that contemporaries

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<sup>102</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. 75

<sup>103</sup> 'Telno 107 Lusaka to FCO: President Kaunda's state visit. 15 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 1

<sup>104</sup> DeRoche, Andy. 2016 "Asserting African Agency: Kenneth Kaunda and the USA, 1964-1980." *Diplomatic History* 40:(5). 980

occasionally went as far as characterising Margaret Thatcher's position on South Africa as sympathetic.<sup>105</sup>

The issue of apartheid was a salient one in Anglo-Zambian relations, but for reasons that contrasted respectively. Rather than considering the threat that the South Africans had been bringing to bear on Zambia, British diplomatic documents discussed at length Kaunda's 'practical accommodation' with Pretoria in contrast to his FLS colleagues, something he is well-regarded for. Whereas Rhodesia was the direct responsibility of the United Kingdom, something that had to be dealt with for the security of neighbouring states, Britain regards the issue of South Africa as one that simply needs to be accommodated. Even more in contrast to Zambia's views, Britain doubted whether South Africa is pursuing a strategy of destabilisation at all. Internal documents of the Foreign Office discuss the lack of "overt evidence", and that the only means of stabilising the region lay in the solution to the issues of Namibia and Angola (perversely, there is no mention of the fact that South Africa was accountable for the persistence of both of these issues).<sup>106</sup> Britain and Zambia would thus characterise the issue of South Africa in completely different ways – a factor which was critical to how relations between the two countries developed in the early 1980s. Britain was absolved of direct responsibility for Zambia's national security with the end of Rhodesia – and South Africa was not considered by any means to constitute the same threat to Zambia that Rhodesia had. To Zambia, the conclusion of the Rhodesian issue was a matter of breathing room, with South African 'total strategy' emerging as a dominant threat to Zambia and southern Africa more broadly.

With completely different characterisations of the South African problem, both Britain and Zambia were to limit any further potential benefits from the normalisation process. This would have significant consequences for the sort of partnership that emerged between Britain and Zambia in this early part of the decade, as both maintained significant interests in the other whilst at the same time recognising that the partnership could only go so far. This constituted a totally different sort of partnership that the UK had imagined with Zambia in 1979. With two totally different conceptions of the problem of South Africa and apartheid, the means by which both states would navigate this issue in their bilateral relations would be severely limited.

#### **4. The limits of Anglo-Zambian normalisation – clashing worldviews**

What is perhaps most peculiar about the normalisation of relations embarked upon by Britain and Zambia in the 1980s is that despite a close relationship built on the stability, access and economic partnership that Kaunda was able to facilitate, Zambia and Britain were in total disagreement when it

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<sup>105</sup> Stevens, Simon. "Chapter 12. Why South Africa? The Politics of Anti-Apartheid Activism in Britain in the Long 1970s" In *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* edited by Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, 204-225. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. 222

<sup>106</sup> 'State visit of the President of Zambia: 22-24 March 1983. Brief no.5 South Africa(b) Destabilisation Essential facts [not for use]' 17 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA.

came to the most salient issue of the southern Africa region. Totally different conceptions of the South African issues by either power meant that they were forced to seek common ground on other issues. This led to a process of ‘normalisation’ in which the issues of Southern Africa were essentially circumvented in order to exploit the full benefits that an Anglo-Zambian partnership could bring. But circumvention does not mean that these issues were ignored. Kaunda would consistently lobby the UK for assistance regarding South Africa, just as the UK believed that Kaunda could facilitate their own objectives in the region. A mutual belief in normalisation providing the foundation that could allow either side to convince the other of their respective worldviews would be the impetus for a clash of viewpoints. The final section of this chapter will explore how the southern African issue was navigated by either party.

There is surprisingly little scholarly attention devoted to the issue of apartheid within Britain’s relationships with postcolonial states. A healthy historiography on anti-apartheid activism within the United Kingdom itself highlights themes which seem apt to this lesser-studied issue. Simon Stevens for example discusses anti-apartheid views in the United Kingdom in an imperial context, arguing that Britain’s opposition to apartheid in the 1950s and 1960s lay in concern with “race relations” and the threat apartheid posed to Commonwealth unity.<sup>107</sup> Equally even after the British government became less publicly opposed to the policy, Rob Skinner notes that anti-apartheid activism was essentially synonymous with the emergent anti-imperialist, anti-racist culture that embodied Thatcher’s political opposition in the 1980s.<sup>108</sup> With an existing literature that already concerns itself so much with apartheid’s relationship with Britain’s imperial past, this section of the chapter will make the conceptual leap of discussing the issue as one within Britain’s relationship with its former colonial territory.

It will discuss each parties’ view in turn, before offering a conceptual explanation for why the partnership was not able to find any common ground on this issue. It will argue that either party were convinced of the role that their opposite could play in actualising their own contradicting visions in regards to South Africa and apartheid. For the UK, normalisation provided an opportunity for their stable, predictable Zambian partner to help promote and pursue the gradualist, diplomatic path. For Zambia, the United Kingdom was a partner who could bring about a Western coalescence around the policy of comprehensive sanctions. However, the process of normalisation would dictate the limits of the Anglo-Zambian partnership. The vision that Kaunda offered up to the British contradicted the stable, predictable version of the partnership that normalisation had constructed. South Africa and

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<sup>107</sup> Stevens, Simon. "Chapter 12. Why South Africa? The Politics of Anti-Apartheid Activism in Britain in the Long 1970s" In *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s* edited by Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, 204-225. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. 206

<sup>108</sup> Skinner, Rob. 2010. *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid: Liberal Humanitarians and Transnational Activists in Britain and the United States, c.1919-64*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. 5-6

apartheid would constitute the limit of the Anglo-Zambian partnership on the basis that it was an issue on which the foundational elements of normalisation had not been built to deal with.

#### **4a. The United Kingdom and the moderate approach to South African apartheid**

On the issue of South Africa, this chapter has already discussed the emergence of ‘total strategy’ and the consequences that it had for the region. The foundational differences of opinion toward ‘total strategy’ by the UK and Zambia has already been discussed. But what were the specific views on South Africa, and how did these views differ? Furthermore, how did either party seek to convince the other of their own views and what can be inferred from this as to the limits of the partnership they had created?

The United Kingdom saw the SA issue as one that had to be accommodated – in the sense that it could be dealt with via the pursuit of good-faith diplomacy combined with a good deal of patience. The British had faith in the American-conceived ‘linkage policy’, a gradualist view which believed in regional de-escalation through a set of diplomatic goals that ended regional conflicts. A UNSC resolution would mandate Namibian independence only when Cuban-backed troops withdrew from Angola. This was believed to lead to a de-escalation in tensions regionally and the emergence of a more moderate South Africa as a result. As far as Zambia is concerned, Thatcher and the British diplomatic establishment were of the opinion that dialogue with President Botha is the option most likely to assist in this.<sup>109</sup> Sanctions, something supported by Zambia and the other Frontline States, are totally out of the question and are seen by the UK to likely enflame tensions more and – a view which they underscore to Kaunda consistently – make life worse for the black population in South Africa. Britain believed that a solution lay in dialogue with both the South African government and also moderate black leaders in SA “who have their own ideas and are worth talking to”<sup>110</sup>. The British were encouraged by Kaunda’s pursuit of dialogue with the last two South African premiers, and they viewed Zambia as a potential avenue in actualising their moderate vision for the region. However, the UK were uncomfortable when it came to engaging with more ‘extreme’ measures, with sanctions being totally off the table. Briefing documents thus outline a ‘policy of persuasion’ toward Zambia, where they believe Kaunda’s past dalliance with diplomacy can be utilised once more, and he can be convinced of the moderate path, and encouraged to continue dialogue where possible.

#### **4b. Zambia and the multilateral confrontation of South African apartheid**

Whilst Kaunda had once pursued the diplomatic path with South Africa, by the early 1980s ‘total strategy’ had seriously begun to inform Zambia’s policy. Bilateralism with SA had failed, and Zambia instead fell back to its tried-and-tested policy of seeking support through international

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<sup>109</sup> ‘State visit of the President of Zambia: 22-24 March 1983. Brief no.5 South Africa(a) Internal: Points to make’ 17 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 1

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

institutions, allies and partners<sup>111</sup>. In order to actualise this strategy of convincing international partners and allies of confrontation with South Africa, Kenneth Kaunda relied once again on the projection of Zambian ideas, much as he had done in 1979. Zambia hosted the ANC in Lusaka, but trod exceedingly delicately when it came to overt material or financial support. Zambia also began to embrace the idea of sanctions more overtly on South Africa during this time, as Kaunda had lost considerable esteem with its Frontline States' colleagues by meeting with both Vorster and Botha. Scholars have characterised this policy shift as a means of "redeeming honour in the eyes of independent Africa"<sup>112</sup>.

To Zambia, normalisation with the United Kingdom had gifted an opportunity of a powerful partner in opposing South Africa. Kaunda believed that his own 'policy of persuasion' could convince the UK to apply pressure and force the South African government to desist from its more hostile measures. Kaunda's 1983 state visit is dotted with his policy of persuasion. Across each of his engagements he consistently falls back on apocalyptic, biblical language which suggests that if a solution is not speedily found in South Africa, violence will erupt. A favourite phrase of his – mentioned consistently in British documents – is that the violence will be so bad that it "will make the French revolution look like a tea party"<sup>113</sup>. In delivering a sermon to St. James' Church in London, he closes by calling "Christian Europe to lead mankind to genuine goodwill and love"<sup>114</sup>. The Zambian strategy here is thus two-fold: suggesting that bloodshed can be avoided with immediate action, and appealing to Britain for leadership based in the Christian tradition. It is a vociferous campaign of explicit verbal warnings as to the urgency of the situation, combined with an invoking of Christian and humanist ideas to try and convince the British to agree to a series of measures that Kaunda believes will exert pressure on South Africa.

These measures are outlined clearly in a letter from the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1983. Kaunda argues for the imposition of comprehensive and mandatory sanctions against South Africa, the end of private investment, the end of moral, military and diplomatic support, open support for liberationist movements in Southern Africa and public condemnation of the apartheid regime.<sup>115</sup> Understanding the Zambian position here is fundamental to seeing normalisation of relations with the UK found its limit here. These measures that Kaunda pursued, and the means by which he tried to convince the British to accept them, constituted a total rejection of some of the foundational pillars that normalisation had been built on. Kaunda was supposed to be a dependable moderate, open to dialogue and a vision of

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<sup>111</sup> Kongwa, Sam. 1987. "Zambia's relations with South Africa". *Africa Insight*. 17 (1): 28

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> 'Record of discussion between PM and President of Zambia at Noon on Wednesday at 10 Downing Street'. 23 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 7

<sup>114</sup> 'Sermon delivered by Kaunda at St. James Church London' 27th March 1983. JEZ027/1, FCO106/1087. TNA. 43

<sup>115</sup> 'Letter from Kaunda to Thatcher' 5 May 1983. JEZ027/1, FCO106/1087. TNA. 2

stability in southern Africa. What he was proposing subverted this entirely – it offered to the British a vision of southern Africa that was unstable, violent and counter to their interests there as a result. The projection of Zambian ideas, which had held considerable sway as a strategy of negotiation in 1979, lost the salience that they had once had on the South African issue.

#### **4c. Clashing viewpoints – ‘a difference in policy, but not in will’**

So, how did the British respond to Kaunda’s requests? Kaunda had leant heavily on similar language when he came to London in 1979, and the British were forced to abandon their ‘urgency’ strategy and instead appeal to Kaunda’s ideas and vision. A similar strategy of invoking humanistic language work did not work in the South African context. Instead, Kaunda would discover the true limits of normalisation. Whilst the Anglo-Zambian partnership had been reforged into something workable for either party, incontrovertible differences in the conceptualisation of the South African issue made it essentially impossible for either party to find common ground on the problem.

Despite Kaunda’s efforts to appeal to the British on apocalyptic grounds, he was essentially stopped in his tracks. Discussions between Kaunda and Thatcher at Downing Street during his State Visit for example prove the fruitlessness of the former’s efforts. While Kaunda discusses an imminent “explosion of immeasurable proportion which will engulf all of us in the region and maybe beyond”<sup>116</sup>, Thatcher is suggesting that Kaunda takes South Africa’s view into account: pointing to how the government there may fear for its own security should it fast-track constitutional changes which would end apartheid.<sup>117</sup> The vision that Britain offers is one that fits with the sort of partnership they have embarked upon with Zambia thus far; one built on dialogue, patient diplomacy and with a partner who can exert soft influence in the region. Kaunda’s vision conflicts with this, and the British find his proposals totally unworkable as a result. British diplomats in the FCO advise Thatcher to reply to Kaunda’s 5<sup>th</sup> of May and “give a brief defence of our position on South Africa...but offer no encouragement to continue the discussion further.”<sup>118</sup> Thatcher’s reply, sent almost two months after Kaunda’s letter, echoes the moderate British vision and offers no direct response to the measures outlined by Kaunda.<sup>119</sup>

The issue of South Africa tested and demonstrated where the limits of Anglo-Zambian normalisation lay. The UK were set in their faith in the policy of linkage, and they saw Kaunda as potentially instrumental to the success of that on the basis of his history as a man of dialogue with South Africa. Equally, Kaunda saw the UK as potentially instrumental on a far more extreme policy of immediate sanctions and diplomatic estrangement of South Africa. These incontrovertible

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<sup>116</sup> ‘Letter from Kaunda to Thatcher’ 5 May 1983. JEZ027/1, FCO106/1087. TNA. 1

<sup>117</sup> ‘Record of discussion between PM and President of Zambia at Noon on Wednesday at 10 Downing Street’. 23 March 1983. PREM19/3591. TNA. 5

<sup>118</sup> ‘Letter from R B Bone, FCO to A Coles PS’ 23 June 1983. JEZ027/1, FCO106/1087. TNA

<sup>119</sup> ‘Letter from Thatcher to Kaunda’ 27 June 1983. JEZ027/1, FCO106/1087. TNA

differences of opinion based themselves in fundamentally different conceptualisations of the South African issue entirely. To Zambia, it was a continuation of the existential threat imposed by white-minority settler regimes. This instructed Kaunda's similar strategy of invoking humanistic, Christian ideas to warn against violence and win support for his extreme measures. To the UK, South Africa was an issue that needed no urgent solution as Rhodesia did. It was one that required careful accommodation and solution through patient diplomacy. As such, Kaunda's vision had no purchase with the British, and they stonewalled him. Equally, Britain found no success in persuading Kaunda of their own vision. Instead, they were content essentially circumventing the issue – agreeing to disagree. 'Incontrovertible differences' on the matter of South Africa would be left aside by either party, characterised by the Zambians later on as a "difference in policy, but not in will"<sup>120</sup>. The partnership that had been built was considered valuable enough to not be worth compromising over South Africa.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated both the success and failure of Britain and Zambia to evolve their relationship in early half of the 1980s. It has argued that both countries favoured the move to 'normalisation' – which was a state of relations broadly understood by both parties to constitute a warmer and deeper partnership. The British valued this partnership in the sense that it provided them a dependable means of maintaining influence and purchase in southern Africa now that the Rhodesian affair had been concluded. Zambia was Kaunda – and Kaunda was a known quantity whom the British had dealt with for almost two decades. He offered them the platform of a moderate, influential partner in southern Africa who could provide them access and even their own influence in regional affairs. The British embarked upon several 'mechanisms of normalisation', which illustrated their own investment in the partnership through the provision of economic and political legitimacy. In a time of shifting foreign policy priorities, Britain's diminished international role informed their desire to use a partnership with Zambia to project its own interests in the region.

Despite the development of a seemingly hardy partnership, this chapter has sought to demonstrate the 'limits of normalisation', using the issue of South Africa as an example. Normalisation had created an arena within which the UK and Zambia could spar their respective worldviews on the issues of South Africa and apartheid. Despite this, totally different conceptualisations of these issues meant that neither side got very far in convincing the other. To the UK, Kaunda's visions regarding South Africa and apartheid constituted a complete reversal of some of the foundational tenets of the Anglo-Zambian partnership. It substituted moderacy with extremism, and regional influence with pleas for international help. Kaunda's ideas found no purchase with the

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<sup>120</sup> 'Call on Mrs Chalker by Joseph Mutale, Zambian Chairman of the elections and publicity committee' 2 March 1988. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 1

British, and his strategy of projecting humanist and Christian ideas – which had worked in his favour in 1979 – was met with a stonewall. Ultimately however, either party continued to consider the other as potentially instrumental in actualising their opposing viewpoints. They valued the partnership that ‘normalisation’ had built far too much to abandon it on the basis of South Africa, and close relations would continue more-or-less unabated by these seemingly incontrovertible differences of opinion on a major regional issue.

## **Chapter 3 – Commonwealth: the diminished relationship and the return of Commonwealth pre-eminence 1985-1989**

### **Introduction**

Relations between the United Kingdom and Zambia had reached their ‘high-water mark’ in the early 1980s. Kaunda’s state visit in 1983 was demonstrative of a new normal: a limited partnership constructed on Kaunda, Zambia’s stability and the access and information Zambia provided on regional matters. It was not to last. The foundations of this partnership would come under increasing pressure as the political and diplomatic realities in southern Africa began to change throughout the 1980s. The Zambian economy continued to show no signs of recovery, the situation in neighbouring Zimbabwe stabilised, and Kaunda’s eccentric predictability made way for uncertain incoherency. Furthermore, many in the West began to seriously foresee a moderate solution to the issue of South Africa, as it became likely in late 1988 that Frederik Willem de Klerk would succeed P.W Botha as President of South Africa. All of a sudden, the foundations upon which an Anglo-Zambian partnership were built came under serious interrogation, and relations would inevitably change as a result. Relations would cool off, initiated primarily by the United Kingdom. In response, Zambia sought to find the means to regain the attention of its former partner.

This final chapter will show that in the climate of diminished relations between Zambia and the United Kingdom in the latter half of the 1980s, African ideas regained their potency and salience in the relationship. A weakened Kaunda turned to multilateralism, utilising a historic inter-African solidarity to exploit British anxiety over ‘commonwealth opinion’ in order to re-imagine the Anglo-Zambian relationship. Firstly, it will assess how the bilateral relationship diminished in importance to the United Kingdom. This will cover how the foundations for the partnership like Kaunda, access and Zambian stability were made redundant or otherwise eclipsed by the new realities of southern Africa in the late 1980s. Secondly, the chapter will conceptualise the Anglo-Zambian relationship in this late period as one that existed in a ‘holding pattern’, in which the relationship’s value was variably considered within the British diplomatic establishment. It will explain the characteristics of the ‘holding pattern’ relationship, arguing primarily that Zambia no-longer retained a prominence with the UK executive as it once had. After the chapter has argued and evidenced a diminished Anglo-Zambian relationship in this period, it will argue that the Commonwealth re-emerged as the pre-eminent interlocutor between either party. Lusaka found in the Commonwealth not only like-minded allies, but a means of exercising agency and exerting diplomatic pressure on the United Kingdom despite a much-diminished importance as an asset in the eyes of the British.

In making this argument, this chapter seeks to make a meaningful engagement with a pre-existing historiography about the Commonwealth in postcolonial diplomatic relations.

Commonwealth scholars have debated the sort of role played by the organisation. The debate as to whether it existed primarily as an institution of projecting British power, or something representing more of a forum for member organisations dots the historiography. This debate has produced a general consensus that the organisation moved from something of an “imperial club” to a voluntary association. Preston Arens’ historiography of the Commonwealth references schools of thought which focus on the organisations’ meaning to its member countries and peoples.<sup>121</sup> This chapter seeks to provide a contribution to Commonwealth historiography in this regard, focusing on the importance of the Commonwealth to independent postcolonial countries in the years immediately after independence. Scholars have characterised the Commonwealth Secretariat, created in 1965, as a ‘counter-weight’ to Britain’s influence within the organisation.<sup>122</sup> Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings have been documented primarily as opportunities for Britain’s ex-colonies to ‘gang up’ on Britain and exert pressure for their own diplomatic objectives, perhaps most notably in 1971 after Prime Minister Ted Heath agreed to continue selling weapons to South Africa.<sup>123</sup> This chapter seeks to elucidate how the Commonwealth was used by both former colonial territories as well as the United Kingdom in this later period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a topic lesser documented by scholars of postcolonial history. Continuities existed in Zambian foreign policy too. The chapter will argue that the Zambian pattern of agitating via international institutions re-emerged once bilateralism with the United Kingdom had ceased to be an effective means.

Equally for the UK, continuities in attitudes to the Commonwealth did exist. Scholarly opinion has often considered the Thatcher administration as one that chose the ‘Cold War’ over Commonwealth, in the sense that Britain pursued a more global agenda with powers like the United States and EU, rather than its previous agenda of being more Commonwealth centric.<sup>124</sup> Conversely, the chapter seeks to demonstrate that not only is the choice between ‘Cold War’ or Commonwealth a false binary, but also a misleading one. Continuities existed in British attitudes toward the Commonwealth in the Thatcher administration, in the sense that ‘Commonwealth opinion’ was a factor considered and highly regarded at an institutional level within the British diplomatic establishment. Anglo-Zambian relations in the late 1980s provide an excellent case study for an exploration of this argument, as the British were forced to contend with Kenneth Kaunda’s 1989 diplomatic initiative which called on Zambia’s African allies within the Commonwealth to exert pressure on the former metropole.

## **1. Explaining the diminished relationship – Kaunda**

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<sup>121</sup> Arens, Preston. 2020 ““To Tidy Minds it May Appear Illogical”: How the Commonwealth Evolved from an ‘Imperial Club’ to an International Organisation,” PhD diss., University of Waterloo. 14

<sup>122</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. 94

<sup>123</sup> Cullen, Poppy. 2017. *Kenya and Britain after independence*. 183

<sup>124</sup> Holt, Andrew. 2014. *Foreign policy of the Douglas-Home government: Britain, the United States and the end of Empire*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 76

An explanation as to why the Anglo-Zambian relationship diminished to the United Kingdom lies in an interrogation of the key foundations of the normalised relationship. These foundations were of course the character of Kaunda – an asset once considered predictable, even dependable – Zambia’s relative stability vis-à-vis the region, and the access to information that Zambia provided the UK as an ally in southern Africa. As the UK and Zambia built their partnership in the early part of the decade, these three factors constituted the foundation of ‘normalisation’ in a relationship that had been allowed to develop following the conclusion of the Rhodesian issue. Therefore, the diminished relationship can be explained via an assessment of how these factors were challenged or otherwise eclipsed as the decade went on. Finally, the issue of South Africa appeared – at least by the late 1980s – to be moving toward a more moderate path, a fact which made Kaunda’s continued call for sanctions seem all the more unreasonable and unrealistic. Before this chapter can discuss how the Commonwealth was used as an interlocutor between the UK and Zambia, it must first go over how the dynamic of the partnership changed from the mid-1980s onwards, after which the Anglo-Zambian partnership that had been constructed in the aftermath of Lancaster House came under test. This first section of the chapter will thus explore what led to the ‘diminished’ relationship, so as to underline the new significance that the Commonwealth came to take.

### **1a. Kaunda - From predictable partner to incoherent eccentric: the 1988 anti-corruption campaign**

Kaunda himself had constituted one of the fundamental pillars of the Anglo-Zambian relationship. A combined set of characteristics such as his longevity, influence with regional partners and perceived moderacy in international affairs made him an attractive asset to the UK. For the issue of South Africa, Zambia had represented to the UK a potential partner in actualising a moderate solution to increased tensions in the region in the early 1980s. As the decade went on however, several aspects of Kaunda’s character – which were always known and tolerated by those in the British diplomatic establishment – came to be seen as more of a hindrance than a help to the UK goals in the region. Furthermore, increasing domestic issues in Zambia resulted in Kaunda acting in ways that were considered erratic or otherwise unhelpful for a positive relationship to be maintained.

Scholars of Zambian foreign policy in the late 1980s have discussed at length how emergent domestic problems led to more and more outlandish and incomprehensible foreign and domestic policy endeavours. Kenneth Good writes an especially critical account of Kaunda in the late 1980s, lambasting policy incoherencies that were predicated on Kaunda’s own irrational beliefs.<sup>125</sup> From the mid-1980s onwards, the threat of South Africa to Zambia was especially played up to Kaunda’s domestic constituency. White farmers living in Zambia were treated with suspicion as potential

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<sup>125</sup> Good, Kenneth. 1987. “Zambia and the Liberation of South Africa.” 516

‘agents of Pretoria’<sup>126</sup>, and in 1988 Kaunda embarked upon an ‘anti-corruption’ campaign which would seek to further capitalise on anti-immigrant sentiment in an economically-struggling Zambia. Analysing the British view of Kaunda at this time thus seeks to confirm an existing historiography which suggests that insecurities regarding his own position caused Kaunda to act increasingly erratically. To appear unpredictable and irrational would contravene the very benefits that the British enjoyed from a partnership with Kaunda in the early part of the decade.

Kaunda’s 1988 anti-corruption campaign was a huge concern for the British, and led many within the Foreign Office to question an aspect of his character that has once been his most valuable: his predictability. Beginning in February of that year, Kaunda was to invoke presidential powers to withdraw the licenses of businessmen who were involved in an emergent black market in Lusaka – a symptom of outrageous prices in the broken economy. Alarming for the British, Kaunda announced at a press conference that same month that those who had their licenses revoked would be deported – whether Zambian or Zambian citizens by registration.<sup>127</sup> Evident in internal exchanges in the British diplomatic establishment was concern about this on three grounds: the potential for those deported to be British Overseas Citizens (Zambia had a British community at that time estimated at around 25,000 people), the similarities that the campaign bore to a far larger and more violent one that was occurring in neighbouring Malawi at the time, and the similarities it bore to Idi Amin’s notorious deportation of Asian Ugandans a decade prior. There is particular anxiety over the potential that British Overseas Citizens (BOCs) have had their licenses revoked, with some even having their passports held by security forces.<sup>128</sup> By 1988 the relationship has changed considerably from where it was only a few years before, most noticeably in how the network of communication has changed. For example, foreign office documents obtained for this study consist almost entirely of internal communications – and only much later on throughout this anti-corruption campaign was effort made to discuss with the Zambians themselves the potential consequences the campaign might have for BOCs. The High Commissioner in Lusaka is able to meet with Kaunda’s subordinates, but there is absolutely no communication with Kaunda himself during any of this – a fact significant when one considers the usual personal contact that the British establishment favoured during the normalisation period in the early part of the decade.

Furthermore, internal diplomatic documents during the anti-corruption campaign illustrate how the historical British perception of Kaunda is being increasingly challenged. Internal communications are rife with confusion over Kaunda’s ‘motivation’ to initiate the anti-corruption campaign, and reveal a great deal about the diminished trust they hold in him. Kaunda is seen as acting out of desperation, using cheap tricks to shore up his support in advance of an election later that

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<sup>126</sup> Good, Kenneth. 1987. “Zambia and the Liberation of South Africa.” 516

<sup>127</sup> ‘Telno 044: Kaunda, press conference’ 24 February 1988. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 1

<sup>128</sup> ‘Telno 051: Presidential anti-corruption campaign’ 2 March 1988. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 1

year.<sup>129</sup> The stability that Zambia seemed to offer earlier in 1980s has all but disappeared as the decade has gone on. A climate of insecurity drummed up by the Zambian government in response to economic pressures and aggression from South Africa has seriously destabilised the country, and the British view Kaunda's 'anti-corruption campaign' as a faintly disguised attempt at recouping lost popular support. Further investigation conducted by the British leads them to conclude that Kaunda is taking these measures specifically - targeting Asian businessmen and revoking their licenses – as he believes that moves against Asians are popular with the “Zambian in the street”.<sup>130</sup> Responses by those within the British diplomatic establishment show confusion as to Kaunda's motivations. Internal documents try to square Kaunda's targeting of Asian businessmen with his humanist philosophy. One scribbled note on a dispatch ponders “this doesn't sound like KK”.<sup>131</sup> Confusion over Kaunda's motivation for an action that did not fit the British perception of him illustrates the value many British diplomats placed in Kaunda personally within the relationship. It was Kaunda's predictability which made him a useful asset to the British in southern Africa, and the sudden decision to initiate an anti-corruption campaign on supposedly racist grounds brought this foundation of the relationship into question.

### **1b. Kaunda - From moderacy to uninformed extremism: South Africa**

Alongside his predictability, Kaunda was agreeable to the British as seemingly one of the only leaders within the Frontline States who held a more moderate course.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, he was considered to be respected within the organisation, with it generally agreed within the British establishment that he held considerable influence. In the early half of the decade, Kaunda's previous dalliance with diplomacy evidenced by his meetings with South African PMs Vorster and Botha had encouraged the British that he could be convinced to further pursue the moderate path. He was considered a potential asset in the solution of South Africa. Just as his predictability came under scrutiny however, so too would the British in the late 1980s begin to question just how moderate and 'clued up' Kaunda really was to the situation in southern Africa.

A tactic relied upon by Kaunda during his 1983 state visit was his continued emphasis of urgency – and that unless extreme measures were taken in dealing with South Africa, a civil war would be inevitable. Scholars have discussed the Zambian foreign policy shift in the 1980s – referring to it as a decisive shift to the strategy of 'confrontation'.<sup>133</sup> At the 1986 Non-Aligned conference, Zambia opts to embrace mandatory economic sanctions on South Africa as the surest means of “averting the explosion”. Fascinatingly, the Zambian strategy was still arguably the more moderate

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<sup>129</sup> 'Letter from CAD, FCO to PS of Mrs Chalker' 24 February 1988. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 2

<sup>130</sup> 'Letter from CAD, FCO to PS of Mrs Chalker' 1 March 1988. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 2

<sup>131</sup> 'Telno 044: Kaunda, press conference' 24 February 1988. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 1

<sup>132</sup> 'General Steering Brief no1' 17 March 1983. JEZ027/1, FCO106/1087. TNA. 2

<sup>133</sup> Kongwa, Sam. 1987. "Zambia's relations with South Africa". 31

when compared to other members of the Front Line States – some of whom had even lobbied for the creation of a Pan-African armed force to be stationed on South Africa’s borders. Nevertheless, the British view of sanctions was clear in 1983 – and by the end of the decade they are none-too-pleased with Kaunda’s decision to opt to the strategy of confrontation. Furthermore, British diplomats became increasingly exasperated with Kaunda’s continual suggestion that a civil war was imminent so much so that by the late 1980s it has become something of an inside joke. One document refers to having received a letter from the President, jocularly described as a ‘very Kaunda letter’.<sup>134</sup> Others place extra stress on the fact that he has “long predicted an imminent civil war”.<sup>135</sup> What was once a trusty and reliable weapon of persuasion that Kaunda used has become synonymous with his general tendency for emotional hyperbole.

Furthermore, Kaunda’s prediction of civil war seemed completely out of touch with the political realities of what was happening in South Africa at the time. P.W Botha stepping down and making way for De Klerk symbolised an opportunity for a moderate outcome in South Africa, one that the British recognised and were quick to jump on. Though Kaunda himself also welcomed the presidency of de Klerk – meeting with him as the first FLS member to do so in 1989 – it made his previous repeated predictions of an imminent bloodbath look exceedingly uninformed. Whereas Kaunda was once held up as a potential asset in the solution of South Africa, the British by the late 1980s consider Kaunda to have perhaps oversold his usefulness in the situation, something of great consequence to the diminishment of the relationship.

## **2. Explaining the diminished relationship – changing realities**

### **2a. Zambia in the late 1980s**

Another foundation of normalisation in the early 1980s lay in the fact that Zambia had stood out in the region as an example of stability. Kaunda had steered the ship of state through the tumultuous times of the Rhodesian affair, and whilst the neighbours of Angola, Mozambique and South-West Africa experienced serious violence and political upheaval Zambia enjoyed relative political stability. This was a continuation of the theme of predictability which underscored much of why the British pursued a partnership with Zambia in the first place. Stability in the country Kaunda ruled was a testament to the president himself. From the middle of the decade onward however, the domestic situation deteriorated rapidly for Kaunda. Economic troubles which had been simmering for many years showed no signs of improvement, and early signs of political discontent also began to make themselves apparent.

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<sup>134</sup> ‘Note for the file: Kaunda Initiative from Peter Tibber’ 14 August 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA

<sup>135</sup> ‘BE in the Hague to CAD, FCO: visit by Zambian Pres to NL April 1986’ 21 April 1986. FCO 106/1946. TNA

Documents exchanged between the High Commission in Lusaka and the Foreign Office in London regularly documented the difficulties President Kaunda faced at home. Particular attention is paid to the fact that Kaunda's ability as a statesman is drastically hindered as a result of economic and political trouble in Zambia. A letter from early 1986 explains to the Foreign Office how Kaunda was recently forced to cancel an extensive diplomatic tour of Australia and South East Asia "because of economic problems which demanded his presence here, and also because the cost of foreign visits was beginning to excite some comment...and this one would have looked especially bad when austerity was on the cry".<sup>136</sup> In December of that same year, rioting and looting was to break out in Lusaka as food became unaffordable to many.<sup>137</sup> Scholars sympathetic to Kaunda often characterise him as a man who was most incensed by crisis. Chan writes of Kaunda's method of work as one which works best when stakes are highest: a man who cannot manage the mundane.<sup>138</sup> While this assessment most certainly paints an endearing image of the Zambian president, the British government at the time would disagree. High Commissioner Willson, the British man in Lusaka from 1988-1990 later referred to the economic situation in Zambia at that time as one caused primarily by neglect.<sup>139</sup> To the British, Kaunda did not seem to be a man who worked best in situations of crisis – rather, one who avoided the crises in his own country to pursue international diplomatic endeavours. Ultimately, a destabilised Zambia was far less attractive to the UK as a partner to work with in southern Africa.

## **2b. Explaining the diminished relationship - Aid on a shoe-string**

When Britain and Zambia embarked upon their partnership in the early half of the decade, the former sought to maintain it via various political and economic means. These have been previously referred to as 'mechanisms' of normalisation. Providing Zambia with a state visit in 1983 was both a material and yet also deeply symbolic method of demonstrating the achievement of normalisation between the two countries. The British considered it as a 'favour' to the Zambians – the granting of political legitimacy and diplomatic stature to Kaunda prior to an upcoming presidential election. If the state visit constituted a form of 'political aid', the British were also prudent in supplying Zambia with huge amounts of economic assistance. These mechanisms of normalisation constituted the means by which Britain invested in the partnership with Zambia early in the decade.

The diminished relationship can be observed in the decline of economic assistance Britain provided to Zambia in the latter half of the decade. As well as a decline of economic aid in real-terms, evident in British diplomatic documents also is a decisive lack of will – lack of trust even – in granting the Zambians with further economic aid. This shift was clearly informed by the

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<sup>136</sup> 'Letter from W White, BHC Lusaka to Ian Lewty CAD FCO'. 10 February 1986. FCO 106/1946. TNA. 2

<sup>137</sup> Good, Kenneth. 1987. "Zambia and the Liberation of South Africa." 516

<sup>138</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. 146

<sup>139</sup> Willson, John "An interview between John Willson CMG and Jimmy Jamieson" By Jimmy Jamieson. 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005 BDOHP, Churchill College, Cambridge. 38

aforementioned economic troubles the country had begun to seriously struggle with from the mid-point of the decade onward. It is seriously apparent that by the end of the decade, Britain has drastically scaled back the economic assistance it once afforded to Zambia. By 1990, aid was kept on a shoe-string – with Britain financing some senior medical posts at the Lusaka Teaching Hospital.<sup>140</sup> Developmental aid was also abandoned, left primarily to private enterprise.

Zambia's deteriorating economic position had by 1988 led to the country disengaging with the IMF. This move was a populist one, undertaken by Kaunda on the basis that the IMF had not delivered the prosperity for the people that was promised.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, Zambia was unable to reach an agreement with any major International financial institution, essentially due to low confidence in the country not defaulting on its pre-existing debts. A meeting in 1988 between Joseph Mutale, the Zambian chairman of elections and Jackie Chalker, a British minister responsible for Africa is enlightening as to the British position on Zambia's economic situation. Mrs Chalker attempts on multiple occasions to encourage Zambia to return to the IMF due to its enormous need for foreign exchange for agriculture and industry. She also notes that even the Nordic countries – who at that time are usefully less stringent with the conditions placed on their loans to developing countries – are asking Zambia to meet some requirements.<sup>142</sup> Britain were well-aware as to the kind of economic pariah that Kaunda was overseeing. Zambia had been in dire economic straits for much of the Anglo-Zambian partnership, but the continued lack of economic recovery made it difficult for Britain to continue their investment in their partner.

The lack of will is evident in internal British documents. The year following Mrs Chalker's meeting with Joseph Mutale, an official within the Foreign Office writes to the PM's Private Secretary in an attempt to convince them to meet with Kaunda. The British clearly believe that Kaunda will inevitably come asking for money, and so the official writing the letter takes great pains to try and argue how other benefits to Kaunda's visit will outweigh the potential awkwardness of this issue. He writes "Should Kaunda raise the issue she could say that though we are encouraged by the steps taken so far, the next essential step is for Zambia to reach comprehensive agreement with the IMF and the World bank about the details of a sustainable economic programme."<sup>143</sup> Needless to say that this request fell on deaf ears, and Kaunda never met with Thatcher in a bilateral setting that year.

Ultimately, the UK relied on economic assistance as an on-the-cheap means to maintain a pliable and close partner in Zambia, yet as the economic situation continued to deteriorate in the

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<sup>140</sup> Willson, John "An interview between John Willson CMG and Jimmy Jamieson" By Jimmy Jamieson. 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005 BDOHP, Churchill College, Cambridge. 41

<sup>141</sup> 'Call on Mrs Chalker by Joseph Mutale, Zambian Chairman of the elections and publicity committee' 2 March 1988. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 2

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>143</sup> 'Possible call on the Prime Minister by President Kaunda – from C A K Cullimore to Mr Tomskys' 8 Aug 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 4

country, Britain felt neither the will nor confidence to double-down on their investment, preferring instead to scale it back drastically. Economic aid had constituted a key part of Britain's mechanisms of normalisation for the Anglo-Zambian partnership, and its withdrawal based on a lack of confidence in the Zambian economy is demonstrative of the deliberate British initiative to move toward a diminished relationship.

### **3. The 'holding pattern' – conceptualising the Anglo-Zambian relationship in the late 1980s**

This chapter has thus far interrogated much of what constituted the foundations of normalisation in the early half of the decade, and sought to show how the redundancy or eclipsing of these foundations made the Anglo-Zambian partnership as it was in the early half of the decade untenable by the latter half. This section of the chapter will seek to broadly conceptualise the new form that the partnership took. It argues that the relationship entered a 'holding pattern' which is primarily characterised by institutional disagreement over how to prioritise the Zambian partnership. It assesses this in detail, demonstrating a reprioritisation of Zambian affairs within the UK diplomatic establishment. Those present in Lusaka were given far more passive roles. The Lusaka position, once a ground for Britain's up-and-coming officers of state to test themselves, became a far quieter, less prestigious one. Those posted in Lusaka, despite considering Zambia and Kaunda most favourably of anyone within the British diplomatic establishment, still carried colonial-era attitudes toward their posting. This section will demonstrate that British diplomatic officials often fell back on a presumed sense of superiority in order to explain the shortcomings of the Zambian leadership.

This section also seeks to engage with the pre-existing historiography on the British relationship with its former colonial territories in this period. Cullen's history of Britain's postcolonial relationship with Kenya for example emphasizes that the relationship between these powers rarely changed between PMs and Ministers, with policy largely the same due to the continuation of civil servants and diplomats.<sup>144</sup> Cullen argues for the need to analyse foreign policy at this level. An examination of Anglo-Zambian relations in the latter half of the 1980s contributes to Cullen's insights. This section of the chapter will argue primarily that the wishes of British civil servants with regard to foreign policy were disregarded by the executive. Whereas some officials – mostly those based in Lusaka – still saw value in a relationship with Zambia, much of their communication with London would fall on deaf ears.

The section will illustrate the nature of the 'holding pattern' relationship by illustrating how Kaunda was dealt with personally. The insights that he offers – which were once highly regarded as part of the 'access' element of the relationship – no-longer held the sway they once had. Rather, his

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<sup>144</sup> Cullen, Poppy. 2017. *Kenya and Britain after independence*. 266

requests were often simply placated on the grounds that it would be costlier to alienate him. This section will make a case study out of a 1985 Zambian diplomatic initiative show both this placation and yet also to demonstrate where Zambia was still able to exercise agency over the British. Despite institutional disagreement over the value of a partnership with Zambia, it was always those lower in the hierarchy who found themselves convinced of Kaunda's continued usefulness.

### **3a. The Lusaka posting and institutional disagreement**

The 'holding pattern' relationship is best first explored through an assessment of what the British diplomatic personnel stationed in Lusaka were tasked with in the late 1980s. John Michael Willson, the British High Commissioner in Lusaka from 1988-1990, provided an interview with the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme in 2005. Willson's career was exceedingly long and illustrious, and he had actually first served in Zambia in 1955 whilst it was still known as Northern Rhodesia, then a part of the short-lived Central African Federation. Within the interview, he gives the impression that his posting in Lusaka oversaw a time of relatively good relations between the United Kingdom and Zambia. He discusses his tasks as "keeping Zambia onside with regard to Britain's African policies", as well as keeping tabs on the resident ANC.<sup>145</sup> What is worth consideration about Willson's tenure however is that his 1988-1990 posting was his last before he would retire. His time in Lusaka was a pre-retirement posting – something comparable to a gardening leave. For comparison: Walter Allinson, the British HC during the Lancaster House negotiations, would win his spurs during his tenure in Lusaka, going on to take up the incredibly prestigious posting of British High Commissioner in Nairobi, Kenya. The Lusaka posting of the late 1980s was thus reserved for an experienced diplomat perhaps, but an aged one on their way to retirement. If one considers Willson's interview – his objectives during his stay in Lusaka – alongside the knowledge that this would be his last official posting as a British diplomat, it is not difficult to see how the importance of Zambia had drastically been scaled back by the foreign office in the short span of the decade.

An institutional disagreement existed within the British establishment as to Zambia's importance. This is the underlying reason as to why the Zambian partnership is kept at arms-length. Requests from those lower in the diplomatic hierarchy for Kaunda to be heard out – whether in meetings or phone calls – are often dismissed. Private secretaries of those within the executive are regularly in communication with officials from the Foreign Office, with the former often making excuses to the latter as to why their superiors are unable to find time for Kaunda.<sup>146 147</sup> The relationship with Zambia had far less prominence with the executive in the late 1980s as it had earlier

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<sup>145</sup> Willson, John "An interview between John Willson CMG and Jimmy Jamieson" By Jimmy Jamieson. 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005 BDOHP, Churchill College, Cambridge. 41

<sup>146</sup> 'Letter from Richard Gozney, FCO to Caroline Slocock: President Kaunda, possible call on PM' 14 August 1989. PREM19/3591. TNA.

<sup>147</sup> 'Telno 229: Kaunda's regional proposals' 23 August 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA

on in the decade. From the middle of the decade onward, those within the Foreign Office departments begin to frustrate the efforts of Lusaka to have Zambia heard. One such letter, written by an official working in the Central Africa department of the FCO, writes to Thatcher's private secretary at the time about a recent request from William White, HC in Lusaka for Kaunda to meet Thatcher at the end of the year. It reads "Zambia has been given plenty of ministerial attention recently (and a special envoy) and visits by Princess Anne and Mr Raison are likely at the end of 1985/beginning of 1986: I do not think, therefore, there is justification for giving priority to an invitation to President Kaunda this year".<sup>148</sup> One aspect which characterised the new Anglo-Zambian relationship was thus a reduced prominence the relationship held with the executive – and this was facilitated by dissonance within Britain's diplomatic institutions as to how important Zambia was.

### **3b. Placating Kaunda – the British response to Zambia's 1985 diplomatic initiative**

What is perhaps easiest to characterise about the nature of the Anglo-Zambian relationship is how Kaunda – with all his eccentricities plainly apparent to the British – is appeased. The appeasement of Kaunda constituted perhaps the most obvious mechanism of the relationship in the latter half of the decade. This sort of appeasement was built basically as a result of the institutional stalemate created by different elements of the diplomatic establishment valuing the Zambian partnership differently. Diplomats based in Lusaka – as well as those in London at the Foreign Office – valued a Zambian partner far more than those in the executive. Though Zambia's importance is diminished perhaps at the executive level, it is the lobbying of those lower in the diplomatic hierarchy which ensures Kaunda is appeased so as to keep him 'onside' in the event that he may be useful in future. Equally, the means by which Kaunda himself uses to create the impression that he is needed in the first place are worthy of note. Zambia used a combination of multilateral diplomatic pressure, as well as stressing the past success of bilateral relations in order to win the attention and agreement of the British.

Perhaps one of the best examples of this is seen at the middle of the decade. In 1985 a series of confidential exchanges between President Kaunda and the British high commissioner at the time William White results in a series of lobbying efforts directed upward in the hierarchy of British diplomatic institutions. An analysis of these lobbying efforts is demonstrative of both how the relationship with Zambia was valued differently by civil servants, but also how even those of greater seniority were eventually convinced of the need to appease Kaunda.

In March of 1985 Kaunda embarked upon a new diplomatic initiative – part of a series undertaken by the Zambian president in a means to bring about collective action over South Africa. This new initiative revolved around summoning envoys from multiple Western powers with perceived

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<sup>148</sup> Letter from Miss T A H Solesby CAD FCO to Mr Johnson: Possible visit by Kaunda' 23 April 1985. FCO 106/1563. TNA

influence over southern African affairs. Kaunda requested envoys from the United States, the UK, Germany and even the Holy See<sup>149</sup>. If Kaunda's intentions seem vague here, it is because from the British perspective they were. Much speculation is made within internal British diplomatic exchanges as to what exactly Kaunda wishes to discuss with the envoys. One message from the BHC in Lusaka to officials in the Foreign Office refers to Kaunda's 'usual themes': the ongoing situation in Namibia, the recent 1985 Nkomati agreement and southern Africa in general.<sup>150</sup> What can be read from this is that the British had no concrete idea as to what Kaunda wished to discuss.

The means by which Zambia sought to persuade the UK to accept its diplomatic initiative were twofold. One tactic relied on upon by Kaunda was the reminiscence over past shared success in the Anglo-Zambian relationship. The issue of Rhodesia continued to sit prominently in the eyes of both Kaunda as well as many Lusaka-based diplomats. White reports for example that Kaunda points to the historical success of envoys sent on behalf of the UK government, citing a similar occurrence in 1979.<sup>151</sup> Recalling the previous cooperation over Rhodesia was a tactic that worked exceedingly well with the British in Lusaka. They were almost immediately convinced that an envoy should be sent. Lobbying attempts by White in early April are reminiscent of the benefits Kaunda brings to a partnership with the United Kingdom. White's report is fascinating as to just how little he knows about what Kaunda wants from this initiative, yet he is still convinced of the need to accept on the basis of retaining this sense of good-faith. He writes "I am not confident that Kaunda has a practical plan in mind...but I am clear that if we rebuffed his approach we would forfeit the considerable credit we have in his eyes...".<sup>152</sup>

The second means by which Kaunda set out to win the British over to his initiative is also evident in many scholars' writings on Zambian diplomacy. Much-discussed in the historiography of Zambian foreign policy is Kaunda's strength in actualising diplomatic policy through multilateral pressure.<sup>153</sup> In 1985, Kaunda successfully obtains British attention through the very same means – the invitations extended to other Western countries are accepted. The British pay particular attention to the fact that the United States have accepted Kaunda's invitation, and it is only after this fact that discussion is made further up the hierarchy as to how to respond to Kaunda's request.<sup>154</sup> A letter directed to Charles Powell, Thatcher's private secretary, from an official in the Foreign Office further confirms that the High Commissioner is confident neither in what Kaunda wants to discuss, nor any practical plan that he might have. All the same, the letter strongly recommends that Kaunda's

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<sup>149</sup> 'Telno 163: Lusaka to FCO' 28 March 1985. FCO 106/1572. TNA.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> 'Lusaka to FCO, Telno 173: Lusaka to FCO' 2 April 1985. FCO 106/1572. TNA

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>153</sup> Schler, Lynn 2018. "Dilemmas of Postcolonial Diplomacy". 101

<sup>154</sup> 'Letter from T A H Solesby CAD to Johnson, PS: Message from President Kaunda' 2 April 1985. FCO 106/1572. TNA

initiative is taken up, referencing the need for his continued support. There is a belief that should Kaunda be rebuffed, the potential for him to turn hostile would constitute a “major additional complication”.<sup>155</sup> Of course, sending an envoy to Kaunda was an inexpensive route of appeasing him. Though the British had little idea of what exactly Kaunda even aimed to discuss, they were of the opinion that it would cost them more to do nothing. Ewen Fergusson, former British ambassador to South Africa, would arrive in Lusaka on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1985. The following days would see numerous meetings between him and Kaunda, though little would come of them.

The 1985 Zambian initiative and Britain’s response to it is an insight into how appeasement constituted one of the primary mechanisms of the Anglo-Zambian partnership in the later stages of the 1980s. Appeasement was built on an institutional stalemate within the British diplomatic establishment – wherein a partnership with the Zambians was valued oppositely at different levels. Kaunda was able to get the British to agree to his vague and unrehearsed proposals precisely by exploiting this. He was able to appeal on more emotional grounds to those in Lusaka, whilst giving those in London the impression that by ignoring his request they would be risking alienating him.

#### **4. The return of Commonwealth pre-eminence? – the 1989 Kaunda initiative**

The chapter has thus far set out to argue how and why the Anglo-Zambian relationship diminished in the latter half of the 1980s. The diminished relationship manifested itself in what has been conceptualised as the ‘holding pattern’, in which the British kept the Zambians at arms-length. As such, by 1989 the relationship with Zambia was a far cry from what it had been during perhaps the state visit in 1983. The magic of Kaunda which had once incensed even the British executive had been lost, working only on those based close to him in Lusaka. Zambia struggled economically, a risky investment for Britain. Regionally speaking, the pre-eminent issue of the time – South Africa – appeared to be moving toward a diplomatic solution. What had made Zambia a marketable asset to the British earlier on in the decade was non-existent in the eyes of London-based British diplomats. Yet in 1989 a last-ditch effort by Kaunda saw the Zambian president exploit an institutional insecurity of the British: the Commonwealth. This section will explore Zambia’s 1989 Commonwealth Eminent Persons’ Group initiative in order to analyse how Kaunda was able to capitalise on a historical British concern with ‘Commonwealth opinion’ in order to reconfigure some of the fundamental aspects of the ‘holding pattern’ relationship.

The history of Britain’s relationship with the Commonwealth has been written about extensively. Much of the historiography of the early relationship – from Macmillan to Heath – demonstrates an executive concern over ‘Commonwealth opinion’. Negotiation over decolonisation and its consequences have been depicted by historians overwhelmingly as Britain almost at the mercy

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<sup>155</sup> ‘Letter from C Budd, FCO to Charles Powell, PS’ 3 April 1985. FCO 106/1572. TNA. 1

of its perception in the Commonwealth.<sup>156</sup> Concern with Commonwealth opinion was essentially almost synonymous with the British concern regarding their post-imperial world status. Maintaining a healthy relationship with the Commonwealth was seen as the surest means of ‘influence on the cheap’ – thus guaranteeing Britain some position as a power despite the loss of empire. The Douglas-Home government of the early 1960s has been characterised as overly-sensitive to the unity of the Commonwealth, particularly in regard to racial tensions spawned from the Rhodesian issue.<sup>157</sup>

Equally, the Commonwealth is discussed as a forum and means by which Britain’s ex-colonial territories can in some way exert pressure over the former metropole. The creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965 for example has been characterised as a postcolonial counterweight to British influence within the organisation.<sup>158</sup> The historiography of Thatcher’s foreign policy compared to her predecessor’s differs most fundamentally in how the British premier viewed the Commonwealth. In contrast to previous premiers’ policy, which has been written about as either concerned with, sympathetic to or in disagreement with the Commonwealth, Thatcher’s policy is often portrayed as arguably dismissive. Scholars discuss Thatcher’s foreign policy in terms of the primacy of the Anglo-American relationship, the resulting focus on Cold War or anti-Soviet matters, the Falklands war and the European integration issue.<sup>159</sup> What little exists on Thatcher’s interactions with the Commonwealth makes it clear that there is no love lost. The Thatcher administration was dismissive of Commonwealth opinion, differentiating it from the policy of previous British governments.

To what extent is this policy shift as clear-cut as the historiography makes it out to be? This section seeks to argue that continuities did exist regarding British policy toward the Commonwealth in the Thatcher era. British foreign policy is complex and though the executive was ostensibly less concerned with the issue of ‘Commonwealth opinion’ as perhaps past executives had been, the issue was a persistent component of concern within the ranks of the British diplomatic establishment. In this analysis of Anglo-Zambian relations for example, Commonwealth opinion was a mechanism used and exploited by the former to try to actualise Zambian diplomatic goals. Concern with Commonwealth opinion remained a meaningful factor to consider for civil servants and diplomats of the UK as late as 1989. So meaningful was it in fact that it was potent enough to elevate Zambia somewhat out of the diminished partnership that had emerged with the UK in the latter half of the decade.

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<sup>156</sup> Holt, Andrew. 2014. *Foreign policy of the Douglas-Home government*. 76

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Chan, Stephen. 1992. *Kaunda and Southern Africa*. 94

<sup>159</sup> Edmunds, Timothy, Jamie Gaskarth, and Robin Porter. 2014. *British Foreign Policy and the National Interest*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. 158

In the summer of 1989, communications between the British High Commission in Lusaka and the Foreign Office in London discuss the latest of Kaunda's diplomatic objectives: the revival of a Commonwealth Eminent Persons' Group (EPG).<sup>160</sup> The first EPG happened in 1985 – a group formed of notable persons within the Commonwealth who were tasked with travelling to South Africa, conducting research and recommending potential solutions to the issue of apartheid. During the EPG's visit in May of 1986, the South African security forces launched attacks on supposed ANC bases in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana.<sup>161</sup> Subsequently, the EPG ruled that South Africa showed no commitment to ending apartheid and so recommended mandatory economic sanctions. To Kaunda, a long-time sanctions advocate, the EPG report constituted a huge vote of confidence in his policy. It is no surprise then that in 1989 he seeks its revival.

Evident as to how the Zambian relationship is prioritised differently from the British side is how those in Lusaka respond to Kaunda's request. Willson's summer telegram to the foreign office notes that Kaunda's proposal is "very much in keeping with Kaunda's track record as a bridge-builder, and one who has always favoured contact (sometimes covert) with South Africa, even when things were difficult".<sup>162</sup> A few days later, Kaunda announced his initiative to the world during a press conference. He was careful to note that the Commonwealth could play an "important role" in the dialogue with South Africa.<sup>163</sup> By going public with the EPG proposal, Kaunda essentially forced the British into some kind of public reaction. Willson's communications with the Foreign Office note that Kaunda is likely to mention the initiative at the upcoming CHOGM that year. He recommends that Kaunda's proposal is given the UK's full support.<sup>164</sup>

What happens next shows a British interpretation of Zambian actions that is consistent with a historiography which emphasizes Britain's historic anxiety over 'commonwealth opinion'. Over the next few days, Kaunda's proposal is discussed at varying levels of the UK diplomatic establishment, where it is concretely decided that Kaunda's proposal is to be rejected. Just how strong a rejection the UK should give however is exactly where the Commonwealth context comes in. Zambian High Commissioner Phiri meets with Foreign Office officials in London to explain further the details of Kaunda's plan, which he insists should be passed on to Thatcher herself.<sup>165</sup> Discussions held in London illuminate the differences in opinion toward the Zambians held by different levels of the British foreign office. Whereas Willson wholly backed Kaunda's proposal on the basis of his ability to act as a bridge-builder, an official at the Southern Africa Department conveys their thoughts to the

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<sup>160</sup> 'Telno 196: Lusaka to FCO' 13 June 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 1

<sup>161</sup> 'President Botha letter to MT, May 1986' 19 May 1986. PRE19/1966 f107 T95/86. Margaret Thatcher Foundation.

<sup>162</sup> 'Telno 196: Lusaka to FCO' 13 June 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 1

<sup>163</sup> 'Telno 203: Lusaka to FCO' 14 June 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 1

<sup>164</sup> 'Telno 212: Lusaka to FCO' 21 June 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 3

<sup>165</sup> 'Telno 169: FCO to Lusaka' 27 June 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 2

ministerial level, calling Kaunda's ideas "ill-formed and inconsistent. They need to be fended off". Despite the damning appraisal, the official notes that "the notion of a revival of the EPG appears to be gaining currency more widely in the Commonwealth".<sup>166</sup> Over the previous few days, it has become apparent that other influential members of the Commonwealth appear to also be lending their support to Kaunda's initiative. General Obasanjo, the Nigerian president from 1976-1979, as well as Shridath Ramphal – then Commonwealth secretary general - are two Commonwealth heavy-hitters the Foreign Office has noted as supporters of Kaunda's EPG plan. The letter outlines that Kaunda should not be brushed off too sharply, and that the wider 'Commonwealth context' needs to be considered.<sup>167</sup> This shows that at a civil service level, the recurring motif of 'commonwealth opinion' that is present within earlier histories of Britain's relationship with the Commonwealth is alive and well even under the Thatcher administration.

Other communication within the Foreign Office in London further reveals British anxieties regarding alienation of the Commonwealth. Something of greater consequence regarding Zambia's position in all of this is that Kaunda's initiative, though opposed by many within the British foreign office, has led to revived discussion as to what use Kaunda may have yet in the South Africa situation. A letter from the Foreign Secretaries' private secretary to Charles Powell, Thatcher's own secretary reflects much of the Commonwealth anxieties of what the southern Africa department letter had to say, yet also compliments Kaunda's "key role" in determining the Front Line States' approach to the issue. The letter argues for a conciliatory approach to Kaunda which ensures that the UK can escape the upcoming CHOGM without the EPG issue being used as a beating stick. It reads "The Foreign Secretary believes, therefore, that President Kaunda be told that a revival of an EPG cannot be ruled out but that it would be too early to take decisions on such a proposal at CHOGM".<sup>168</sup> What is worth noting at this stage is that Kaunda's ideas have reached a ministerial level – and though the British plan on rejecting them as they stand, he has injected himself once again as a potential asset and partner in actualising British policy. By relying on the Commonwealth, and exploiting British diplomatic anxiety about 'Commonwealth opinion', Kaunda in many ways re-imagined the diminished relationship between the UK and Zambia of the previous few years.

The discussion of Kaunda's initiative at an executive level further demonstrates the effect that utilising the 'Commonwealth context' had on the Anglo-Zambian relationship. Communications show that Thatcher calls for the proposal to be "killed with kindness" – a tacit acceptance that Kaunda's initiative requires a diplomatic rejection so as to keep the Commonwealth onside prior to the

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<sup>166</sup> 'Letter from R N Dales to Mr Fairweather: South Africa, President Kaunda's initiative' 29 June 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 2

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> 'Letter from J S Wall to Charles Powell: South Africa, President Kaunda's initiative' 30 June 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 2

upcoming CHOGM.<sup>169</sup> These anxieties are reiterated as Number 10's message is passed back down the diplomatic chain, from London all across the British outposts in the Commonwealth. Communications from the Foreign Office to a multitude of African capitals instruct High Commissions to keep their ears to the ground about the EPG idea gaining currency in the Commonwealth. One particular telegram, sent to Lagos but also forwarded to effectively every Commonwealth capital in Africa, points out "We do not wish to alienate those African leaders such as Kaunda and Obasanjo who may have a genuine role to play at a later date in bringing the various parties in South Africa to the negotiating table".<sup>170</sup> Kaunda's use of the Commonwealth context has propelled him into the position of mediatory statesman, reviving one of the key pillars that had made him such a marketable partner to the British earlier in the decade.

Demonstrative of Kaunda's return to prominence within the eyes of the British foreign office is the formal suggestion to Number 10 that he is invited to London for discussions with the Prime Minister in advance of CHOGM. This is a remarkable turn of events given that just one year prior at the height of the anti-corruption campaign, the very same officials in London dismissed the Zambian president as man making desperate moves for electoral gain.<sup>171</sup> The letter of recommendation closes with the suggestion that the meeting "could help to consolidate a better relationship between the Prime Minister and Kaunda which would be a valuable asset at CHOGM and beyond".<sup>172</sup> The recommendation that Thatcher and Kaunda meet prior to CHOGM was rejected on the basis of the Prime Minister's other commitments. Nonetheless, it shows a considerable change in the British perception of Kaunda. He was able to quickly return to the position of mediator and peace-maker, simply by triggering a British anxiety over being diplomatically outflanked within the Commonwealth.

Much of consequence can be learned from the EPG episode in 1989, both in terms of what it meant for the Anglo-Zambian relationship but also British foreign policy more broadly. During the period of a diminished bilateral relationship, Kaunda fell back on tried and tested means in order to return to prominence in the eyes of a former diplomatic partner. By falling back on international institutions – and poking at the historical British concern with Commonwealth opinion – Kaunda re-imagined the diminished relationship and revived in some senses some of the foundations which had made normalisation possible. What this shows is that continuities existed with regards to British policy toward the Commonwealth during the Thatcher years. Though it may be tempting to characterise British foreign policy in broad strokes, wherein one premiership may prioritise certain

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<sup>169</sup> 'Letter from Charles Powell to J S Wall: South Africa, President Kaunda's initiative' 3 July 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA.

<sup>170</sup> 'Telno 729: FCO to Lagos' 14 August 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 2

<sup>171</sup> 'Letter from CAD, FCO to PS of Mrs Chalker' 24 February 1988. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 2

<sup>172</sup> 'Possible call on the Prime Minister by President Kaunda – from C A K Cullimore to Mr Tomskys' 8 Aug 1989. FCO 105/3509. TNA. 4

issues over others, this is ultimately reductionist. A nuanced view at something as complex as British foreign policy demonstrates that continuities at an institutional level can persist despite changing attitudes of the executive, in such a way that still has a tangible impact on British policy at large.

## **Conclusion**

Chapter 3 has sought to illuminate how the British partnership with Zambia changed toward the latter half of the 1980s, with a view to showing how Zambia was able to fall back on multilateral support within the Commonwealth to exert pressure on the former metropole. In this pursuit it has argued that much of the foundational elements on which the partnership was built had become irrelevant or otherwise eclipsed by the end of the decade. As a result, the relationship diminished, and entered a ‘holding pattern’ best characterised by Zambia’s loss of prominence with the UK executive. Zambia was no longer able to provide the UK the stable, predictable, insider partner in southern Africa. Kaunda – a character who had been so crucial to the partnership in the first place – seemed out of touch with the political realities of Southern Africa, and his erratic attempts to quell dissent in his own country caused discomfort at every level of the British diplomatic establishment.

With a diminished bilateral relationship, Zambia returned to its historic reliance on international institutions and inter-African solidarity in order to exert pressure on the former metropole within the Commonwealth. The chapter has challenged the notion that Britain disregarded its Commonwealth connections during the Thatcher administration, a popular theme throughout much of the historiography of this period. It has demonstrated how the theme of ‘commonwealth opinion’ still continued to inform British policymakers’ views and actions, and how Zambia – in spite of the diminished relationship – was able to capitalise on this historical insecurity to reconfigure some of the characteristics of the diminished relationship. Equally for Zambia, diminished bilateral relations forced a reconfiguration of its own foreign policy, and Kaunda utilised multilateral African support within the Commonwealth in order to maximalise diplomatic pressure on the United Kingdom.

## **Conclusion – African ideas in British foreign policymaking**

British foreign policymaking toward Zambia and Southern Africa in the 1980s was demonstrably influenced by African ideas. This thesis has sought to chart a decade of Anglo-Zambian relations to explore how British officials interpreted and understood Zambian actions and ideology. In this way, it has sought to bridge the conceptual gap between ‘declining empire’ and ‘post-empire’, and illustrate how colonial attitudes changed and evolved. Throughout each of its three chapters have been reflections on how the dynamic nature of the Anglo-Zambian relationship impacted the salience of ideas the course of British policymaking. British foreign policy toward southern Africa became adaptive and even malleable to African ideas.

The thesis therefore concludes on two key observations. First, the reconsideration of Britain’s strategic position in world affairs that occurred in the latter half of the late twentieth century came in tandem with a decisive change in diplomatic attitudes toward ex-colonial territories. This change in attitudes manifested itself in the way the British diplomatic establishment were forced to contend with often-opposing African worldviews. African ideas were a salient and often potent force in bilateral relations with Zambia. Britain no-longer possessed the monopoly on ideas that it once had, and it had to engage with and interpret the ideas and actions of its new international partners in order to actualise its own diplomatic objectives. This was a new fact of life in an era where Britain’s changed international role forced it to find new ways of influence to recoup its ‘great power’ status. This observation advances pre-existing discussions on Britain’s changed international role in the late twentieth century by demonstrating the change in British doctrine toward international relations with Africa.

Secondly, despite a clearly unequal partnership, Zambia was able to demonstrate considerable agency over the former metropole via an amplification of their worldview and ideology upon the British. Zambia sought out a close relationship with Britain on its own terms, recognising the potential advantages the British could bring in actualising Zambian regional policy, such as exercising pressure over South Africa. Zambia could exploit Britain’s diminished position in world affairs and offer up its own worldview which the British were forced to interpret and respond to. Britain found particular vulnerability in the realm of international institutions, wherein Zambia could further propagate its vision among like-minded states. Ideas were a salient and powerful force that Zambia deployed in order to equalise its partnership with the former metropole.

In 1979, Kaunda was invited to London by officials who expected a wilful facilitator, an African leader who would simply actualise British policy. Doctrine remained influenced by a belief in African political innocence, and colonial mentalities persisted in the sense that foreign office officials were prepared to use economic coercion to achieve their goals. British diplomatic doctrine and strategy had to adapt, however. Britain was forced to speak the language of humanism, and engage

and interpret Kaunda's worldview and ideology in order to win him over as an equal. In the years following, the United Kingdom pursued a strategy of normalisation with Zambia, envisioning it as a helpful partner in projecting its influence in southern Africa during a time of much-diminished British influence. Zambia represented a partner that could be predictable, influential among other southern African states and informative as to British interests. British foreign policy toward Zambia was also predicated on an interpretation of Kaunda as a moderate who could actualise a moderate direction on South Africa and apartheid. Normalisation however would introduce pragmatic reasoning for a partnership with Zambia which overshadowed the salience of African ideas. It provided an arena within which Zambia and the United Kingdom could debate their opposed worldviews on the South African issue. At the closing stage of the decade, the foundations on which normalisation had been constructed came under interrogation by the British, and Zambia lost the 'seat at the table' it had achieved earlier on. Despite this diminished relationship however, British foreign policymaking was still affected by Zambian ideas. Zambia returned to a strategy of calling on inter-African support within international institutions, thereby exploiting a historic British anxiety over Commonwealth opinion to obtain a hearing from its former partner.

Any further research on this topic should begin at the United Independence Party Archives in Lusaka, Zambia. They were inaccessible to the author at the time of writing, and as such the research question's scope was limited wholly to a British perspective of affairs. For example, opening up the research question in a way which would offer insights into the Zambian perception of British ideas would offer a reverse perspective as to how colonial perceptions of the metropole from the perspective of the colonised changed and evolved.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, Kenneth Kaunda passed away in Lusaka, capital of Zambia. Kaunda had stood down in 1991, making him at the time Africa's first political leader to facilitate and respect a peaceful transfer of power. Obituaries in the British press contain mixed interpretations of Kaunda's complex legacy. He is an "idealist and visionary"<sup>173</sup> and "respected if somewhat eccentric statesman"<sup>174</sup>, with *The Times* drawing attention to his "outstanding" achievement of maintaining domestic stability in the face of hostile foreign neighbours.<sup>175</sup> Simultaneously, British obituaries also reported Zambia's emergent economic troubles, outrageous per capita debt and numerous coup attempts, all during Kaunda's 27-year tenure. Kenneth Kaunda (or KK, as he is still affectionately referred to by many in Zambia) leaves behind a complex legacy. In extending the UK's condolences,

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<sup>173</sup> Arnold, Guy. "Kenneth Kaunda: Obituary" 17 June 2021. *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/17/kenneth-kaunda-obituary>

<sup>174</sup> Smith, Harrison. "Kenneth Kaunda: President and founding father of Zambia". *The Independent*, 26 June 2021. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/kenneth-kaunda-zambia-president-africa-liberation-b1871287.html>.

<sup>175</sup> Turnley, Peter. "Kenneth Kaunda: Obituary". 17 June 2021. *The Times*, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/kenneth-kaunda-obituary-b7km9zmzz>

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab discussed Kaunda as a “defining figure in...the successful foundations of your nation, through his leadership, vision and famous mantra ‘One Zambia One Nation’.”<sup>176</sup> The British often struggled to interpret the man, prone to emotion and eccentricity as he was. Yet Kaunda was able to impress upon the former metropole a potent worldview which often conferred upon him a diplomatic advantage in a seemingly unequal relationship.

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<sup>176</sup> Press Release. “Foreign Secretary’s statement on the death of former President of Zambia Kenneth Kaunda”. 17 June 2021. Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/zambia-foreign-secretary-statement-on-the-death-of-former-president-kenneth-kaunda>

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