

The Lion and the Springbok

*Britain and South Africa
since the Boer War*

Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw



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1 The uneasy special relationship: dynamics and divergencies

Of all the regions of the world where imperial Britain sought to exert influence, none exhibited more contradictions, and therefore such intractable dilemmas and frustrations, as South Africa. Cape Colony was conquered from the Dutch in 1806 and retained in 1815 because of its strategic importance on the route to India. Control of the hinterland inevitably followed. Britain thus acquired a foreign settler community of some 40,000, who resented a more intrusive government than they were used to and doctrines of race relations which seemed to them wrong-headed. Many Boers trekked into the interior from the 1830s, determined to assert their right to a quiet sweet life (*lekke lewe*) of their own choosing, free from interference, and to preserve what they regarded as 'proper relations between master and servant'.¹ The fundamental constitution (*grondwet*) of the South African Republic (Transvaal) made their intransigent Bantu policy all too plain (clause 9): 'The people will admit no equalising (*gelijkstelling*) between the white and coloured inhabitants whether in church or state' (February 1858). It was not simply that the Boers would not accept or admit black *equality* (for which the word would have been *gelijkheid*), but, more uncompromisingly, no assimilation, no *making equal* or *treating as if equal*.² Treks enormously enlarged the area of contact and potential conflict on the highveld with spirited and sometimes highly mobile African chiefdoms determined to resist subjection. In 1879 at Isandhlwana the Zulu inflicted humiliating defeat on a contingent of the British army, although the Zulu were unable to prevent the destruction of their kingdom. The threat of a major African uprising thereafter loomed ominously in the background and further complicated relations between barely compatible white communities. Africans were seen overwhelmingly as 'the Other', but despite this some Africans sought imperial support or protection against local oppression.

Although British settlers had arrived in the Eastern Cape in 1820, South African conditions were not attractive to emigrants in the decades which

¹ G. M. Theal, *History of South Africa, from 1828 to 1846* (London, 1904), pp. 266–7 for manifesto of Piet Retief, 22 Jan. 1837; for the latest account, N. Etherington, *The Great Treks: the transformation of Southern Africa, 1815–1854* (London, 2001).

² P. Mason, *An essay on racial tension* (London, 1954), p. 85.

followed. Until the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886, South Africa's economic future looked bleak, and even the maintenance of viable European-style states in the interior was in doubt. British policy-makers were always perplexed as to what to do. Withdrawal without first providing some sort of collaborative structure (perhaps through federation) would imperil strategic and humanitarian interests. Gladstone came to the conclusion that South Africa was an insoluble problem. In these circumstances, it is hard not to accept the validity of Jan Smuts's critique of British rule and intervention in South Africa as a perfidious record of duplicity and fraud, violence and vacillation, by an alien, remote, and, in its 'native policy', quite possibly hypocritical government, a record which he summed up in the title of his polemic as *A century of wrong* (1899). Many well-informed English observers agreed with him: men like the Anglican archdeacon Augustus Wirgman, who described the British handling of the Transvaal as 'a series of miserable blunderings and tactless ineptitudes'.³ There were in fact five formal changes in British relations with the Transvaal in a little over fifty years (six if you include an adjustment made in 1884): recognised as independent in 1852; annexed in 1877 (as a prelude to a projected federal reconstruction of South African states); self-government restored (subject to a notoriously undefined British 'suzerainty') in 1881; annexed again in wartime, 1900; responsible self-government restored again in 1906. Similar patterns of maddening uncertainty can be traced, for example, in relations with the African kingdom of Basutoland, of particular concern to the neighbouring Orange Free State: protection status refused in 1866; granted in 1868, transferred to the Cape government in 1871; resumed in 1884.

British and Boer communities had always sat uneasily together. In 1880 the British blundered into a Transvaal war, and in 1881 the Boers defeated them at the battle of Majuba Hill ('the hill of the doves', beautifully onomatopoeic), and forever thereafter taunted their opponents about it. Relations got worse as the mineral revolution brought in more money-making British immigrants. These thrusting Uitlanders (outsiders, denied the vote), who created Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand mines, gave deep offence to highly conservative, religious Boers, 'whose standards could not be measured by those of Birmingham or Threadneedle Street'.⁴ The Boers were essentially unsophisticated Calvinist farmers, who had few schools and no higher education as yet. President Kruger refused to allow postal pillar-boxes in Pretoria on the grounds that town-dwellers should not have facilities denied to those in rural areas – an attitude the British found incomprehensible. Boer trust in imperial government was irretrievably

³ A. T. Wirgman, *Storm and sunshine in South Africa, with some personal and historical reminiscences* (London, 1922), p. 79.

⁴ C. W. de Kiewiet, *The anatomy of South African misery* (Oxford, 1956), pp. 10–11, 24.

destroyed by the Jameson Raid of 1895 (an ill-considered incursion into the Transvaal meant to spark off an uprising against Kruger's regime), and the cover-up which followed it.

A land with such a complex history of interaction between Black, Coloured, and Indian communities, and two diverse white groups, was never going to be free of controversial historical interpretation, not least in its external relations with the British overlord, six thousand miles away. And so we begin with an analysis of the modern historiography, and the ways in which this can be challenged.

I

Historiographical approaches

Since the 1960s, the dominant revisionist historiography has written an overall economic determinism (and several varieties of Marxism) into South African history. The distinctiveness of twentieth-century South Africa has been attributed by one of its leading historians to the 'imperatives of South Africa's capitalist development', to a history dominated 'to a very large extent' by the history of mining; and we are invited to believe that 'gold linked South Africa to the British empire'.⁵ The fundamental tenet of this type of approach is that British policy towards South Africa was mainly directed to the formation and preservation of a modern industrial infrastructure, in order to maintain vital British economic interests.⁶ Even historians who do not subscribe to this version of neo-Marxist analysis are inclined to ascribe governmental action, whether British or South African, to definite material interests, and underestimate the role of non-economic motives.⁷

⁵ S. Marks, 'Southern Africa' in J. M. Brown and W. R. Louis, eds., *Oxford history of the British empire*, vol. IV (Oxford, 1999), ch. 24, pp. 547 and 550; A. Atmore and S. Marks, 'The imperial factor in South Africa', *JICH* vol. 3 (1974), pp. 105–39. Two articles, S. Marks, 'Scrambling for South Africa: a review article', *JAH* vol. 23 (1982), pp. 97–113, and S. Marks and S. Trapido, 'Lord Milner and the South African state reconsidered' in M. Twaddle, ed., *Imperialism, the state and the Third World* (London, 1992), represent a considerable retreat from the excesses of earlier formulations, as in S. Marks and S. Trapido, 'Lord Milner and the South African state', *History Workshop Journal* vol. 8 (1979), pp. 50–80, but the central contention remains the same: 'focus on the nature of the British economy'.

⁶ H. Wolpe, 'Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa, from segregation to apartheid', *Economy and Society* vol. 1 (1972), pp. 425–56, partly repr. in W. Beinart and S. Dubow, eds., *Segregation and apartheid in twentieth-century South Africa* (London and New York, 1995), ch. 3, pp. 60–90; F. Johnstone, *Class, race and gold: a study of class relations and racial discrimination in South Africa* (London, 1976).

⁷ G. R. Berridge, *Economic power in Anglo-South African diplomacy: Simonstown, Sharpeville and after* (London, 1981) and *South Africa, the colonial powers and 'African Defence': the rise and fall of a white entente, 1948–1960* (London, 1992).

To make a contribution to the challenging of these simplistic propositions is the aim of the present project. It is based on testing them against an intensive exploration of the British archival record. Once this is begun, it becomes immediately obvious that such notions bear little relation to the way governments think, or to the actual preoccupations of British policy-makers. Our alternative approach to the complex and uneasy special relationship between Britain and South Africa provides a place for the economic dimension, whilst widening the perspective to restore political, strategic, geopolitical, diplomatic, ethical, and socio-cultural considerations to their appropriate place. Thus we find ourselves taking issue with two historical approaches: (1) those which are based on economic determinism, but also those which neglect or over-play and thus misinterpret the economic dimension, and (2) those which are based on overly speculative or theory-bound work which neglects essential archive evidence and thus misinterprets the way the British government behaved. We are not attacking methodological diversity, only interpretations which are plainly wrong.

No doubt this stance makes us 'empiricist' historians, a label which is not usually employed in a complimentary sense. But while we are uncommitted to any of the grander theoretical positions, this does not mean that we have any claim to be free of presuppositions or bias. Realistically, no historian can cope simply by hoping high-mindedly to go ideologically unencumbered 'where the evidence leads', since the bits of evidence which get investigated are subjectively selected. It is a complete delusion to suppose 'that any given body of material would suggest all the concepts necessary to interpret it', and it is impossible to expect to ask only such questions as arise *out* of the evidence, since no-one can ever discover what all the evidence is.⁸ For no historians is this more true than those working on twentieth-century imperial history and international relations, where the quantity of surviving British evidence is so massive. Accordingly, all any of us can do is to put questions of our own choosing to a part of the evidence, the portion which, speculatively, seems likely to be interesting or significant. Our own particular interest is in issues of 'high policy' at the ministerial level of government, and our theoretical bias is towards a belief in 'the primacy of geopolitics', the importance of strategy and prestige in policy-making and inter-state relations.⁹

Such a position arises, of course, out of our understanding of the nature of British government – perhaps of all government. State decisions are not taken by trends, or abstract phenomena, but by a few individuals acting in very small groups. Governments – whether village elders, oligarchs, politicians, or

⁸ See the trenchant criticism of G. R. Elton's *The practice of history* by Betty Behrens, *HJ* vol. 12 (1969), pp. 190–3.

⁹ R. Hyam, 'The primacy of geopolitics: the dynamics of British imperial policy, 1763–1963', *JICH* vol. 27 (1999), pp. 27–52, repr. in R. D. King and R. W. Kilson, eds., *The statecraft of British imperialism: essays in honour of Wm. Roger Louis* (London and Portland, OR, 1999).

fighting-service chiefs, and their various advisers – are by definition elites. All elites – again, almost by definition – have their own particular ‘cosmologies’, ways of looking at the world and interpreting their responsibilities within a bureaucratic tradition. In Britain the relevant training of most government ministers for ruling an empire or playing the world stage has always been minimal. The members of the British elite, drawn in part from the aristocracy and upper classes for a long period of time, and mostly with an Oxbridge education mainly classical in emphasis, were amateurs. Many had some experience of large-scale farming and local administration, and Lord Palmerston was not alone in trusting to the simple homely principle that looking after world-wide British interests was merely a problem of estate-management writ large. Mostly this elite understood the basic principles of survival-politics, but not the economic technicalities of say, monetary policy. They were frequently disdainful of business and industrial interests, highly resistant to the attempts of pressure-groups to persuade them. Some government decisions might coincide with what commercial lobbies or mining magnates or ‘gentlemanly capitalists’ wanted, but this emphatically does not mean that they were genuinely influential, still less instrumental, in bringing those decisions about. (This point has an important bearing on the interpretations of the outbreak of war between Britain and South Africa in 1899, and we shall return to it.)

It is worth reminding ourselves that ministers of the Crown do not think in or talk the language of social science theorists, and are unlikely to know their Foucault from their Weber. It is important not to overestimate the sophistication of their decision-making. J. A. Spender, an astute and well-connected Edwardian journalist, the biographer of two prime ministers, believed that ‘the motives of politicians are few and simple, and the action they will and must take in given circumstances can nearly always be deduced with certainty by those who know the rules of the game’.¹⁰

Unfortunately Spender did not spell out what those ‘rules’ were. However, we may be sure that government is mostly about response to immediate problems rather than the implementation of preconceived or long-term plans, and in the face of crisis ministers must concentrate on the essentials. Apart from holding on to office, these are primarily concerned with protecting ‘the national interest’. This is most obviously interpreted to mean the security of the state against attack or collapse. This is the realm of ‘high politics’, the most serious preoccupation of ministers, concerning especially their relations with other states, also pursuing their own national interests. The dynamics of this rarefied world – the very essence of what constitutes international relations – are frequently driven by something called prestige. What is prestige? Harold Nicolson, a British writer and diplomat, usefully defined it as ‘power based on reputation’, an amalgam of

¹⁰ J. A. Spender, *Life, journalism and politics* (London, 1927), vol. I, p. 113.

the two, something which has to be acquired by power but can only be retained by reputation; prestige is thus more durable than power alone.¹¹ Estimates formed by rival states of another's power may determine action taken, and so all governments worry about prestige. This calculation had a particular relevance to the way the South African government evaluated whether from the mid-1950s Britain still had what Bismarck called *Bündnisfähigkeit*, the quality which makes for a worthwhile ally. And while it may at first sight seem implausible to ascribe to an Afrikaner nationalist regime any concern with international reputation, in the end they found they had to concede its imperatives in the face of sanctions and the increasing difficulties experienced in performing its desired role as a regional power (see Epilogue).

Almost all decision-making is a contested business. Advisers seldom agree. There can never be in 'the real world' any automatic application of theoretical solutions. People change their mind. Jockeying for position, personality conflicts or loyal allegiances, gut reactions and private moral belief-systems, can all modify expected outcomes. In 'the real world' the complexity of the various factors and factions to be taken into consideration make clear-cut, overwhelmingly supported conclusions difficult. Even prime ministers find themselves constrained, and with surprisingly little freedom of manoeuvre 'at the top'.¹² One of the most striking features of British Cabinet minutes is the rehearsal (seldom, alas, attributed to the individual ministers) of arguments put 'on the one hand', but 'on the other', or 'as against this'. Conclusions were often reached in the form 'the balance of advantage lies . . .'. Sometimes the Cabinet had to decide between different positions taken up by ministers advised by different government departments. Even when officials agreed, the Cabinet might reject, on strictly political grounds, what had been submitted inter-departmentally as objectively desirable. This happened in May 1950, when recommendations were made for dealing with the South-West Africa dispute at the United Nations (see chapter 7, pp. 156–7).

Ministerial understanding of South African personalities and politics relied heavily on reports from the high commissioner on the spot. When we speak of 'the British government' in respect of South African policy, the high commissioner must be understood as playing an essential role as part of that government. This is true whether we are looking at Sir Alfred Milner and the origins of the South African War, or Sir John Maud and the construction of prime minister Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech sixty years later.¹³ The extent to which

¹¹ H. Nicolson, *The meaning of prestige* (Rede Lecture, Cambridge, 1937). Compare an American secretary of state's definition: 'prestige is the shadow cast by power' (Dean Acheson, *Present at the creation: my years in the State Department*, London, 1969, p. 405).

¹² P. Hennessy, *The prime minister: the office and its holders since 1945* (London, 2000), p. 54.

¹³ For a detailed analysis of Maud's contribution to the speech, see R. Hyam and W. R. Louis, eds., *The Conservative government and the end of empire, 1957–1964* (BDEEP, London, 2000) intro., pp. xxxviii–xl.

a high commissioner might effectively influence the metropolitan government, however, depended largely on the degree of trust reposed in him. A high commissioner appointed by a previous government might be regarded with suspicion by his new political masters, and this might circumscribe his ability to carry his ideas into action. This happened with Lord Selborne from 1906 (see chapter 4). Interestingly, not a single high commissioner was 'captured' by local political society, in the way that successive governors of Kenya were seduced by the settlers; in South Africa there were no proconsular converts to apartheid. The high commissioner was essentially an intermediary, a proconsular link between metropolis and periphery. Before the Union, the high commissioner 'worked as a half-way relay station that could charge up, or scale down, the impulses transmitted in either direction'.¹⁴ Thereafter, with South Africa becoming more and more an Afrikaner state, the high commissioner's role became increasingly restricted to that of an imperial agent.

Any study of government policy must accept the 'human agency' of individuals, and not only consider carefully the input from the high commissioner, but also grapple with the detailed work of Whitehall departments. Disparaging scepticism about the value of studying 'what one clerk said to another' is to be deplored as the product of an unsound historical sense. Understanding the inwardness of a situation or policy in fact depends upon it. The power of the civil service to formulate or frustrate policy was something the National Party in South Africa after 1948 (or the African National Congress after 1994) was acutely aware of, hence the reconstruction of its senior levels. It is vital to study what policy-makers themselves thought they were trying to achieve. Anything else is but idle speculation, however clever or intellectually elegant in itself. No doubt it is tiresome (and at times boring) month after month, year after year, to make the trek to archives remote from home-base or inconveniently situated,¹⁵ to pore for hours over muddled batches of paper, disentangling rusty paper-clips from musty sheets, deciphering bottom-carbon-copies on flimsy paper, or to endure the miseries of churning the microfilm machine. For some scholars, no doubt, archival research is logistically too difficult or temperamentally uncongenial. Such must survive by their theorising, and hope to invent a concept which catches on. But history is too important to be left to the stay-at-home theorists. Intensive primary research is absolutely essential if history is not to succumb to the dangers of relying on abstract formulations, the prescriptions of theoretical models constructed around purely secondary literature. All too often theoretical analysis assumes that there is a precise set of static 'givens', when in 'the real world' all is fluid and confusing.¹⁶ On the other hand, the

¹⁴ J. Benyon, *Proconsul and paramountcy in South Africa: the High Commission, British supremacy and the sub-continent, 1806-1910* (Pietermaritzburg, 1980), p. 335.

¹⁵ An observation which applies with some force to the British Public Record Office at Kew.

¹⁶ As powerfully argued by Dan O'Meara, *Forty lost years: the apartheid state and the politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Randburg and Athens, OH, 1996), pp. 429-31.

limitations of the archives have also to be recognised. Empathy with the dilemmas of government must not result in seeing things uncritically only from the government's point of view; nor must it be supposed that the written record will yield all the answers we should like. We have accordingly devoted two chapters (12 and 13) to media opinion and the 'representation' of public attitudes. Nevertheless, in-depth archival research such as we have undertaken is the fundamental, unavoidable, unrivalled, and only safe starting-point for all sustainable historical analysis.

Economic historians have exercised a powerful grip over all branches of history since the Second World War, and nowhere has this been more true than with respect to South Africa. A suspicious and sceptical generation was perhaps bound to look to material self-interest and entrepreneurial conspiracy for explanations in history. Concurrently, too, any alternative approach to empire history through 'geopolitics' – more or less invented by a British historical geographer, Sir Halford Mackinder, in the years before the First World War – had been fatally discredited by its association with Nazi and Fascist expansionist programmes in the 1930s, in which 'geographical imperatives were used to legitimise imperialism'.¹⁷ From the vantage-point of the early twenty-first century, however, it is high time to explore the explanatory potential of 'the primacy of geopolitics'. It is no part of our purpose to replace 'economic determinism' with 'geographical determinism'. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that South Africa's history and integration into the wider world has been at least as much shaped by its geographical location as by its Transvaal gold-mines. South Africa stands at the intersection of major global sea-routes, providing a vital link in 'the routes to the east' – which is why the British went there in the first place – and it commands access to two oceans, the Atlantic and the Indian, with an unrivalled surveillance of both, and it was of increasing importance as an air-transport base. These were factors of considerable significance throughout the Cold War, which formed the background to the Afrikaner nationalist regime of 1948 to 1989.¹⁸ Moreover, control of the hinterland, far to the north, has remained a salient geopolitical theme in South African history.

Our approach is both comprehensive and unusual. Most imperial historians since 1945 have not been preoccupied with South Africa, and most historians of South Africa have paid even less attention to the British connection. One notable exception in the latter category has been Shula Marks and her collaborators. We cannot, therefore, avoid commenting upon their interpretation of the relationship between Britain and South Africa. The first thing to say is that they have never succeeded in proving one of Marks's basic original claims: that there was a historically determinant link between the demands of

¹⁷ M. Bell, R. Butlin, and M. Heffernan, eds., *Geography and imperialism, 1820–1940* (Manchester, 1995), and G. Parker, *Western geopolitical thought in the twentieth century* (London, 1985).

¹⁸ O'Meara, *Forty lost years*, p. 476.

mining magnates and British policy-making. Magnates might indeed support Sir Alfred Milner in the run-up to the South African War, but they did not in fact manipulate him. He used them, not vice versa. Both Chamberlain and Milner were antipathetic to the magnates, whose concerns they recognised were purely self-interested. They were not a monolithic group of British patriots, not a set of 'ideal prefabricated collaborators', but a cosmopolitan and heterogeneous collection, including many European Jews, who found their funds not just in Britain but throughout Western Europe. In 1906, the biggest group of twenty-six companies, known as 'Corner House' and including Wernher-Beit, held only 17 per cent of their share capital in Britain; perhaps 30 per cent was in France, and 9 per cent in Germany. Some were purely financial speculators, more interested in market operations than in gold production. Essentially they functioned as an international group of developers and speculators. The last thing the mining magnates wanted in 1899 was a war, least of all a war instigated and won by Britain. Their desire for political power was strictly limited. Their political stance was wholly unco-ordinated.¹⁹

The truth is that some sort of war might well have broken out in 1899 even if gold had never been discovered in the Transvaal in 1886.²⁰ The historic long-term causes driving the two sides apart pre-dated the discovery of gold. The war was above all a regional geopolitical conflict with international ramifications ('the estimate formed of our power and influence in our Colonies and throughout the world', as Chamberlain expressed it in 1899).²¹ These issues are examined in detail in chapter 2.

¹⁹ R. V. Kubicek, *Economic imperialism in theory and practice: the case of South African gold mining finance, 1886–1914* (Duke, NC, 1979), esp. pp. 177–204; A. A. Mawby, review of A. H. Duminy and W. R. Guest, eds., *Fitzpatrick, South African politician: selected papers, 1888–1906* (Johannesburg, 1976) in *JSAS* vol. 5 (1979), p. 257; M. Fraser and A. Jeeves, eds., *All that glittered: selected correspondence of Lionel Phillips, 1890–1924* (Cape Town, 1977); J. Butler, 'The gold mines and labour supply: a review article', *SAHJ* no. 18 (1986), pp. 93–7; R. V. Turrell, "'Finance . . . the governor of the imperial engine": Hobson and the case of Rothschild and Rhodes', *JSAS* vol. 13 (1987), pp. 417–32.

²⁰ For sound expositions of the 'role of gold' see A. Jeeves, 'Control of migratory labour in the South African gold mines in the era of Kruger and Milner', *JSAS* vol. 2 (1975), pp. 3–29; P. Richardson and J. J. Van-Helten, 'The gold mining industry of the Transvaal, 1886–1899' in P. Warwick, ed., *The South African War, 1899–1902* (London, 1980), ch. 1, pp. 18–36; and J. J. Van-Helten, 'Empire and high finance: South Africa and the international gold standard, 1890–1914', *JAH* vol. 23 (1982), pp. 529–48.

²¹ J. S. Marais, *The fall of Kruger's republic* (Oxford, 1961), p. 318. Essential reading on the origins of the war now also includes G. Cuthbertson and A. Jeeves, 'The many-sided struggle for Southern Africa, 1899–1902', *SAHJ* no. 41 (1999), pp. 2–21 (special issue: centennial perspectives on the South African War, 1899–1902); Iain R. Smith, *The origins of the South African War, 1899–1902* (London, 1996); A. N. Porter, 'The South African War (1899–1902): context and motive reconsidered', *JAH* vol. 31 (1990), pp. 43–57, and 'The South African War and the historians', *African Affairs* vol. 99 (2000), pp. 633–48; J. Butler, 'The German factor in Anglo-Transvaal relations' in P. Gifford and W. R. Louis, eds., *Britain and Germany in Africa: imperial rivalry and colonial rule* (New Haven: Yale University Press and London, 1967), pp. 179–214; N. G. Garson, 'British imperialism and the coming of the Anglo-Boer War', *South African Journal of Economics* vol. 30 (1962), pp. 140–53.

Post-war, the basic position remained the same: the British government was not mesmerised by gold, and magnates and governments were frequently at cross-purposes. The Randlords were dependent on government rather than able to dictate to it. The London government, and the Botha–Smuts elite which succeeded it in the Transvaal, both disliked the magnates, and neither was manipulated or intimidated by them. Governments might arrive at some conclusions which suited the mine-owners, but they did so by different routes. Some decisions were fundamentally against the wishes of the mining magnates, such as increases in rates and taxes, and, most important of all, the curtailment in 1907 of the importation of Chinese labour, which had come to represent some 27 per cent of the total work-force in the mines. The reasons for its suspension were exclusively ethical: the taint of slavery. The Liberal government also tackled the problem of mining monopsony, that is, the collective recruiting monopoly, the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), and for no other reason than an ideological objection to monopoly in all its forms. Nevertheless, magnates and politicians had to live together. Any government would be bound to have some working relationship with the leading industry of a country, and no South African government has ever wanted the mining industry to contract. If the British authorities up to 1910 were keen to build up mining, industrial, and commercial development, this was not an end in itself, but rather the means to a larger political objective. Milner needed to increase the revenues of growth industries, especially gold, in order to finance, as he hoped, a massive immigration of British settlers who would numerically swamp the Boers and through demography ensure British supremacy.²²

The ‘Marks-ist’ picture of Briton and Boer conspiring through and after the introduction of responsible government in the Transvaal and Orange Free State in 1906 and 1907, in an alliance of ‘maize and gold’ – enshrined as apparent orthodoxy in the *Cambridge history of Africa* – has to be rejected.²³ Trapido first suggested a commonality of interest between British Rand financiers and Boer farmers now beginning to grow maize for the export market in a big way. He postulated as an essential link in forging this alliance the granting of British government loans. Botha’s new Transvaal government received £5 million, half

²² D. Denoon, ‘The Transvaal labour crisis, 1901–1906’, *JAH* vol. 8 (1967), pp. 481–94, and ‘“Capitalist influence” and the Transvaal government during the Crown Colony period, 1900–1906’, *HJ* vol. 11 (1968), pp. 301–31, and *A grand illusion: the failure of imperial policy in the Transvaal Colony during the period of reconstruction, 1900–1905* (London, 1973); Benyon, *Proconsul and paramountcy in South Africa*, pp. 300–1; A. A. Mawby, ‘The political behaviour of the British population of the Transvaal, 1902–1907’ (PhD thesis, Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1969), and *Gold mining and politics – Johannesburg, 1900–1907: the origins of the old South Africa?* (2 vols., Lampeter, 2000).

²³ S. Trapido, ‘Landlord and tenant in a colonial economy: the Transvaal, 1880–1910’, *JSAS* vol. 5 (1978), pp. 26–58; S. Marks, ‘Southern and Central Africa, 1886–1910’ in R. Oliver and G. N. Sanderson, eds., *Cambridge history of Africa* vol. VI: 1870–1905 (Cambridge, 1985), p. 488.

of it to be used for the establishment of a Land Bank, and the rest to be used for rehabilitating farmers, and for improving public works, irrigation, and railways. Yet this is to be properly understood as a British *imperial* government alliance with Boer maize – if you wish to put it in those terms – expressly designed to break the possible link between *local* gold magnates and maize farmers. The chief British aim in making this loan – paid for by British taxpayers, not gold-mining magnates – was to release the new Transvaal government from dependence on the magnates. Without it the credit of the new Transvaal government would otherwise depend on the gold magnates and their goodwill. The British government was determined to secure for the inheritor government complete independence of action *vis-à-vis* the magnates. Nor was this without strings: the deal seems to have been that as a quid pro quo the Boer part of the bargain would be to soft-pedal its discriminatory policies towards Indians. Of course Trapido is right to say that the effect of the loan was useful in calming down the anti-Britishness of the main Afrikaner political party, Het Volk. But he appears completely to have misunderstood its purpose.²⁴

A further misreading of the evidence was made in '*Volkskapitalisme*' by Dan O'Meara, who, relying upon the work of Marks and Trapido, argued that in 1906 Smuts proposed to the head of the largest mining house an alliance with the Het Volk party, partly on the grounds that their interests were in many ways identical; and political co-operation between the wealthier farmers and the mine operators is said to have developed from this point.²⁵ But all that happened was that Smuts suggested action on a specific point: the good sense of getting a uniform labour recruiting system. The upshot was that the renegade J. B. Robinson Group rejoined the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association in January 1908. In no sense did this make Het Volk the 'willing ally of the mining industry' (Marks and Trapido).²⁶ Magnates had to make their peace with the Botha–Smuts government in 1907.²⁷ And the Act of Union in 1909 represented the entrenchment of white rural voting power (through a rural percentage variation-weighting of otherwise equal constituencies of voters), and not of mining capital. Only when in the early 1920s Smuts's South African Party absorbed the old true-blue magnates' party, the Unionist Party, can the phrase 'alliance of gold plus maize' be said to have acquired some real meaning.

A more general point may now be made. There is no necessary connection between industrialisation and racial oppression, or between white supremacy and economic growth. It is now increasingly admitted that one of the basic neo-Marxist contentions of the 1970s, that 'apartheid was functional to capitalism',

²⁴ R. Hyam, *Elgin and Churchill at the Colonial Office, 1905–1908* (London, 1968), pp. 262–8.

²⁵ D. O'Meara, '*Volkskapitalisme*': *class, capital and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934–1948* (Johannesburg & Cambridge, 1983), pp. 166 and 258 n. 4.

²⁶ Marks and Trapido, in *History Workshop Journal* (1979), p. 70.

²⁷ Butler, 'The gold mines and labour supply', *SAHJ* (1986), p. 97.

that the two were integrally linked together if not indistinguishable, was an ahistorical suggestion. We now have it on the authority of Dan O'Meara that: 'as its many critics, and indeed some of its own (and erstwhile) protagonists were quick to point out, this approach suffered from a number of theoretical deficiencies, which rendered its ability to explain the demise of apartheid more than somewhat problematic'.²⁸ It may well equally be the case that 'capitalism' is an inadequate explanation of the origin of apartheid ('apartness'). Throughout the 1950s the bulk of 'capitalists' regularly expressed opposition to apartheid policies, especially the rigid controls in the labour market; even during the black urban uprising of 1984 to 1986 the government obstinately refused the demands of major business groups to dismantle apartheid. There was nothing new in this. In fact for decades, white South African industrialists had put continual pressure on government and white workers' trades unions to be allowed to use more black labour and to get more blacks into skilled jobs. The mining magnates resisted the application of the government's so-called 'civilised labour' policy of 1924 because of what Johnstone has called its 'extreme incompatibility with profit maximisation'.²⁹ In other words, because it did not pay. Indeed the whole of the 'civilised labour' policy, the replacing of black labour with 'civilised' white workers, was part of a political rescue of the Afrikaner *volk*, the poor white *bywoners*, reversing a tendency to blurring the line between black and white at the working-class level, a policy introduced at the expense of the economy. It simply made no sense economically to have to pay white men more to do an unskilled job, such as railway portering, less well than an African had been doing it.

As for the priorities of the British government, the most recent statement from Shula Marks acknowledges that belief in the strategic importance of the Simon's Town naval base, substantial trade, and the fate of the High Commission Territories were all of 'some significance'. But: 'Far more vital to Britain's pre-eminence in the world, however, was the unimpeded flow of South African gold to the City of London, as was starkly revealed during both world wars'; it was this which made the stability of the region of 'critical concern' to Britain; trusteeship was 'not of the essence'.³⁰ This formulation completely reverses the priorities as successive British governments would have seen them. We address

²⁸ O'Meara, *Forty lost years*, pp. 424–5; the whole of O'Meara's 'Theoretical appendix: understanding politics in the apartheid state', pp. 419–89, is essential reading. M. Lipton, *Capitalism and apartheid: South Africa, 1910–1985* (Aldershot, 1986) remains a valuable guide, together with C. Saunders, *The making of the South African past: major historians on race and class* (Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1988), esp. pp. 186–91. It is to be hoped that another important statement by O'Meara will be widely noticed: 'I agree that it is essential to avoid the crude reductionism and/or economic determinism of some of the 1970s marxist writings on South Africa' (*Forty lost years*, p. 447).

²⁹ Johnstone, *Class, race and gold*, p. 71.

³⁰ Marks, in *Oxford history of the British empire*, vol. IV, p. 546.

Table 1.1. *Trade between Britain and South Africa, 1946–1961*

	British imports from S. Africa %	British exports to S. Africa %	S. African imports from Britain %	S. African exports to Britain %
1946–8	1.4	7.9	30	25
1948–58	2.3	5.7	34.2	27.5
1959–61	2.2	4.2	29.6	28.6

the particular point about gold head-on in chapter 6, and it is surely clear that it is all too easy to fantasise about the importance of gold. Trusteeship for the High Commission Territories is examined in chapters 4 and 5, and found to be, on the contrary, very much ‘of the essence’. Criticisms of the thesis in chapter 4 recently offered by Torrance are not found to be of much substance.³¹

II

The dynamics of the relationship

What were the links which tended to bind Britain and South Africa together? The most persistent were the economic connections. The general trade links are indicated in table 1.1.³²

As an export market, South Africa was important to Britain as a buyer of engineering products, motor cars, and tractors. Britain was South Africa’s chief supplier of lorries, trucks, and locomotives. South Africa was usually one of the top five export markets for Britain between 1945 and 1970, and always so until 1961. Before 1955 South Africa was regularly in second or third place. Only about 5 per cent of the total of British exports went to South Africa, however. As to imports, in 1961 South Africa supplied Britain with 10 per cent of its fruit and vegetables, 28 per cent of its wood-pulp, 15 per cent of its asbestos, and 24 per cent of its manganese ore. About a quarter of British diamond imports came from South Africa, especially the industrial variety. Gold imports accounted for 64 per cent of the total in 1960. South Africa was not only the world’s largest producer of gold, but dramatically increased her production in the 1960s, so alternative sources were harder to find. Thus although the sum total of British

³¹ D. Torrance, ‘Britain, South Africa and the High Commission Territories: an old controversy revisited’, *HJ* vol. 41 (1998), pp. 751–72.

³² D. J. Geldenhuys, ‘The effects of South Africa’s racial policy on Anglo-South African relations, 1945–1961’ (PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1977), pp. 96 and 446–7; D. Austin, *Britain and South Africa* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 151–4; F. Wilson, ‘Southern Africa’, table 6.10 in M. Crowder, ed., *Cambridge history of Africa*, vol. VIII: *c. 1940–1975* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 276.

imports from South Africa was not large – an average of about 2 per cent – they contained several items of significance.

If gold is left out of the equation, South Africa consistently ran a huge annual trade deficit with Britain. South Africa always needed to use a substantial part of its gold output to cover this deficit, in other words, to pay for its imports from Britain. This deficit averaged £58m in 1946–8, £62m in 1948–58, and £35m in 1959–61. In normal circumstances Britain would eventually have acquired and accumulated a significant proportion of South African gold production whether or not South African gold was *marketed* in the first instance in London. (This is something which has frequently not been properly understood.) Thus the *accumulation* of South African gold in London did not depend on its being shipped directly from South African ports to London. Moreover, it augmented Britain's hard currency reserve, helping Britain to sustain its own, and a large part of the world's trade on a multilateral basis. Additionally, the *flow* of South African gold through the London gold market greatly assisted the management of sterling as an international currency (see chapter 6).

South Africa received between about 7 per cent and 10 per cent of British investments, which made it as important as the USA, with only Canada and Australia more important. These investments were profitable and yielded returns above the global average return on capital. Even in 1982, 10 per cent of British direct investments were still in South Africa.³³ The figures for British capital as a percentage of the total external capital invested in South Africa were: 91 per cent in 1913, 62 per cent in 1956, and 50 per cent in 1972 (see chapter 6).

Strong economic links had their manifestations in everyday life. South African shops were full of imported British magazines and comics, goods and brand names, with local products, such as Joko tea and Baker's biscuits, very much the exception. But beyond this, there were profound cultural influences at work. As the Foreign Office briefing for the new high commissioner put it in 1963: 'more broadly the two countries, though now foreign to each other, have preserved a special relationship flowing from their historic ties and the existence of a population of British speech, descent, and in some cases nationality, who comprise some 40 per cent of the Republic's three million Europeans'.³⁴ (The percentage of British South Africans was formerly even higher: 45 per cent in 1911.) The British commanded great wealth, dominated the higher echelons of the military, and they retained very considerable influence on cultural

³³ Berridge, *Economic power in Anglo-South African diplomacy, passim*; R. Owendale, 'The South African policy of the British Labour government, 1947–1951', *International Affairs* vol. 59 (1983), pp. 41–58.

³⁴ Hyam and Louis, eds., *The Conservative government*, part 2, p. 463, document no. 463, Lord Home to Sir H. Stephenson, despatch, 28 June 1963; John Lambert, 'South African British? Or Dominion South Africans? The evolution of an identity in the 1910s and 1920s', *SAHJ* no. 43 (2000), pp. 197–222, esp. 208–11. See further below, pp. 275–7.

life and ways of doing things. Freemasonry and boy-scouting took root. Civic architecture and organisation followed British models. Parliamentary procedures stuck closely to those of Westminster. Nelson Mandela has declared that for South Africans of all backgrounds and persuasions, Britain is the country outside Africa where they felt most at home and which they could best relate to.³⁵ The English press in South Africa was much larger and more influential than the Afrikaans press. The *Cape Times*, *Natal Mercury*, and *Pretoria News* actively promoted a sense of British identity. Education was British-orientated at all levels, from primary schooling upwards, especially among black communities, until well into the 1960s. Missionary work throughout southern Africa was almost entirely the preserve of the British churches.

Sporting links were also important. The dissemination of British sports was one of the more conspicuous legacies of British rule and caught the imagination of peoples throughout the globe. Whilst some, notably soccer, became internationalised, others remained distinctively British. Rugby and cricket were in this category, though both became the 'glamour sports' of the countries which played them. Cricket became the 'sporting lingua franca of the entire Commonwealth', except in Canada.³⁶ Rugby had a narrower appeal, but conquered South Africa. The triangular rugby contests between Britain, South Africa, and New Zealand had great popular significance in those Commonwealth countries. Cricket in South Africa, as the epitome of English empire, became confined at the national level to English-speaking South Africans, although there were plenty of keen schoolboy Afrikaner cricketers, and interested Coloured and South African Indians. The black majority played mainly soccer. Rugby took off in South Africa in the 1880s, but became the Afrikaner's game, although it was played in the Eastern Cape by Coloureds and also some Africans. British teams toured South Africa in 1891, 1896, and 1903. Colonials generally from about 1900 used sport to assert their nationalistic sense of equality with and potential superiority over the old mother country. The Afrikaner choice of rugby for this purpose has a certain irony, since in Britain the 'union' rules game was firmly associated with, and for long restricted to, public-school circles. Afrikaners, however, perceived it as a 'macho' sport, responding to its required physical resilience and collective discipline. The South African rugby team beat the British in 1903, and in the United Kingdom itself in 1906, and again in 1912–13, when the name 'Springbokken' was invented for the British press – who anglicised it to Springboks. From the 1930s the Afrikaners 'co-opted rugby as part of their nationalist project' and as an expression of power in white South Africa. 'Rugby', it has been said, 'is the Afrikaner's second religion'. The

³⁵ Magdalene College Archives, P/30/2, address by Nelson Mandela on the occasion of admission to an honorary fellowship, 2 May 2001.

³⁶ Hyam and Louis, eds., *The Conservative government*, part 2, pp. 649–50, document no. 535, 'The British Legacy', CRO confidential print, 9 Aug. 1960.

Broederbond made active attempts to gain control of the game, eliminating Britons from management and administration. By the 1950s and 1960s many Springbok captains were members of the National Party and the Broederbond; and nearly all the managers were members of the latter from the 1960s.³⁷ The loss of rugby internationals, especially with the New Zealand 'All Blacks', as a result of international sanctions against the apartheid regime, was a painful deprivation, which proved to be perhaps the most powerful of the cultural influences on the decision to abandon apartheid.³⁸ Sporting links were easily reactivated after 1989.

One other common interest between British and South African governments might have been a powerful link after 1945: their mutual concern to combat global communism.³⁹ Defence co-operation to this end did indeed at one time seem to be on the cards. However, not even a shared anti-communism could deliver an active co-ordination of military and naval effort in Africa beyond South Africa's borders and territorial waters. South Africa's anti-communist laws were so bluntly and broadly drawn that they seemed to buttress apartheid. Indeed, 'communism' seemed idiomatically to be defined as anything seeking change through disturbance and disorder, and a 'communist' was anyone who had ever done so.⁴⁰ Thus it came to seem to British politicians that apartheid was itself a cause of communism's becoming attractive to African nationalists. The sub-text of Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech in February 1960 was that South Africa had become an actual liability to the West in the global east-west struggle for men's minds. The South African government urged the formation of an African Defence Organisation, but since they would not agree to countenance the arming of their Africans, the problematics of apartheid were underlined for the British government. For the British it was axiomatic that Africans should defend Africa, and it was equally obvious that a Russian invasion would come via the Middle East. South Africa's equivocal attitude towards Middle East defence was therefore another source of exasperation, giving rise to sarcastic

³⁷ D. R. Black and J. Nauright, *Rugby and the South African nation: sport, culture, politics and power in the old and new South Africas* (Manchester, 1998), pp. 1–29, 60–9, 93; P. van der Schyff, 'Lions versus SA: "The ultimate of Rugby in SA"', SARFU's *Official Guide to 1997 Tour*, pp. 104–9 ('History').

³⁸ Alongside its rugby-players and dentists, South Africa has also produced a world-class boys' choir, its international emergence being held back by sanctions. Founded in 1967, the Drakensberg Boys' Choir from KwaZulu-Natal has undertaken many international tours since 1981 (though never in Britain), singing a mixture of classical Western choral music and African music. In 1992 it was acclaimed one of the best in the world at the Triennial World Boys' Choirs Festival at Poznan in Poland, and in the following year four boy soloists took top honours in an international competition at Des Moines, Iowa, USA. In 1995 the choir sang at the opening match of the Rugby World Cup in Cape Town.

³⁹ Berridge, *South Africa, the colonial powers and 'African Defence'*, and review by P. J. Henshaw in *SAHJ* no. 30 (1994), pp. 164–7.

⁴⁰ F. Welsh, *A history of South Africa* (London, 1998), p. 444.

observations about South Africa's parochial obsession with 'hedgehogs along the Limpopo'. It had long been the case that Britain wanted South Africa's co-operation in war, but found it difficult and embarrassing to co-operate militarily in peacetime. South Africa was torn between her desire to avoid even the appearance of being a cog in the British war-machine and recognition of the need for British help. The result was that peacetime governmental co-operation between the two was largely restricted to disease control, agricultural marketing, and scientific and technical matters. Anything which signalled South Africa's involvement in political issues elsewhere in Africa was studiously avoided by British planners.⁴¹

In any analysis of the nature of British governmental concern for its relations with South Africa, the defining statement to be considered is the Cabinet memorandum of 25 September 1950, jointly agreed between the Commonwealth Relations Office, the Colonial Office, and the Foreign Office, and issued under the name of P. C. Gordon Walker, the Labour government secretary of state for Commonwealth relations. This paper set out the fundamentals of British policy as they persisted for at least the next thirty years. Echoes of it were apparent in official papers through into the 1990s. Its conclusions were endorsed by the Cabinet at a meeting on 28 September 1950, one of the most serious discussions of South African policy ever held in Whitehall and Westminster. The preservation of good relations was held to be important for four reasons. (1) From the strategic and defence point of view, the naval base at Simon's Town was of vital importance (it being assumed that the Suez Canal would be closed in war), and other South African ports were indispensable to shipping and as staging-posts for troops. The Union might also contribute military and civilian manpower and uranium, and had already contributed assistance in the Berlin airlift and Korean War. (2) South Africa was an important export market, and several hundred millions of capital were invested there; it was also of 'the utmost importance' to the viability of the sterling area to obtain a substantial part of the country's gold output. (3) The High Commission Territories 'could at any time be economically strangled by the Union Government withholding essential facilities'. (4) Britain had obligations to South Africa as a fellow-member of the Commonwealth; 40 per cent of the white population was of British stock; it was to be hoped South Africa would remain in it, even as a republic.⁴²

The Cabinet as a whole was apparently impressed mainly by the strategic argument: the importance of South Africa's support in the struggle against communism. In other words, for most ministers, South African policy had to

⁴¹ PRO, FO 371/70195, no. 37, high commissioner Sir E. Baring to secretary of state, 15 Oct. 1948; A. Seegers, *The military and the making of modern South Africa* (London, 1996).

⁴² Hyam, ed., *The Labour government and the end of empire, 1945–1951* (BDEEP, London, 1992), part 4, document nos. 429 and 431.

be attuned to the overall geopolitical imperatives of the Cold War. Maintaining the integrity and prestige of the Commonwealth itself was also a weapon in this struggle. However, the civil servants and Gordon Walker himself were principally concerned with trusteeship obligations and the protection of the High Commission Territories against South African expansionistic tendencies; equally important with maintaining some co-operation was 'containment' – preventing the spread of apartheid northwards, beyond South Africa's boundaries. It was thought that the South Africans could in theory 'march in' at any time to effect incorporation; but short of that they had a whole battery of economic sanctions they could apply, through control of the running of railways, buses, customs, currency and banking facilities, mail and telecommunications, food supplies and job opportunities. Sanctions thus applied to the three Territories would make British administration almost impossible, and maybe only at a financial cost which Britain could not pay. If that happened, the Territories would dissolve into chaos, which would then provide the ideal excuse and opportunity for South Africa to 'march in'. A gloomy scenario indeed.⁴³

These considerations formed the background to the conduct by the British government of the biggest issues of the day in its relations with Afrikanerdom: Seretse Khama (chapter 8), the disputes with the UN, including South-West Africa (chapter 7), the formation of the Central African Federation (chapter 9), and the Simon's Town Agreements (chapter 10). Consistent underlying themes run through all of them, and demonstrate that British policy was essentially an ambivalent and paradoxical mixture of containment and co-operation, a policy worked out mainly by civil servants and high commissioners, and endorsed by ministers mainly on the basis of strategic and geopolitical considerations.⁴⁴

III

The Afrikaner Nationalist perspective and identity

The inauguration of a republic in May 1961, after a referendum narrowly voted in its favour, represented the attainment of a historic Afrikaner objective, the resolution of an age-long debate about the British connection.

A sweeping and much quoted generalisation has it that white South African politics from 1910 to 1961 was essentially a debate among Afrikaners about what to do with the South African British. According to one authority, the relationship between the two white communities was in this period 'the principal

⁴³ PRO, DO 119/1172, no. 6, despatch from high commissioner to secretary of state, 8 July 1954, with memorandum, 'The transfer issue: probabilities of retaliatory measures by the Union government'.

⁴⁴ *The Labour government and the end of empire*, part 4, document no. 433, pp. 310–15, Cabinet memorandum by P. C. Gordon Walker, 16 Apr. 1951.

issue of South African politics and the chief determinant of partisan alignments'. Or, as O'Meara puts it: 'The victim mentality of Afrikaner nationalism required a demonised external enemy.' Thus appeals to the British bogeyman helped to mobilise the *volk*, and the vote for the republic (1960), reinforced by departure from the Commonwealth (1961), left a vacuum which revealed just how important this defining focus had been.⁴⁵ By 1961 the historic argument between Britain and Afrikanerdom was largely superseded – the popular generalisation runs – by an almost total preoccupation with black racial issues; and white South African politics became a debate among the whites about what to do with the blacks. Wags predicted that one day there would be a third phase: a debate among the blacks about what to do with the whites.

There is thus ample evidence of an Afrikaner preoccupation with 'the British problem'. South African perceptions of Britain are described in chapter 12. Although internal personality conflicts were vicious and endemic, sharp divisions and party splits in Afrikanerdom (fig. 1.1) often sprang from disagreements about relations with Britain. In 1914 a rebellion fundamentally divided the old South African War comrades, with Botha and Smuts in favour of supporting Britain against Germany in war, and De La Rey, Beyers, and De Wet opposed. The rebels considered entry into the war and a campaign against German South-West Africa as a great betrayal. Botha and Smuts put them down without hesitation. But a South African general election in October 1915 indicated an accelerating drift in Afrikaner allegiance into National Party ranks; and one half of all Afrikaners appeared to be opposed to the war. In 1939 prime minister J. B. M. Hertzog took his stand on neutrality, again reviving memories of the South African War: why should Britain (the only power ever to have attacked South Africa) be supported against Germany (who had shown only friendship)? Smuts opted for supporting Britain, rejecting the neutralist argument that participation was a denial of South African independence. The Union parliament divided 80:65 in favour of Smuts and war. This crisis led to the downfall of Hertzog and then his eventual brief reunion with Malan.⁴⁶ If Hertzog had preached a two-stream white development, and Smuts 'conciliation' (better regarded as a policy of using the imperial connection for the furtherance of Afrikaner ends), Malan was unequivocally for 'Suid-Afrika Eertse'. This slogan is to be understood idiomatically not simply as 'South Africa First' but as 'Afrikanerdom first and only'. The more extreme Afrikaners under Dr J. F. van Rensburg continued their flirtation with Nazi symbols and trappings.

After 1948 anti-Britishness reached new heights, and in some respects seemed to take precedence over the imperatives of implementing white

⁴⁵ N. Stultz, *Afrikaner politics in South Africa, 1934–1948* (California, 1974), p. 2; O'Meara, *Forty lost years*, p. 476.

⁴⁶ T. R. H. Davenport, 'The South African rebellion, 1914', *English Historical Review* vol. 78 (1963), pp. 73–94, and *South Africa, a modern history* (4th edn, London, 1991), pp. 295–7.

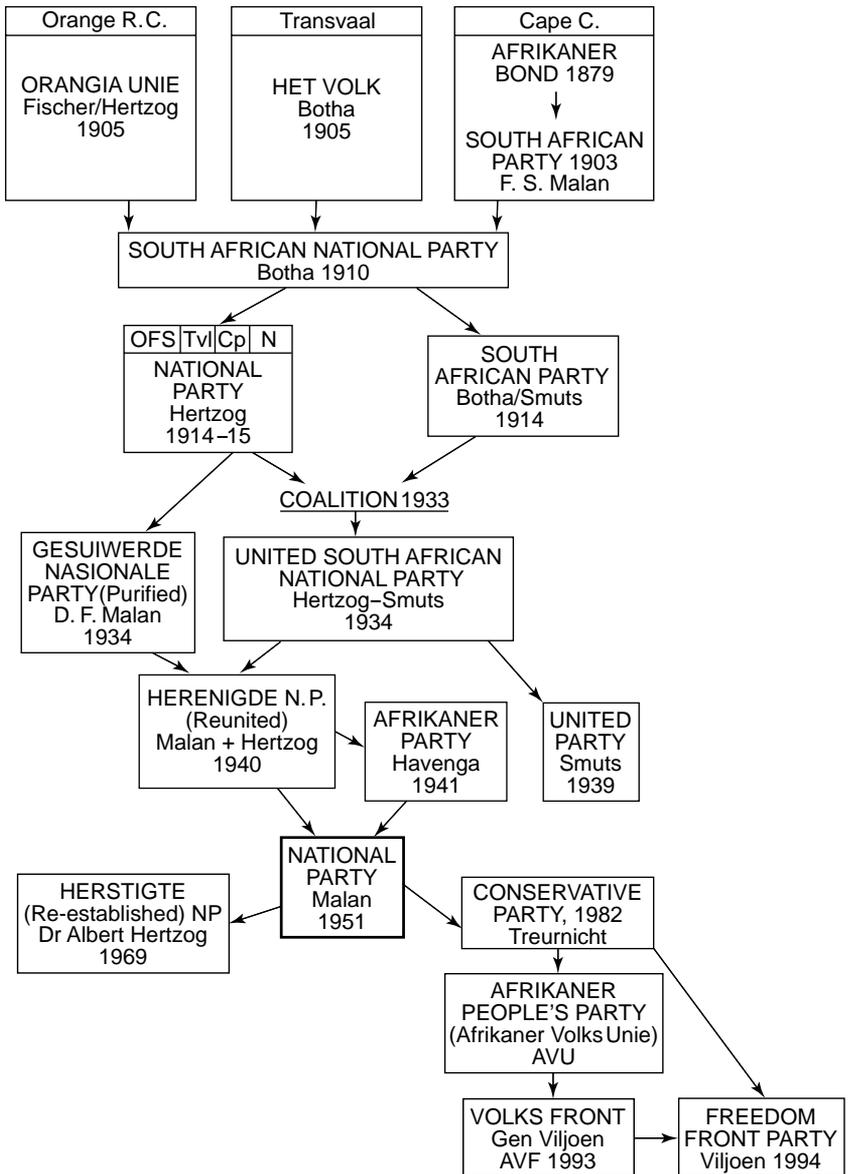


Fig. 1.1 The evolution of Afrikaner political parties.

supremacy. This can be seen in the curtailment of immigrants from Britain, whose numbers plummeted from 25,513 in 1948 to 5,094 in 1950, and further declined to 3,782 in 1959, a mere fifth of the total. By 1960 there was a net loss of 2,823 whites from South Africa.⁴⁷ And this at a time when the priority might have been building up the size of the white community. Getting rid of 'the British connection' was the object of the republican movement. The referendum produced a turn-out of 91 per cent. It demonstrated overwhelming Afrikaner support, even if the actual overall majority was only 52 per cent. Like apartheid itself, perhaps, republicanism was designed in part to produce a greater harmony in a white society rent by conflict.⁴⁸

The departure from the Commonwealth did not mean the removal of the British problem. The response of Britain to deepening apartheid, to the implementation of 'grand apartheid' through bantustans or African homelands, and to international calls for sanctions against South Africa, meant that Afrikaners were still compelled to take an attitude towards British 'interference'. This is the subject of chapters 12 and 13.

So, clearly, the debate about the British connection mattered. But from at least the mid-1920s, there were in fact two great simultaneous debates in South African politics, not one: the debate among Afrikaners about what to do with the British, certainly, but also the debate among whites about what to do with the blacks. The two debates interlocked and complicated the situation, embittering it in a fateful way. For example, although the hugely divisive and acrimonious dispute about adopting a new national flag (1926 to 1928) – the most prominent issue of the 1920s – might at first sight look like a straightforward intra-white debate, the wider implications became apparent when Afrikaners started burning the Union flag at public demonstrations, providing a potentially dangerous precedent for black protest.⁴⁹ Conversely, the removal of Cape African voters from the common-roll franchise in 1936 – the most significant event of the 1930s – which at first sight seems a simple black/white issue, was probably intended by Hertzog to deal with a white/white problem, by eliminating some 14,000 pro-British voters. The Cape Afrikaners had never accepted the Cape African franchise, resented as 'an incubus saddled upon [them as] a subject people' in 1853 and preserved in the Act of

⁴⁷ Geldenhuys, 'The effects of South Africa's racial policy on Anglo-South African relations', pp. 146–7, 337; J. Barber, *South Africa's foreign policy, 1945–1970* (Oxford, 1973), p. 51; H. Brotz, *The politics of South Africa: democracy and racial diversity* (Oxford, 1977), p. 78; F. G. Brownell, *British immigration to South Africa, 1946–1970, Argief-Jaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis/Archives Yearbook*, 48th year, vol. I (Pretoria, 1985), pp. 1–192; S. A. Peberdy, 'Selecting immigrants: nationalism and national identity in South Africa's immigration policies, 1910 to 1998' (PhD thesis, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, 1999).

⁴⁸ A. W. Stadler, 'The Afrikaner in opposition, 1910–1948', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* vol. 7 (1969), p. 209; O'Meara, *Forty lost years*, pp. 105–9.

⁴⁹ H. Saker, *The South African flag controversy* (Oxford, 1980).