



Daniel Mark Hunt
Oriel College

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Contents

- i. Short abstract
- ii. Extended abstract
- iii. Abbreviations and acronyms
- iv. Acknowledgements

1. Introduction	pp. 11-47
2. 'Greater Britain' in Rhodes' Theory and Practice	pp. 48-99
3. Theory and Practice in South Africa	pp. 100-139
4. Party Politics in Britain	pp. 140-189
5. Company Lobbying	pp. 190-249
6. Conclusion	pp. 250-263
7. Bibliography	pp. 264-285

i. Short Abstract

This study asks how and why and to what effect Cecil Rhodes operated in British imperial politics from around his formal entry into politics in 1880 to his death in 1902. It shows that Rhodes used a network of ideologically coherent lobbyists operating mainly in London, but also from South Africa, to influence British imperial policy in Westminster and Whitehall; it examines the techniques that he and this group deployed, including in relation to the press. A detailed analysis of Rhodes' role in British imperial politics has not yet been undertaken, a gap in the historiography which this study rectifies. Rhodes is positioned as a case study for how settler states and their leaders related to Britain as the centre of imperial power and decision making and shows that Rhodes envisaged a closer constitutional arrangement for the British Empire, based on the principles of 'Greater Britain'. This brings new emphasis to the political exchange between London and the settler states which has been explored less by the British world school in recent decades than other areas such as culture, identity and migration. 'Greater Britain' is used as an interpretive framework for the analysis of the period and its practical counterpart 'imperial federalism' is placed in the mainstream of British political debate. I suggest that imperial federalism was closely related to the issue of British unionism, and therefore Irish nationalism, highlighting the presence of unionists, whose careers had been affected by Home Rule, in and around the movement for imperial federation – which shows the importance of Ireland to Rhodes' career and to British imperial politics more widely during the period.

ii. Extended Abstract

This study asks how and why and to what effect Cecil Rhodes operated in British imperial politics from the point of his entry into politics from around 1880 to his death in 1902.

Rhodes used a network of ideologically coherent lobbyists operating mainly in London, but also from South Africa, to influence British imperial policy in Westminster and Whitehall; this study examines the techniques that he and this group deployed, including in relation to the press. The duality of Rhodes' political world, whereby his *imperial* agenda often facilitated his *colonial* activities in business and politics and *vice versa*, has distracted historiographical attention from his career in British imperial politics. There is a vast historiography relating to Rhodes, including the occupation and administration of Rhodesia, the Jameson Raid and the South African War, but a detailed analysis of Rhodes' role in British imperial politics has not yet been undertaken. This study attempts to fill that historiographical gap.

Recent historiography has shown the complex relationship between Britain and the settler states of the wider British world. This study argues that Rhodes' engagement with the imperial government, its systems and bureaucracy, reveals Greater Britain as a coherent political unit during the period. This is supported by the political exchange between the Anglophone settler states and Britain, whereby settler state politics were heavily influenced by the political culture, trends in policy, and ideological groupings in Britain itself. Greater Britain is used as an interpretive framework to show the saliency of Ireland and the related political concepts of unionism and federalism in colonial affairs in the settler states. The United States' role as an antagonist to the British Empire and its status as a rising economic and trading power is considered, including the McKinley Tariff which was engineered to

displace British trade. The imperial anxiety about decline and disintegration is linked to the rise of the United States, as well as Home Rule and a sense of insecurity in settler states that resulted from Gladstone's parsimony in defence policy. Rhodes sought to arrest this trend through a proposal for imperial unity based on imperial federalism. By highlighting these factors, this study links events on the imperial periphery, where the British Empire was expanding, to events in the British Isles, where the British Empire was contracting. This is an original adaptation of ideas that have been developed by members of the British world school.¹

There are a number of tools deployed to illuminate the ways Rhodes influenced British imperial policy. Throughout this study, Rhodes' activity in the *colonial* and *imperial* settings is differentiated. This formulation categorises *colonial* activity as political and sub-imperial activity mainly in and around the Cape Colony, including Rhodes' collaboration with, and lobbying of, High Commissioners. Conversely, it categorises *imperial* activity as initiatives that contributed to policy that affected the empire as a whole, rather than only the Cape and its surrounding territories directly. The latter category is concerned with ideas connected with nationalism, imperial federalism, trade policy and geopolitical considerations relating to the future of the Anglosphere, all of which affected sub-imperial politics but would not have existed independently of Greater Britain. *Colonial* and *imperial* activity are not restricted to the geographical confines of either the Cape or Britain respectively; some *colonial* activity took place in London, for instance press activity related to Bechuanaland, and likewise *imperial* activity occurred in southern Africa, such as Rhodes' insertion of tariff provisions into the British South Africa Company charter. These general categorisations are used by a

¹ For instance, see: David Armitage, "Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?", *The American Historical Review*, 104/2 (1999), p. 442.

wide range of recent scholars but this study codifies each category to help dissect the types of political activity with which Rhodes was concerned.²

The network of influence that Rhodes created to shape British imperial policy was defined crucially by ideological common cause. Its members were Liberal Unionists, whose careers had been shaped by Home Rule; Irish Parliamentary Party imperialists, who were opportunistic politically but equally committed to their cause; members of the high aristocracy, who were implacably opposed to decline and disintegration; and journalists who were personally more devoted to Rhodes than any cause. This meant that in practice their ideologically driven goals were primary and thus the individual measures to achieve those goals were secondary. This meant, for instance, that Africans played multiple roles in the course of policy and in Rhodes' political career. This was a function of his approach to business and politics that was compromising in contrast to his often-uncompromising rhetoric. To analyse Rhodes' behaviour and motives we introduce the dichotomy of *ideological strategist* and *non-ideological tactician*. This draws a distinction between Rhodes' overriding ideological ambitions, for instance an expanded British-dominated settler society in southern Africa, and tactical decisions that took him incrementally towards that aim, such as making treaties with African states which involved arming and training their militaries, even though this could have strengthened a future antagonist to the British-dominated settler society he aimed to create (which is discussed in chapters 3 and 5). This framework reveals the multiple roles that the same or similar groups occupied in Rhodes' thinking, in different contexts; for instance, Africans were geopolitical actors in central

² *Colonial* activity includes colonial politics and alliances with the Bond and British settler interests, the sub-imperial activities of the Cape Colony on its periphery in, for instance, Griqualand West and Bechuanaland, economic concerns relating to the expansion of the mining industry; *imperial* activity includes ideas about the future of policy in the British Empire including tariff and trade policy, constitutional policy, the implications of nationalism across the British world and imperial federalism.

Africa during expansion and either enfranchised or disenfranchised as was politically expedient in Cape Colony politics (which is discussed in chapter 5). This formulation shows that despite being an ideological actor, Rhodes' tactical approach to business and politics was inherently non-ideological. In other words, Rhodes would sanction tactical action that was ideologically inconsistent with his aims if it took his strategic aims forward. His relationship with Charles Stewart Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary Party typifies this point (which is expanded upon in chapter 4).

Parnell's role in Rhodes' career has received limited scholarly attention, despite the link being discussed in the press sporadically in recent years. Rhodes sought to use Irish nationalism to strengthen rather than weaken the British Empire in a novel way by using it as a pretext or 'stalking horse' for imperial federation. This approach, unique amongst settler state politicians, stemmed from his experience of colonial South Africa and its combination of potent nationalism and British democratic institutions, which had, despite the obvious tensions, enabled imperial expansion. Imperial federalism – Greater Britain's constitutional counterpart – was in the mainstream of British political debate during the period (as is discussed in chapter 2). The failure of the idea to take a constitutional shape involving shared parliamentary structures was related to constitutional reform in the settler states, the refusal of Britain's political leaders to engage with the policy, and the Home Rule debate that dominated British, and influenced imperial, politics during the period (which is discussed in chapter 4). Yet the network that Rhodes used to influence imperial policy was defined by the debates about nationalism concerning the union and Ireland, which characterised nineteenth century British politics. Rhodes saw himself as the catalyst for imperial rebirth and Home Rule was both a stalking horse to assess the political will for imperial federation in Britain and beyond in the settler states and a test case for the problems that a wider imperial

parliamentary union might have encountered. It had the tactical advantage of enhancing his influence in British imperial politics by giving the impression of power and reach. It is argued here that imperial federalism was closely related to the issue of British unionism, and therefore Irish nationalism, highlighting the presence of unionists whose careers had been affected by Home Rule in and around the movement for imperial federalism, and in so doing it shows the importance of Ireland to Rhodes' career, and to British imperial politics, more widely.

Rhodes personified John Darwin's 'bridgehead' through his use of the Cape Colony as an instrument for imperial expansion.³ But at the same time, he was archetypal of a reverse process of 'recolonization' between the settler states and Britain.⁴ This is demonstrated by his ideas about the future of Greater Britain, regarding imperial federalism, trade policy, the geopolitical role of the United States, and approaches to imperial identities and nascent nationalism. Rhodes sought to arrest trends that developed from these factors which were pronounced in Britain's settler states due to contested loyalties and shared identities. This thesis positions Rhodes as a case study for how settler states and their leaders related to Britain as the centre of imperial power and decision making and shows that Rhodes envisaged a closer constitutional arrangement for the British Empire, based on the principles of 'Greater Britain'.

³ Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c.1850–1914* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 23.

⁴ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld, 1783-1939* (Oxford, 2009), p. 180.

iii. Abbreviations and acronyms

BSAC – British South Africa Company

IFL – Imperial Federation League

IPP – Irish Parliamentary Party

MFC – Morrogh Family Collection

Parl. Debs – Parliamentary Debates

Parl. Paps – Parliamentary Papers

PMG – Pall Mall Gazette

RoR – Review of Reviews

SAL – South African League

iv. Acknowledgements

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

Purpose of study

This study seeks to understand the role that Cecil Rhodes played in British imperial politics during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. This is more complicated than it has often been supposed because, as this study shows, Rhodes both publicly and privately orchestrated a network of lobbyists and supporters who were engaged in influencing public policy in Britain on his behalf. The nature of British imperial politics itself is a complicating factor because it encompasses not only activities at the centre of imperial power in London but also in the settler states where bridgeheads were operating across the British world, manipulating British imperial policy for sub-imperial purposes.

¹ Rhodes was also an active presence in public discourse in the leading newspapers of the day both as a subject of news and comment and as a publicist and manipulator of news and his own public image. An imperial press system had been enabled by a technological revolution in undersea cables, which facilitated intercontinental information exchange across the British world, which was accompanied by cultural and economic exchange between Britain and its settler states. It has been argued that ‘constructive imperialists’ lobbied the British government to intervene to shape the imperial press system into a more ‘efficient medium of imperial mass communication’ in the years between the South African War and the First World War.² Despite support for some intra-imperial press formation, Rhodes did not take this approach. Rather, he used the press as a tool for

¹ John Darwin, "Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion", *The English Historical Review* 112/447 (1997), pp. 629-30.

² Simon J. Potter, *News and the British World: The Emergence of an Imperial Press System, 1876-1922* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 2-9.

achieving political advantage in Britain and South Africa³ and to promote his own vision of imperial unity. This study places Rhodes at the centre of political, strategic, and economic debates concerning the future of the settler states; examines how the emerging United States related to the settler states and the British Empire, and how it influenced discussions about the future constitutional shape of the British Empire during a period of rapid technological, economic and political expansion in the British world; as Rhodes said:

I believe with all the enthusiasm bred in the soul of an inventor it is not self glorification I desire but the wish to live to register my patent for the benefit of those whom I think are the greatest people the world has ever seen but whose fault is that they do not know their strength their greatness and their destiny and who are wasting their time on their minor local matters, but being asleep, do not know that through the invention of steam and electricity and in view of their enormous increase they must now be trained to view the world as a whole and not only consider the social questions of the British Isles.⁴

As Rhodes suggested here to the journalist W. T. Stead in 1891, his political career was designed to enhance the ‘greatness’ and enable the global ‘destiny’ of Britain. This study shows how this perspective shaped the network around him and thus his engagement with the British government in London, political parties and politicians. Rhodes was committed to the idea of Greater Britain and its practical counterpart, imperial federalism; but the chapters that follow argue that imperial federation was always an unlikely constitutional outcome because of the internal processes of unionism and federation that were taking place within the settler states, as well as the nature of the individual settler states themselves, and the priorities of successive imperial governments in London.⁵ These processes are resonant of the political and constitutional processes that led to the union of

³ The term ‘South Africa’ is used throughout this study to refer to the area covering the contemporary states, colonies and territories that comprised pre-federation South Africa.

⁴ Rhodes to Stead (14 August 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 140.

⁵ The term was coined by Sir Charles Dilke in Charles Dilke, *Greater Britain: a Record of Travel in English-speaking Countries During 1866 and 1867* (London, 1869); and further popularised by Sir John Seeley in J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London, 1895).

Great Britain and Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and have according conceptual linkages, as we shall see.

There was an asymmetry in settler state constitutional development. Canada unified and adopted a federal system in 1867, which put it politically ahead of the other settler states, with Australia federating in 1901, New Zealand going its own way rather than joining with Australia but acceding to dominion status in 1907, and South Africa adopting the union in 1910. The United States, which occupied an antagonistic position to Britain in imperial trade, economic and diplomatic affairs, had reached the same position in 1789 and by the end of the nineteenth century was vying with Britain for economic pre-eminence, as the McKinley Tariff implies.⁶ Views about the form that imperial federation might have taken differed amongst its adherents and across the British world.⁷ Pressure groups like the Imperial Federation League (IFL) did not elevate imperial federalism to the status of national importance despite the presence of senior statesmen in its membership. Debates about the form of the idea it promoted, be it a defence union, a trade area or a constitutional and parliamentary settlement, were played out amongst IFL members limiting its coherence and influence on government.⁸ The scale of the proposition was its weakness and its most prominent supporters such as the Liberal politician and former chief secretary of Ireland W.E. Forster were often preoccupied managing these conflicting positions rather than attempting to influence imperial policy.⁹ Rhodes was both a *colonial* and *imperial* actor, at once a sub-imperial politician seeking to expand beyond the

⁶ Marc-William Palen, "Protection, Federation and Union: The Global Impact of the McKinley Tariff upon the British Empire, 1890–94", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38/3 (2010), p. 396.

⁷ Michael Burgess, "Imperial Federation: Continuity and Change in British Imperial Ideas, 1869-1871", *New Zealand Journal of History*, 17/1 (1983), pp. 60-61; Ged Martin, "Empire Federalism and Imperial Parliamentary Union, 1820-1870", *The Historical Journal*, 1/1 (1973), pp. 81-84.

⁸ John Kendle, *Federal Britain: A History* (London, 2002), p. 48.

⁹ Imperial Federation League, *Report of the adjourned conference held on November 18th, 1884*, (London, 1884), p. 11.

periphery of the Cape settler state and an imperial statesman seeking to bind the empire more closely together through a combination of trade and constitutional measures. This duality of vision and purpose poses an interpretive challenge when assessing Rhodes' primary objectives because the *imperial* agenda often facilitated his *colonial* activities in business and politics. For instance, he developed a formula for imperial unity and promoted this formula as a means of achieving its stated goal, but it also served as a tactical device to increase his influence in British imperial politics. This study argues that these dual functions are indivisible, but that practical politics in the Cape meant that much more of Rhodes' time was spent on the realisation of sub-imperial aims.

Anxiety in the British world

The nature of British imperial politics, proto-democracy and economy contributed to the sense of internal anxiety which persisted throughout the century. Irish terrorism in England was a feature of the nineteenth century and frequent rebellions in northern England and Ireland demonstrated at the very least unease in certain quarters with the constitutional *status quo*.¹⁰ The prelude to the period explains some of the anxiety that occupied the minds of settler state colonists. A series of major conflicts from the middle of the century added to the sense of the impermanence of the British Empire: the Crimean War (1853-56) was a reminder of the challenge to Britain's fiscal position of protracted conflict and of its ability to destabilise the established order; the Indian Mutiny (1857) indicated the prospect of continuous wars in Asia; and the American Civil War (1861-65) disrupted trade, diverted British resources to Canada, and indicated the pivotal role that the

¹⁰ K.T. Hoppen, *Governing Hibernia: British Politicians and Ireland 1800-1921* (Oxford 2016), p. 197.

United States would increasingly play in world affairs.¹¹ The antagonism of much of the American political system, particularly the Jacksonian Democrats, to Britain's imperial world system and its corollary of international capital upon which the United States, as a debtor nation, relied, was established after this conflict.¹² There were colonial wars and rebellions within the settler states themselves: the New Zealand Wars ran from 1845-1872 and intensified in the 1860s; the Ashanti War (1863-64); a rebellion in Jamaica (1865) and the Red River Rising in Canada (1869) punctuated the 1860s. South Africa had seen perhaps the most protracted conflict of any settler colony with the Frontier Wars in the Cape running for around a century until 1879 when the British suppressed the Zulus after an initial setback at the battle of Isandlwana. When Rhodes arrived in Griqualand West in 1872 during South Africa's 'mineral revolution' it was still frontier territory and did not become a Crown Colony until 1873 or a part of the Cape Colony until 1880.¹³ 'By annexing Griqualand West in 1871, Britain gained control of the principal mines and with them a means of funding responsible government at the Cape, and the imperial government seized the opportunity to uncouple the colony from its reliance on the Treasury and to link it instead with the London money market.'¹⁴ The economic implications on labour supply led to the then colonial secretary Lord Carnarvon's drive for South African federation and the subsequent annexation of the Transvaal in 1881, which Peter Cain and Anthony Hopkins argue failed because the diamond industry could not support federation alone.¹⁵ This context meant that South African federation was far from a certainty during the period under examination. James Belich has argued convincingly

¹¹ P. J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688–2015* (Oxford, 2016), p. 418; John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire Since 1405* (London, 2007), p. 239; Burgess, "Imperial Federation", p. 64.

¹² Jay Sexton, *Debtor Diplomacy: Finance and American Foreign Relations in the Civil War Era 1837-1873* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 248-53.

¹³ Richard Reid, *History of Modern Africa: 1800 to the present* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 192-93.

¹⁴ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 345.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

that ‘the dominant interpretation’ of colonial warfare in Britain itself was influenced strongly by the expectation of victory over non-European colonial adversaries and when ‘defeat was recognized, the jarring disjuncture between event and expectation created a traumatic shock, which then had to be alleviated, mainly through the development of acceptable explanations for the disaster’.¹⁶ This led to a disconnect between reality in settler colonies and political debate and decision making in the imperial centre in London. There were contrarian voices about the empire, such as the 1865 Select Committee Report that recommended eventual British withdrawal from West Africa, which were reflections of imperial policy.¹⁷ ‘Gladstone believed that self-defence was an inescapable corollary of self-government’ and he applied the principle to New Zealand in 1869 even though ‘the colonists faced a renewal of Maori hostilities’.¹⁸ The diffuse nature of the empire and in particular the settler colonies within it, led to questions about the long-term defensibility of the British world system, leading to calls in some quarters, such as the IFL and its Canadian equivalent, for constitutional reform.¹⁹ Thus, Gladstonian principles were not only evident causes of disruption in British domestic politics, where his management of Irish affairs was one of the defining issues of British political culture during the period, they had direct implications for the security of colonists in the settler states and made imperial policy vital to individual settler interests.

Unionism in Britain was in some ways an exercise in assimilation, but it also involved significant military conflict, from the Wars of the Three Kingdoms in the seventeenth century to rebellions in Ireland and Scotland during the course of the eighteenth century.

¹⁶ James Belich, *The Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict: The Maori, the British, and the New Zealand Wars* (Montreal 1989), p. 312.

¹⁷ Burgess, “Imperial Federation”, p. 64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁹ For a discussion of Canadian imperial federalism see: *ibid.*

The process in South Africa followed a similar historical trajectory to that of Great Britain, with the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879 and two Boer Wars in 1880-81 and 1899-1902 repressing nationalist interests in favour of British hegemony and South African federation. Saul Dubow evinces the problem that was created by these processes:

The slowly emerging political arrangement between leading Afrikaner and English-speaking notables that culminated in the alliance between the Afrikaner Bond and Cecil Rhodes, marked the apogee of the Cape colonialist concordat. It was shattered by Rhodes himself, who reverted to the imperialist standard in 1895, having long presented himself as a plausible champion of colonialist interests. Patriotic colonialists were horrified at the ascendancy of militant imperialism and the power of capitalists. Yet, almost all English-speakers, and many Cape Afrikaners too, balked at supporting retrogressive Boer republicanism.²⁰

Federalism was the logical solution in South Africa due to its ethnic diversity and existing state structures. But '[t]here was neither the means nor the will to bring into effect the confederal aspirations of [federalism's adherents]. In this respect, as in so many others, the mineral revolution provided the catalyst'.²¹ As in the context of the union of England and Scotland, it took economic disruption to make the South African union plausible. In Great Britain, unionism was a hybrid version of federalism, with parliamentary representation for all components of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, complemented by representative peers in the upper house. Recently some historians have characterised 'Britishness' as a multi-ethnic identity that was forged across the British Isles during the process of unionism and argued that 'Britishness' itself constituted an ideology, which has sometimes been seen more vaguely only as a national identity.²²

Linda Colley has shown that contemporary understanding of imperial Britain was shaped by Britain's geographic and demographic size which formed an inherent anxiety about the

²⁰ Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa 1820-2000* (Oxford, 2006), p. 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

²² Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, p. 33.

empire's prospects and potential, highlighting imperial expansion and migration's draining effect on the home population. This was particularly so in the case of Britain's early American colonies.²³ Britain's 'smallness' was reflected in the settler states of the Second British Empire after the loss of America, where large territories like Canada and Australia hosted relatively tiny populations of British settlers, or territories with large indigenous populations, such as South Africa, were the host of minority British settler populations. Recent work has begun to reject the 'historiographical binaries of British "metropole" and colonial "periphery" to visualise the empire as an interconnected zone constituted by multiple points of contact and complex circuits of exchange'.²⁴ At the same time, a reverse process of 'recolonization' between settler states and Britain occurred following the industrial and communications revolutions. Instead of divergence, the Anglosphere settler societies sought to establish neo-Britains, creating a global hinterland.²⁵ Magee and Thompson argue that:

...as soon as we begin to re-imagine imperial geographies, we are faced with the tricky question of where power spatially resided. For the logic of a "networked" or "decentred" approach to studying empires is that metropole and settler colony acted and reacted upon each other in complex ways, and that sovereignty in the colonies, far from being static or stable, was subject to constant negotiation and renegotiation by a variety of settler and non-settler groups.²⁶

This study builds on this idea by demonstrating that Rhodes was active in the process of imperial renewal through his vision of reform for the empire, with its implications for British domestic policy and state structures. This helps to resolve a gap in the existing historiography that has focused on migration, culture and identity in settler states rather than the political processes and exchange that existed in the politically decentred British

²³ Linda Colley, "'This small island': Britain, size and empire", *Proc. British Academy*, cxxi (2003), p. 175.

²⁴ Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, p. 23.

²⁵ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, p. 180.

²⁶ Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, pp. 25-26.

world that Magee and Thompson describe.²⁷ ‘In the political sphere’, “Imperial Britain” was essentially “Greater Britain”, however incomplete and inadequate a construction of empire this may now seem’, and because of settler representative institutions and ethnic and cultural ties, imperial politics was to a degree an extension of British politics as opposed to the more strictly colonial approach taken in India and newer colonial acquisitions in tropical Africa.²⁸ More recently the study of the implications of networks on South African political development has been complemented by that of the empire’s impact on the ‘political culture of the modern British state’.²⁹ Yet the implications of contemporary settler state politics on British politics, and *vice versa*, has been neglected.

Rhodes’ geographic separation from the source of imperial power and authority meant that he had to devise innovative means of shaping the views of statesmen in Britain who mattered to the course of South African, settler state, and imperial affairs. Rhodes occupied a position in the public sphere that was historically novel because he was operating in the context of an emerging imperial press system; as Rhodes told W.T. Stead at their first meeting, ‘he had taken his ideas from the *Pall Mall Gazette (PMG)*, that the paper permeated South Africa, that he met it everywhere’.³⁰ His vision of imperial expansion was supported by ‘New Journalism’, epitomised by Stead, which campaigned for the empire’s ascendancy but also prophesied its fall.³¹ The anxiety typified by Salisbury in ‘Disintegration’ and encapsulated by Colley’s hypothesis of Britain’s

²⁷ For example see: Dubow, *Commonwealth of Knowledge*; A.S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back: the impact of imperialism on Britain from the mid-nineteenth century* (Harlow, 2005); Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*.

²⁸ A.S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain: the Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932* (Harlow, 2000), p. 124.

²⁹ Dubow, *Commonwealth of Knowledge*, p. 120; Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 239.

³⁰ Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead (vol. 1)* (London, 1925), p. 271.

³¹ Stead quoted Carlyle: ‘If, indeed, these fail us, and are trodden out under the unanimous torrent of hobnails, of brutish hoofs and hobnails, then, indeed, it is all ended. National death lies ahead of our once heroic England.’ in W. T. Stead, “To All English-Speaking Folk”, *Review of Reviews* [London], no. 1 (January 1890), p. 15, col. a, ProQuest (12 January 2020).

‘smallness’ explains the urgency that must have been writ large in the settler states, where the anxiety was amplified so far from Britain, with the limited physical presence of the imperial state being obvious to colonists.³² Contemporary journalism and political debate reflected this position, magnified in particular by trade policy. Rhodes was a product of, and enmeshed in, this context. David Cannadine connects this acute sense of British political anxiety, where the French Revolution, the loss of the American colonies and Napoleonic Wars represented successive existential threats to the British Empire, with constitutional continuity, which in many ways was Britain’s strength, causing a threat to the viability of the union at both ends of the nineteenth century. At the outset George III extinguished Catholic emancipation and at the close the House of Lords left Home Rule unresolved after repeatedly compromising Ireland’s position in a union that had begun to experiment with popular democracy.³³ Rhodes saw the same existential weakness in the British constitutional framework. Rhodes would use Ireland as a stalking horse to assess the political will for imperial federation and also as a test case for the problems that a wider imperial parliamentary union might encounter. Constitutional reform in Ireland with implications for the centre of imperial political power would, he hoped, propel imperial federation at the same time as demonstrating that it could be practicable. Meanwhile, Ireland occupied an important conceptual position in the imperial federation debates because the Home Rule movement was causing wider imperial strains that were convincing imperial federalists of the criticality of closer imperial union. Thus, Ireland

³² For instance, Lord Salisbury argued: ‘Napoleon was wont to say that Antwerp was a loaded pistol held to the mouth of the Thames. The coast of Ireland, in unfriendly hands, would be something more than a pistol held to the mouths of the Clyde and the Mersey and the Severn. And we must not dismiss such extreme conditions from our minds as possibilities which cannot be realized. We shall have speedily enough to choose between them and the reconquest of Ireland, if once Home Rule be granted. Any political power conceded to an Irish assembly will be made the fulcrum by which more will be exacted, until complete practical independence is secured. ... Is this always to be so, even to the end? And if so, how long can the final disintegration of the Empire be postponed.’ in Salisbury, "Disintegration", in Paul Smith (ed.), *Lord Salisbury on Politics: A Selection from his Articles in the Quarterly Review, 1860-1883*, (Cambridge, 1972), p. 335-76.

³³ David Cannadine, *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800-1906* (London, 2018), p. 343.

occupies a practical position in Rhodes' thinking as well as an emotive conceptual position for many of his supporters.

Rhodes' political activities in the metropole have been characterised as essentially self-serving, as a means of supporting his charter company.³⁴ His most recent biographer does not see Rhodes' political activity in Britain as a critical part of his ambitions in South Africa. His short commentary on Rhodes' relationship with Charles Stewart Parnell, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), concludes elliptically that 'Rhodes was using Parnell to deflect potential opposition over some as yet undeveloped policy regarding the northward expansion'.³⁵ Nor is there a clear identification anywhere in the vast array of Rhodes literature of the content and form of the network of influence that he employed to shape political opinion at the imperial centre. There is very little suggestion that there was an ideological guiding principle binding this group, rather the social importance of its members is emphasised over their views and interests.³⁶ There is substantial time devoted in the literature to his 'secret society' and his interest in Jesuitical structures yet these were hypothetical considerations during his lifetime.³⁷ In contrast, the network of lobbyists, journalists, politicians and well-placed financiers had a prominent role in simultaneously taking forward Rhodes' ambitions for imperial expansion in southern Africa and his initiatives for closer imperial union in the wider context of the British Empire and the Anglosphere.

³⁴ For instance, Robert Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 273-89; J. Flint, *Cecil Rhodes* (Boston, 1974), pp. 113-17. .

³⁵ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 231.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 279; Flint, *Rhodes*, pp. 116-17.

³⁷ For instance Rotberg, *The Founder*, pp. 234-35, 56, 82, 663, 68.

A thorough exploration of the relationship between Rhodes' career in South Africa and his activities as a sponsor of British politicians and political parties, and of his direct and tangential connections with the press and pressure groups has not yet been conducted. A corollary of this neglect has been the conclusion that Rhodes was a single-minded capitalist, as reached by J. H. Plumb in his introduction to John Flint's biography, or by Flint himself who found Rhodes 'remarkable especially for the limited capabilities of his intellect and power of self-expression, the immaturity of his philosophical views on life's meaning and purpose, and his lack of profundity in judging men and issues'.³⁸ Rhodes' judgement of men and issues was substantial enough to allow those who were better placed than himself to act on his behalf, as we shall see. Moreover, his 'limited intellect and power of self-expression' were able to capture men such as Albert Grey and Stead who were in their different ways significant public intellectuals. This study takes a more deliberated view that considers Rhodes' public life as both statesman and lobbyist, showing that Rhodes and his career embodied many of the definitive political debates of the era, which highlight the transoceanic political networks of the British world. Rhodes was at once a product of the circumstances of Greater Britain and a proponent of its structural counterpart, imperial federation. Greater Britain, as formulated by J. R. Seeley, J. A. Froude and others, had considerable appeal in Britain and the settler states and Rhodes sought to advance its agenda with the imperial government in London.³⁹ The network of influence that he constructed around him was composed of men who were supportive of this radical position.

³⁸ Flint, *Cecil Rhodes*, xviii.

³⁹ Seeley, *Expansion of England*; J. A. Froude, *Oceana: or, England and her Colonies* (London, 1886).

There is a tendency in the historiography of Rhodes, concordant with some of the accusations in the press during his lifetime, to suggest that Rhodes' sponsorship of political parties and the press meant that he purchased influence over the people and institutions that he supported, indeed that he made them dependent on him. This thesis shows that was not the case. His Liberal Party donation of £5,000 was not large enough to buy the dependency of the Liberal Party and nor would it have been permissible under Gladstone. By way of comparison Rhodes paid £25,000 per head for the freedom of the Jameson Raid conspirators.⁴⁰ Rather, Rhodes' political donations in Britain purchased goodwill and a route into the establishment, but not without implications. Merriman observed of Rhodes' donations: 'what is his object in identifying himself with the set of Irish miscreants who are trying to ruin England and break up the Empire? My heart grieves to see a man with so many fine qualities sink into a mere money grubber. He makes a mistake if he thinks the *mere* possession of money gives any power in a democracy'.⁴¹ In other areas such as the press, Rhodes was supporting journalists whose views were already aligned with his own and therefore his donations tended to push open doors, rather than act as inducements to change positions fundamentally.

Historiography

David Armitage argues that '[n]one of the major modes of English historiography in the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth had any place for the imperial enterprise. An insular history of English exceptionalism maintained a wilful amnesia about England's

⁴⁰ Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, "Rhodes, Cecil John (1853-1902)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 3 October 2013), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/35731> (15 September 2016).

⁴¹ Merriman to Currey (28 September 1887) and Merriman to Agnes Merriman (6 October 1887) in Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 232.

outlying dependencies, whether British, Irish, Continental European, or ultramarine'.⁴² He sees Greater Britain as a trend in English history that runs from England's earliest medieval imperial enterprises within the British Isles itself.⁴³ He relates the work of Seeley to that of J. G. A. Pocock, which argued for a 'Atlantic archipelago' context for a 'New British History' rather than the geographically siloed version he encountered in the 1970s, that, as Armitage put it, 'would be a history of Greater Britain as a fluid, dynamic, and interactive system', as opposed to a union based on shared ethnic origins in the British archipelago that Seeley described which accommodated some non-Europeans but not others.⁴⁴ He argues that the general separation of empire from the course of British history is fundamentally flawed and misunderstands the creation of 'Britain':

...the very formation of the British state itself, by the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707, was an event incomprehensible without its imperial context, since the compulsions that drove the Scots and the English together were cast on a global screen from the Isthmus of Panama to the Low Countries...⁴⁵

Armitage argues that the separation of 'British' and 'American' history has been unhelpful in understanding these processes and argues for the continuity of British and American history and for the recognition of 'relations of power within the early modern British Atlantic world [that] draw attention to the cultural, economic, and emotional bonds that tied inhabitants of that world together as Britons in the broadest sense... Both the extent and the limits of those relations need to be more closely defined if the full usefulness of Greater Britain as an analytical category can be realized'.⁴⁶ This study shows some examples of how the United States interacted with the British Empire and its settler states

⁴² Armitage, "Greater Britain", p. 428.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 428-29.

⁴⁴ J. G. A. Pocock, "'British History: A Plea for a New Subject'", *New Zealand Historical Journal*, 8 (1974), pp. 3-21.

⁴⁵ Armitage, "Greater Britain", p. 442.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 444.

in terms of trade, and argues that some of Rhodes' political activities and outlook were shaped by the United States' role within the British world.⁴⁷

Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher reconfigured the understanding of British imperial history by revealing what they termed 'the invisible empire of informal sway', the differing levels of control that the British imperial state levied in areas of the world that came under its influence.⁴⁸ As they put it, 'empire tended to be thought of as an auxiliary, in much the same way as the liberal state at Home. The main engine of expansion was enterprise. Its momentum was attributed to the free energies and aspirations of myriads of individual Britons in search of maximum opportunity'.⁴⁹ Whereas the 'official mind' of government policy tended towards the use of trade hegemony to achieve political influence delivered by 'diplomats with gunboats in the offing'.⁵⁰ This ex-centric view of imperial history, where interventions by London were generally designed to deliver outcomes that were other than territorial in nature, allowed new sub-imperial and pro-consular interpretations of activity on the imperial periphery. Robinson and Gallagher remain the bedrock of British imperial history and the foundational authors of the 'British world' school. The British world school has developed from this base to consider colonial identity, citizenship and belonging, which necessarily refocuses the imperial story on the 'neo-Britains' in North America, Australasia and Africa.⁵¹ However, the recent work on Greater Britain as an idea and possible explanatory framework for events that took place in

⁴⁷ Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, p. 39.

⁴⁸ R. Robinson, J. Gallagher, and A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (1961), p. 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵¹ A.S. Thompson, "The Languages of Loyalism in Southern Africa, c. 1871-1939", *The English Historical Review*, 118/477 (2003); Dubow, *Commonwealth of Knowledge*.

the British Empire during the latter decades of the nineteenth century remains undeveloped.⁵²

Cain and Hopkins' theory of 'gentlemanly capitalism' has led to debate since its formulation in the 1990s.⁵³ They argue that as the aristocracy declined it merged into a 'new gentlemanly class arising from the service sector [rather than from] the industrial bourgeoisie'.⁵⁴ They suggest that this 'gentlemanly elite had a common view of the world and how it should be ordered', even a 'degree of coherence or like-mindedness', and that this was the principal force that propelled British imperial expansion.⁵⁵ This attractive theory does not conform to the case of Rhodes, as we shall see. His network was ideological and defined not by the bonds of class and background *per se* but by an ideological framework that was not the predominant position of the age: imperial federalism. Cain and Hopkins compare Rhodes to John North, an upwardly mobile British entrepreneur in the Chilean nitrate industry, who involved himself in Chilean politics to protect his nitrate interests, whilst raising capital in London. They assert that '...North, like Rhodes, was too much of a "mushroom gentleman" to acquire significant influence in top circles in the City'. Missionaries were from 'established gentry families and from the professional classes', rather than 'proto-gentlemen' as they deemed North and Rhodes to be.⁵⁶ Yet at the same time, they said British 'entrepreneurs who descended on Africa carried the gentlemanly code with them. They saw themselves as being Christian knights engaged in a civilising mission and performing a patriotic duty, which in turn expressed

⁵² Saul Dubow, "How British was the British World? The Case of South Africa", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37/1 (2009).

⁵³ For instance, see a discussion of Cain and Hopkins' 'gentlemanly capitalism' in: Raymond E. Dumett (ed.), *Gentlemanly capitalism and British imperialism: the new debate on empire*, (London, 1999).

⁵⁴ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 125.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 287, p. 336.

their loyalty to the crown – and hence the acceptance of the social order it represented'.⁵⁷

Figures like Rhodes seem to sit outside of this theory, as not products or part of 'gentlemanly capitalism', but its 'colonial agents'.⁵⁸ This underplays the role that Rhodes had in shaping imperial policy in southern Africa and in Britain, and it does not adequately consider political and geopolitical factors such as the presence of competing European powers in southern Africa or the rise of the Transvaal.

John Darwin's conception of the imperial 'bridgehead' is a more sophisticated formulation than 'colonial agent' with roots in Robinson and Gallagher. Darwin argues that 'sub-imperialist tycoons like Rhodes were able to manipulate circumstances in the metropole and the colonial context through the 'tactics, opportunities, needs and discretion of local agents':

The bridgehead was the hinge or 'interface' between the metropole and a local periphery. It was the transmission shaft of imperialism and the recruiting sergeant of collaborators. It might be a commercial, settler, missionary or proconsular presence or a combination of all four. It might be a decaying factory on a torrid coast or, at its grandest, the 'Company Bahadur'. Whether British influence grew, or was transformed into formal or informal empire, largely depended upon the circumstances and performance of the bridgehead. How skilfully did it exploit the political, economic or ecological characteristics of its host environment? How efficiently could it transmit the power of the metropole into its periphery? Could it attract, or pay for, substantial European manpower - so often the means of winning local domination? How effectively could it command by coercion or collaboration, the local political resources required to fashion a responsive political economy? How quickly could it build a local political "infrastructure" as a vehicle for further injections of force or influence from the metropole? How dependent was it on the short-term swings of policy endemic in parliamentary government? How effectively could it lobby for military, financial or diplomatic assistance?⁵⁹

Darwin's formulation refers primarily to entities such as companies or missionary groups but for the purposes of this thesis the term 'bridgehead' will be extended to include

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 336.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 346.

⁵⁹ Darwin, "Imperialism and the Victorians", pp. 629-30.

individuals because of Rhodes' prime mover characteristics in British imperialism in South Africa. There were multiple types of 'bridgehead' and the context of South Africa was particularly apt for a number of these types to interact with one another. For instance, capitalists, missionaries and pro-consuls had different objectives in the same territorial area. Rhodes is the archetype but figures like the missionary John Mackenzie in Bechuanaland and Sir Henry Hamilton Johnson, British Consul in the Shire Highlands, were others operating in southern Africa during the period. Such figures, particularly missionaries, had their own networks and pressure group support in Britain, and represented a separate paradigm of imperialism from Rhodes.⁶⁰ The combination of South Africa's proximity to uncolonised areas of Africa and the complex nature of South African society – the variety of ethnic groups, interconnected but historically and culturally unrelated state structures for instance – made this settler state particularly susceptible to a sophisticated 'bridgehead' that could operate across the empire and within Cape politics and business simultaneously.

At one extreme, a bridgehead which captured a revenue system, possessed its own army and mustered a powerful lobby could expand with little regard for wider metropolitan opinion. At another, military weakness and financial penury made survival, let alone expansion, dependent on rhetoric in a remote assembly. In a third case, a commercial bridgehead with no means of exerting any systematic political influence or of exploiting any available form of metropolitan intervention, accommodated itself to local society and merely occupied a favoured commercial and cultural niche within it. With the prolific creation of new bridgeheads and the reinforcement of old, it was little wonder that mid-Victorian governments displayed such ambivalence about the new liabilities that they seemed likely to load upon them.⁶¹

Rhodes, through the chartered British South Africa Company (BSAC), acquired a revenue system from concession sales, an army – the British South Africa Company Police – and

⁶⁰ Anthony J. Dachs, "Missionary Imperialism - The Case of Bechuanaland", *The Journal of African History*, 13/4 (1972), pp. 653-54.

⁶¹ Darwin, "Imperialism and the Victorians", pp. 629-30.

deployed a powerful lobby in both the *colonial* and *imperial* contexts, as we shall see. As Darwin suggests, the imperial government was conceivably subject to the influence of multiple bridgeheads at once on a single issue, thus necessitating sophisticated lobbying operations to exert ‘systemic political influence’.

In South Africa, Rhodes was operating in a complex settler state environment involving a variety of groups with a spectrum of loyalties and interests. Colonial nationalism in the Cape went beyond the Afrikaner nationalism of the Bond, the Boer party in the Cape Assembly led by Jan Hofmeyr. Keith Hancock showed how ‘a wider pan-British identity could be reconciled with separate statehood’, and argued that settler state nationalism did not preclude a sense of imperial community, which could be mutually reinforcing.⁶²

Darwin has more recently suggested that these trends continued into the mid-twentieth century.⁶³ Pro-imperial sentiments amongst non-British groups, such as the Boers has been emphasised by Mordechai Tamarkin.⁶⁴ ‘To understand the ideological outlook and political behaviour of Cape Afrikaners in the late nineteenth century, it is vital to comprehend the process of their integration and socialisation into the British imperial and colonial world.’ Tamarkin argues that it was these processes, which have some similarities, if not absolute uniformity, across the settler states, ‘which shaped, from a Cape Afrikaner perspective, the common ground and ripened them for the alliance with Rhodes’.⁶⁵ The challenge for the Afrikaners was to achieve their aims, such as influence over ‘native’ affairs, within the framework of the empire, which required an alliance with a

⁶² Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, p. 32.

⁶³ John Darwin, "A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics: The Twentieth Century", in W. R. Louis and J. Brown (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. iv (Oxford, 1999), pp. 64-87.

⁶⁴ Mordechai Tamarkin, *Cecil Rhodes and the Cape Afrikaners: The Imperial Colossus and the Colonial Parish Pump* (London, 1996), p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

suitable colonial politician who was an ideological step removed from the Cape's British liberal tradition or tactically dexterous enough to straddle both camps.⁶⁶ Andrew Thompson has shown that there were different varieties of South African loyalism during the period and that there was a distinction between loyalty to the British government, *ergo* British policy or 'Downing Street' as he put it, and loyalty to Britain as an idea or cultural identifier. The complexities of South Africa's experience in the twentieth century have led historians to put the various communities 'in neat and tidy categories of ethnicity, and thereby essentializ[e] "Britishness"'.⁶⁷ Yet there were different types of loyalty to 'Crown and Empire' from outside the British settler elite, based on cultural, ethnic, ideological affinity or a sense that only the empire could guarantee their security. Loyalism 'was socially diverse, highly regionalized and multi-ethnic; a phenomenon upon which no one section of South African society could ever claim a complete monopoly, but which was to play a powerful role in shaping the world views of many South Africans not just during, but well before and well after the South African War'. Regionalism characterised the South African experience and Thompson argues that this was demonstrated by 'Rhodes's appreciation of the Cape colonists' desire to be the 'dominant state in South Africa'.⁶⁸ However, for many in the Cape this was also a function of ethno-linguistic and cultural nationalism, as the alternative was domination by an ethno-linguistic and culturally foreign Afrikaner framework. The identities of British settlers in the 'frontier' territories of the Eastern Cape, Natal or the Rhodesias were different from those of metropolitan settlers of the same background in, for example, Kimberley. 'Fear and insecurity typified their actions. It was generated not only by the designs of the frontier, or by the uncertainties of Metropolitan policy, but also by the prospect of Britishness being subsumed within a

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

⁶⁷ Thompson, "Languages of Loyalism", 620.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 621.

larger and Afrikaner-dominated federation.’⁶⁹ The anxiety was exacerbated by Gladstone’s decision to withdraw British troops in the 1870s, in common with other settler states where there was not a guarantee of settler safety, such as New Zealand. There was some separatist sentiment in the eastern Cape towards independence from its western neighbour but internal conflicts within the English settler community in the eastern Cape reduced the idea’s appeal and the limited population of British settlers made the reality of a separate functioning British-dominated colony difficult to achieve.⁷⁰ The prospect of a Bond government in the Cape risked the secession of eastern and northern Cape according to pressure groups like the South African Vigilance Committee.⁷¹ Meanwhile, the views of the Uitlander population in the Transvaal were ambivalent toward the British and in the Orange Free State the British population was ‘fiercely loyal to their Republic, and took great pride in institutions’. Natal on the other hand was imbued with the essence of ‘L. E. Neame’s phrase “Natalians first, Britishers second and South Africans third”’.⁷² Thompson argues that ‘Blacks and Coloureds developed their own strains of loyalist ideology, which saw the British Crown as a source of protection against the machinations of labour and land-hungry settler politicians’, citing Christopher Saunders’ view of African pro-imperialism as essentially anti-colonialism.⁷³ However, ‘although skin colour was never in theory a bar to British citizenship, in practice it often proved to be so, and, by the end of the nineteenth century, those non-white groups who sought the protection and privileges provided by that citizenship increasingly found that Britishness was racially defined’.⁷⁴ Rhodes had a part to play in this process through changes to the franchise and

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 622-23.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 624.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 624-25.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 627-28.

⁷³ C. Saunders, "African attitudes to Britain and the Empire before and after the South African War", in D. Lowry (ed.), *The South African War reappraised*, (2017), p. 145.

⁷⁴ Magee and Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation*, p. 38.

his collaboration with the Bond. He applied a non-ideological and cynical approach to political tactics, by which he would take steps that were seemingly directly opposed to his overarching ideological position in order to advance a position or agenda. This meant that at other times he was actively supporting, even championing, the interests of African groups.⁷⁵ The cosmopolitan settler state that intersected with African societies that were to a greater or lesser extent integrated into it, was not unlike the Atlantic world in which other neo-Britains had been shaped. Commenting on Rhodes' relationship with the Afrikaner party in the Cape Assembly, Tamarkin observed that 'in striking the alliance, Rhodes did not drag Cape Afrikaners to his ideological and political domain, but rather invaded and settled in theirs'.⁷⁶ The complexity of the Cape's political context – African, Boer and British and loyalism and nationalism that existed within and across each group – led to idiosyncratic difficulties in federating South Africa, which Rhodes sought to resolve.

This study is not directly concerned with the causes of the South African War. However, Rhodes' career is intertwined with the causes and indeed the blame for the war is often laid at his door, not unfairly; for instance, Tamarkin says 'Rhodes himself made an important contribution towards this cataclysmic war'.⁷⁷ Debates about causation go back to J. A. Hobson in the wake of the conflict who characteristically found the motives to be economic.⁷⁸ The Marxist tradition has ensured that the relationship between British capital and geopolitical expansion in southern Africa is the subject of quite intense historiographical debate, of which Rhodes is at the centre. Geoffrey Blainey and Ian Phimister have argued that the Jameson Raid was economically motivated, with the latter

⁷⁵ During the 1898 Cape General Election he sought to appeal beyond the white electorate to Africans with the slogan 'Equal rights for every civilized man south of the Zambezi' in Rotberg, *The Founder*, pp. 610-12.

⁷⁶ M. Tamarkin, *Cecil Rhodes and the Cape Afrikaners: the Imperial Colossus and the Colonial Parish Pump* (Tel Aviv, 1996), p. 319.

⁷⁷ Tamarkin, *Colonial Parish Pump*, p. 314.

⁷⁸ J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: a study* (London, 1902), pp. 67-68.

pointing to speculation as a cause.⁷⁹ Andrew Porter has rejected this, asserting that ‘[h]istorians are now generally agreed that the maintenance of British supremacy together with the ultimate intention of promoting federation were the local objects of British endeavours in South Africa’.⁸⁰ Ian Smith developed Porter’s position to reinforce the political argument for causation, which he suggested was to do with the growing threat that an increasingly wealthy and well-armed Boer republic posed to the British position in South Africa and Britain’s aim of creating a Cape-led federal union.⁸¹ Even recently Cain and Hopkins argued that ‘[c]ommercial disappointment led [Rhodes] to search for a second Rand further north [but]... none of these vast acquisitions yielded a second Rand, and in 1894 Rhodes fixed his gaze firmly on the Transvaal, where gold-production was beginning to shift from out-crop to deep-level operations’.⁸² Biographical evidence emanating from those who knew Rhodes personally suggests otherwise. Leander Starr Jameson and James Rochfort Maguire commented on his strategic motivation and Philip Jourdan emphasised his limited interest in money for its own sake.⁸³ J. G. Lockhart and C. M. Woodhouse said, ‘Rhodes's real purpose, from which he never departed, was the extension of Cape Colony into Central Africa’.⁸⁴ It is clear, however, that Rhodes the colonial politician may have existed without Rhodes the businessman and mining magnate, but Rhodes the imperial statesman could not have come to the fore without money because it was vital for recruitment and persuasion on an international scale. The source of the capital is also subject to debate. Rather than it being the product of mining *per se*,

⁷⁹ Geoffrey Blainey, "Lost causes of the Jameson Raid", *Economic History Review*, 18/2 (1965), p. 366; Ian Phimister, "Markets, Mines, and Magnates: Finance and the Coming of War in South Africa, 1894-1899", in A. Vari (ed.), *Africa. N.S. II/2, 2020*, (Rome, 2020), p. 22.

⁸⁰ A. N. Porter, *The origins of the South African war: Joseph Chamberlain and the diplomacy of imperialism 1895-1899* (Manchester, 1980), p. 267.

⁸¹ Iain R. Smith, *The Origins of the South African War, 1899-1902* (Harlow, 1996).

⁸² Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 347.

⁸³ Leander Starr Jameson and James Rochfort Maguire, *Cecil Rhodes; a biography and appreciation* (London, 1897), p. 9; Philip Jourdan, *Cecil Rhodes: his private life* (London, 1911), p. 200.

⁸⁴ J. C. Lockhart and C. M. Woodhouse, *Rhodes* (London, 1963), p. 142.

Phimister argues that the origin of the capital was London speculation. Phimister does not actually show the direct connection between the speculative activities of Wernher, Beit and Company and Rhodes' programme of expansion. The relationship between Rhodes' network of companies, the BSAC and Goldfields of South Africa in particular, is clear, with the latter funding the exploratory stages of expansion.⁸⁵ Moreover, Rhodes used De Beers funds to further his political ambitions and to support the BSAC.⁸⁶ The interconnectedness of his business and political activities provided enough ambiguity to fuel economic interpretations. As a life governor of De Beers, Rhodes was able to directly fund political activity in Kimberley and support aspects of the 1898 General Election from the company, but the De Beers Board prevented some of Rhodes' larger scale schemes in gold mining that might have helped him politically in the South African Republic.

Imperial historiography has been through a period of transition, which saw traditional imperial and Commonwealth histories displaced by the post-colonial school in the academy for much of the post-war period. More recently the British world school has shifted the focus and perspective.⁸⁷ As Saul Dubow says:

... there are advantages in thinking of the British Empire less in the possessive sense – the empire that belonged to Britain – and more in the adjectival mode as a mode of description capable of taking into account self-declared affinities and values.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ian Phimister, "Rhodes, Rhodesia and the Rand", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 1/1 (1974), pp. 75-77.

⁸⁶ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 608 and pp. 487-90.

⁸⁷ 'The rise of American hyper-power in the decade after the fall of the Berlin wall has spurred interest in historical analogues and precedents. Growing awareness of the possibilities of global and transnational histories, of transoceanic systems and worlds (Atlantic and Indian), and of the histories of migration and diaspora, have expanded frames of reference. Social and cultural history has aerated compacted ground. Cross-disciplinary influences, from literature, cultural studies and post-colonial theory, as well as geography and anthropology, have steadily been absorbed.' in Dubow, "British World", p. 2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

However, this view is out of sync with more theoretical approaches, principally the post-colonial school. Aside from the nature of his own career and the subsequent history of South African Apartheid, Rhodes' reputation, and indeed fame and notoriety, have been heavily influenced by these trends in Western academia.⁸⁹

It is not the purpose of this study to critique contemporary academia or to look for the roots of cultural debates in the twenty-first century, but race and its particular context and history in South Africa is by far the single biggest factor weighing on Rhodes' historical reputation. His reputation has been conflated with the record of the South African regime that came to power in the decades that followed his death and some historians have linked Rhodes' political legacy in South Africa with the origins of Apartheid.⁹⁰ This has made Rhodes a toxic figure; indeed, some historians have used the Glen Grey Act to substantiate this point. But one of the principal difficulties in assessing Rhodes' motives in relation to the Glen Grey Act is the historiographical debate that surrounds its relationship with the evolution of later segregationist policies in the Union and Republic of South Africa. It is seen by some historians as being the basis on which Apartheid was built, whereas others see it as a local policy instrument.⁹¹ Certainly Rhodes prioritised South African federation and imperial expansion over African interests. Limited and contained African enfranchisement may have benefited the British political interest because African groups were unlikely to vote for the Bond, as was evident during the 1898 Cape General Election.

⁸⁹ For instance, see: Paul Maylam, *The Cult of Rhodes: Remembering an Imperialist in Africa* (Cape Town, 2005).

⁹⁰ For example, J.H. Plumb's verdict that 'Desperate for labor as the mines grew deeper, [Rhodes] used blacks ruthlessly, penning them up in compounds, destroying their family and tribal life, and giving them wages that made them little better than slaves, so creating the economic base of apartheid'. in Flint, *Rhodes*, xv.

⁹¹ For instance: Ruth Edgecombe, "'The Glen Grey Act: local origins of an abortive 'Bill for Africa'", in J.A. Benyon et al. (ed.), *Studies in local history: essays in honour of Professor Winifred Maxwell*, (1976), p. 89; Marion Lacey, *Working for boroko: the origins system in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1981), pp. 14-15, 55-56, 310.

However, Rhodes' view for much of his career was that a union with the South African Republic was less likely if it did not involve a policy that reassured the Afrikaners that Africans would not play a part in the government of the union. Richard Bouch has argued that the historiographical significance attributed to the Glen Grey Act has been overplayed and that rather the explanation for the Act lies not with wider public policy factors of the Cape such as 'native' affairs but within the context of the Glen Grey locale itself.⁹² That is to say that the Act was seeking to resolve long-run local issues about land ownership and tribal rule and colonial attitudes to both. This may not have been Rhodes' only motivation – he was as likely, if not more so, to be sending a signal to Afrikaners in the Transvaal, the Orange Free State and the Cape Colony itself, that a federated South Africa would be able to find ways of accommodating the African population without losing British and Afrikaner control. However, the actual solution to this perceived *problem* would have been a secondary consideration for Rhodes to federation itself, which was one of his overriding policy objectives during his political career. This study removes the teleology that has developed in connection with Rhodes as a result of this uniquely problematic context.

It is helpful to outline the cast of characters at the outset of this study. Cain and Hopkins note that other British entrepreneurs operating in Africa recruited socially well-placed men of influence. George Goldie, for instance, had Lords Aberdare and Scarborough as chairmen of the Royal Niger Company and Sir William Mackinnon's British East Africa Company employed the Duke of Sutherland. But they say that 'Rhodes went a step further' by employing 'a brace of Dukes'.⁹³ However, beyond the obviously elevated

⁹² Richard Bouch, "Glen Grey before Cecil Rhodes: How a Crisis of Local Colonial Authority Led to the Glen Grey Act of 1894", *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 27/1 (1993), 5.

⁹³ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, p. 367.

social position of Abercorn and Fife, they do not examine the important differences that were involved in Rhodes' selection and activation of his network. In appointing Fife, for instance, he was creating a connection with the Royal Family; moreover, Rhodes' network beyond the dukes on the BSAC's board was much more significant. The network of influence that Rhodes created was defined crucially by ideological common cause. Its members were Liberal Unionists, whose careers had been shaped by Home Rule; IPP imperialists, who were opportunistic politically but equally committed to their cause; members of the high aristocracy, who were implacably opposed to 'Disintegration'; and journalists who were personally more devoted to Rhodes the individual than any cause. What this meant in practice was that their ideologically driven goals were primary and thus the consequences for African peoples in the course of policy was not material in their thinking. Principal among the Liberal Unionists is Albert Grey, the future fourth Earl Grey, who would have a distinguished career in colonial and imperial administration as Administrator of Rhodesia and Governor-General of Canada but whose parliamentary career in England was brought to a premature end by the Liberal schism of 1886. He would act as adviser and intermediary with the most senior figures in British government and public life. Amongst the Parnellites was James Rochfort Maguire who was an Oxford contemporary of Rhodes and was present with Rudd on the expedition that brought Rhodes and the British Empire Matabeleland through the concession from Lobengula. He is a crucial figure in Rhodes' career in British imperial politics and he acted as Rhodes' primary lobbyist, IPP Member of Parliament and general intermediary with government, parliament and Whitehall. There is no archive for Maguire but there is extensive correspondence in the Rhodes Papers at the Bodleian; there is also a biography of Rhodes that he and Jameson wrote anonymously during Rhodes' lifetime, published in 1897.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Jameson and Maguire, *Cecil Rhodes appreciation*.

Maguire is an underrated and under-researched historical figure who occupied an interesting ideological and political niche, which this study draws together for the first time.

The Duke of Abercorn was in a lesser category because he was never a close personal friend or ally of Rhodes, yet he was the chairman of the BSAC, brother of the Secretary of State for India, and he was the diplomatic face of the company in London and Europe when required. There were alliances forged with the leading political figures of the day, who counted as part of the network but whose political careers meant that they were not as reliable or as devotional as Maguire for instance. Joseph Chamberlain and Charles Stewart Parnell obviously occupied antithetical positions on Ireland but they were both drawn into Rhodes' plans for colonial expansion and imperial unification. Chamberlain, who had led his wing of the Liberal Party against Gladstone and his Home Rule formula for Ireland, was an imperialist who saw the empire's future as a trading block, like Rhodes, and was prepared to take extraordinary risks to protect the agents of this agenda (and his own reputation). Parnell, the Irish nationalist leader, had been an opponent of British imperial interests, particularly and axiomatically, in South Africa but was willing to publicly risk his own party unity by supporting Rhodes' constitutional schema, which would have tied Ireland to the empire in the event of Home Rule. Lord Rothschild was principally a financier; he was the largest shareholder in De Beers and at the centre of the political establishment in England. Alfred Beit was Rhodes' main financial backer, personal friend and occasional lobbyist when other options had been exhausted. Beit was the key financial figure for Rhodes because he acted as his financial facilitator, connecting him with continental capital. There were peripheral political figures who acted to strengthen the network, such as John Morrogh, an Irish goldfield acquaintance of Rhodes who

became a director of De Beers, and for whom it appears Rhodes facilitated a seat in Parliament. Sir Hercules Robinson was the long-serving High Commissioner and Governor General at the Cape, who supported Rhodes in Bechuanaland and during the Jameson Raid; he had been Governor-General of New South Wales (1872-1879) and of New Zealand (1879-80). Alfred, later Viscount, Milner was the technocratic and politically savvy High Commissioner in South Africa at the end of Rhodes' career, who helped guide Rhodes because of their ideological commonality and shared political pragmatism, but who had a markedly different political style. These were key, pro-consular figures who each had a considerable impact on the course of South African history, but neither are central to this study because they were anchored in the Cape rather than London. Outside of politics the key figure in journalism was the remarkable W. T. Stead, who was successively editor of the *PMG* and *Review of Reviews (RoR)*, the latter of which gave itself the form of the view it espoused insofar as it was a proponent of Greater Britain and was an Anglospherical publication operating in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. Leander Starr Jameson was an extremely significant figure in Rhodes' life and career. He was the first Administrator of Rhodesia and the eponymous leader of the Jameson Raid that fundamentally altered the course of Rhodes' seemingly inevitable ascendancy, but he is not a focus of this study because of his geographical position in Rhodesia and South Africa, away from London, and his absence from British imperial politics during Rhodes' lifetime. He comes into view after Rhodes' death when he became Prime Minister of the Cape Colony (1904-1908), when he lobbied the British imperial government on imperial trade. There were a host of important business relationships such as Charles Rudd, and Rhodes' solicitor Bouchier F. Hawksley, who likewise sit in the background of the study because they were not actively involved (in Rudd's case) or had limited direct involvement (in Hawksley's case) in British imperial

politics. Hawksley acquired some personal notoriety during the parliamentary inquiry into the causes of the Jameson Raid, when he was the subject of a parliamentary motion to have him recalled to present the telegrams, which implicated the Colonial Office in the Raid, to the British South Africa Committee.

Rhodes' network of connections uncovers his own political essence. He claimed to be a Liberal publicly in *The Spectator*, but in many respects his views were more Conservative than Gladstonian.⁹⁵ His reasons for supporting imperial federalism were in sympathy with the problem that Salisbury set out in 'Disintegration' yet ostensibly it was a radical proposal. His support for Home Rule was based on the conservative notion that it would strengthen the imperial economy and security and therefore he was a Liberal Imperialist in a hybrid mould that fitted neither wing of the pre-1886 Liberal Party and, of course, his restlessness for imperial reform was too radical for Salisbury's Conservative Party. Stead, who knew him ideologically better than practically anyone, said of his politics 'like almost every other colonist, Mr. Rhodes was a Home Ruler long before the adoption of Home Rule as the official creed of the Liberal Party. From 1882-84 Mr. Rhodes seems to have dallied with the idea of standing for a seat in Parliament, nominally as member of the Conservative Party, but really as member for South Africa'.⁹⁶

Research questions and methodology

⁹⁵ "Untitled Article", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3362 (3 December 1892), p. 807, col. b, ProQuest (4 September 2020).

⁹⁶ Stead added that 'The idea had gained sufficient substance for Sir Charles Warren to write to Mr. Rhodes's brother (March 4th, 1884) saying, "Your brother has great mental power for organising, and will be a most valuable addition to the Conservative ranks"'. W.T. Stead, *The last will and testament of Cecil John Rhodes: with elucidatory notes to which are added some chapters describing the political and religious ideas of the testator* (London, 1902), p. 117.

Between his entry into politics in the Cape Colony in around 1880 and his death in 1902, Rhodes was active in British imperial politics, whilst operating principally as a leading statesman in South Africa. This study examines how and why and to what effect he involved himself in British imperial politics. It asks how the Greater Britain debates and imperial federalism affected the course of his career and early successes. Rhodes differs from his counterparts in the other settler states of Canada, Australia and New Zealand because of South Africa's uniquely expansionary position in imperial affairs and is thus a prismatic figure for understanding how settler states and settler state leaders related to Britain as the imperial centre. Moreover, Rhodes' case offers illumination into the ways they promoted their respective visions for the future of the settler states within the British Empire. Whilst not a comparative study, it seeks to address the extent to which Rhodes was more active than other settler state leaders such as Sir John Macdonald of Canada, who was a keen imperialist but sceptical about imperial federation, and Sir Henry Parkes of New South Wales, who was principally concerned with Australian, rather than imperial, federation during the period. Rhodes is assessed against Darwin's 'bridgehead' framework to show that he was both a particularly successful example of the type and why this is related to the nature of South Africa itself. The press in a sense evidences Greater Britain because it was a medium by which agents on the imperial periphery shaped opinion in the metropole showing the nature of this diffuse and complex polity; and this study analyses its role in Rhodes' political career in Britain.

This study argues that Greater Britain was a coherent political unit during the period, which is evidenced by Rhodes' engagement with the imperial government, its systems and bureaucracy. This is premised by the idea that the Anglophone settler states together with the British Isles were in many ways one polity and therefore political culture, trends in

policy, individual political events, and ideological groupings in one part of Greater Britain, particularly the centre, shaped and moulded the political context elsewhere in Greater Britain. The study uses this concept as an interpretive framework to show the saliency of Ireland and the related political concepts of unionism and federalism in colonial affairs in the settler states. This links events on the imperial periphery, where the British Empire was expanding, to events in the British Isles, where the British Empire was contracting. This is an original adaptation of ideas that have been developed by members of the British world school.⁹⁷

This study differentiates between Rhodes' activity in the *colonial* and *imperial* settings throughout. This formulation categorises *colonial* activity as political and sub-imperial activity mainly in and around the Cape Colony, including Rhodes' collaboration with, and lobbying of, High Commissioners. Conversely, it categorises *imperial* activity as initiatives that contributed to policy that affected the empire as a whole, rather than the Cape and surrounding territories and colonies. The latter category is concerned with ideas connected with nationalism, imperial federalism, trade policy and geopolitical considerations relating to the future of the Anglosphere, all of which affected sub-imperial politics but would not have existed independently of Greater Britain. *Colonial* and *imperial* activity are not restricted to the geographical confines of either the Cape or Britain respectively; some *colonial* activity takes place in London, for instance press activity related to Bechuanaland, and likewise *imperial* activity took place in southern Africa, such as Rhodes' insertion of tariff provisions into the BSAC charter. These general categorisations are used by a wide range of recent scholars but this study codifies

⁹⁷ For instance, see: Armitage, "Greater Britain", p. 442.

what each category contains as appropriate to this investigation to help dissect the types of political activity with which Rhodes is concerned.⁹⁸

To analyse Rhodes' behaviour and motives we introduce the dichotomy of *ideological strategist* and *non-ideological tactician*. This draws a distinction between Rhodes' overriding ideological ambitions, for instance an expanded British-dominated settler society in southern Africa, and tactical decisions that took him incrementally forward towards that aim, such as making treaties with African states which involved arming and training their militaries, even though this could have strengthened a future antagonist to the British-dominated settler society he aimed to create. This framework reveals the multiple roles that the same or similar groups occupied in Rhodes' thinking, in different contexts. For example, Africans were geopolitical actors in central Africa during imperial expansion and either enfranchised or disenfranchised as was politically expedient for Rhodes in Cape Colony politics.

The main source material for this study is the Rhodes Papers, formerly housed at Rhodes House in Oxford but now permanently held at the Bodleian Library. These papers were formerly in the possession of the BSAC and are predominantly connected with Rhodes' business affairs but also cover his political and personal interests. The same people were active in both the business and political parts of Rhodes' life and these issues are discussed simultaneously in the same letters by the same people. Deposited with the papers in 1974 was a collection of Rhodes' personal and political correspondence, which was compiled by

⁹⁸ *Colonial* activity includes colonial politics and alliances with the Bond and British settler interests, the sub-imperial activities of the Cape Colony on its periphery in, for instance, Griqualand West and Bechuanaland, economic concerns relating to the expansion of the mining industry; *imperial* activity includes ideas about the future of policy in the British Empire including tariff and trade policy, constitutional policy, the implications of nationalism across the British world and imperial federalism.

Thomas Baxter.⁹⁹ This collection has been extremely useful because it has brought together Rhodes' correspondence from disparate sources and archives. In his introduction to the Rhodes Papers, J. C. Williams, who re-catalogued the collection in the 1970s, referenced Rhodes former secretary Philip Jourdan's memoir that states that he filed Rhodes' 'letters received by me under about a dozen headings, such as De Beers Consolidated Mines, Chartered Company, Consolidated Gold Fields, Politics,'¹⁰⁰ adding that 'those he enumerates correspond to those employed by Le Sueur [Rhodes' last secretary who originally categorised the collection], but include one now missing, "Politics"'.¹⁰¹ The inference here is that a whole package of political material is missing; this does not appear to be the case because firstly, Jourdan was referring to his day-to-day filing system used for Rhodes' incoming post, not an overarching archival framework, and secondly there is an enormous amount of political material in the Rhodes Papers still, which is used extensively by this study.

The tendency towards overstatement of Rhodes' public statements gives the impression of deliberate dishonesty: even if the point he is making stands on its own the evidence he used often did not. For example, when Rhodes made an otherwise strong case for an imperial tariff in *The Economist*, which he undermined by overstating the South African trade figures.¹⁰² Robert Rotberg observed that 'Rhodes possessed a sure touch for reordering the past to suit the present. He developed justifications and explanations after the fact which were intended to imbue events with an inexhaustible logic as well as with

⁹⁹ T. W. Baxter, 'Yrs, C. J. Rhodes: the letters of an imperialist' (1974), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804.

¹⁰⁰ Jourdan, *His private life*.

¹⁰¹ The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts Report of correspondence of Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 227 B21.

¹⁰² "Mr Rhodes On Tariff Policy", *The Economist* [London], no. 2683 (26 January 1895), p. 111, col. b, Gale Primary Sources (12 September 2020).

the broad, statesmanlike sweep of prescience that they may never have had'.¹⁰³ This habit has added complexity to interpreting Rhodes' motives and is compounded by Rhodes' use of political tactics, which were designed only to take forward his wider strategy rather than to be ends in themselves. As such, sometimes the archetypal *imperialist* pursued tactics that were ostensibly anti-empire. In other words, his tactics were ideologically inconsistent with his strategies, for instance when providing guns to African states as part of treaty negotiations. This study draws out examples of this behaviour and uses the framework of ideological strategist and non-ideological tactician to separate Rhodes' actions from his aims and motives.

The fragmented nature of Rhodes' correspondence has meant that researchers have not focused on the network of men around Rhodes, whose views and actions give some sense of his own mental world.¹⁰⁴ There are extensive biographies of Rhodes, which began to be written at the end of his life, that can be separated into two general categories: the first of which is supportive and written whilst the age of imperialism subsisted up until around the Second World War; and the second was written in the post-colonial age, when Apartheid was in operation and Rhodes' career was conflated with it. Within the first group are a number of subcategories including works written with the knowledge and collaboration of Rhodes himself which were originally published anonymously as 'Vindex' and 'Imperialist' and show that Rhodes was keen to manage his image even after his death, with the latter seeking to justify the Jameson Raid in patriotic rather than economic terms.¹⁰⁵ There are also works written after his death by people he knew such as Sir Lewis

¹⁰³ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 150.

¹⁰⁴ Accordingly, this study has also benefited from reviewing the Salisbury Papers at Hatfield House, the Grey Papers at Durham University, the Chamberlain Papers at the University of Birmingham, the Selborne Papers at the Bodleian Library and the Parnell Letters at the National Library of Ireland.

¹⁰⁵ pseud. VINDEX, *Cecil Rhodes: His Political Life and Speeches. 1881-1900. By Vindex. With Portrait ... and a Map* (London, 1900); Jameson and Maguire, *Cecil Rhodes appreciation*.

Michell, Philip Jourdan, Gordon Le Sueur and Sir Herbert Baker, which give the authors' recollections and views of Rhodes as a friend and a man, giving insight into his character.¹⁰⁶ There are biographies written by people who did not know Rhodes, but benefited from the assistance of people who were then still living and had known him.¹⁰⁷ The later works are often less useful and constitute only secondary source material; some are condemnatory but serve to show the view of Rhodes that emerged in the second half of the century.¹⁰⁸ Others are more balanced but are either dated or methodologically unsound.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, some of this material makes claims that cannot be substantiated because the source of the information used is unclear or without footnotes, making corroboration difficult or impossible. This has meant that particular care has had to be given to source selection and usage during this study.

Many scholars who have studied Rhodes have applied frameworks that have used exclusively or primarily the *colonial* context or, in other cases, adopted contemporary historical approaches that lead to teleology. This study broadens the picture by seeking to situate Rhodes in both the *colonial* setting, with its proconsular and settler nationalist implications, and the *imperial* context. The latter context brings into focus imperial decision making in London and ideas about the future of the empire that may not come to the fore if attention remains purely on South Africa. In order to properly contextualise the geopolitical position of the British Empire and the Greater Britain debates that surrounded its future, chapter 2 begins with an exploration of Greater Britain in theory and practice.

¹⁰⁶ Sir Lewis Michell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Cecil John Rhodes 1853-1902 II* (London, 1910); Jourdan, *His private life*; Gordon Le Sueur, *Cecil Rhodes: the man and his work* (London, 1913); Herbert Baker, *Cecil Rhodes by his Architect* (London, 1934); J.G. McDonald, *Rhodes a life* (London, 1927); J.G. McDonald, *Rhodes a heritage* (1943).

¹⁰⁷ Howard Hensman, *Cecil Rhodes : a study of a career* (Edinburgh ; London, 1901); McDonald, *A life*; Basil Williams, *Cecil Rhodes* (New York, 1921).

¹⁰⁸ Sarah Gertrude Millin, *Rhodes* (London, 1933); Flint, *Rhodes*; Antony Thomas, *Rhodes: The Race for Africa* (London, 1997).

¹⁰⁹ Lockhart and Woodhouse, *Rhodes*; Rotberg, *The Founder*.

This section places Rhodes at the centre of debates about imperial unity covering trade, defence and constitutional considerations. Chapter 3 then examines his role in South African politics through the case study of Bechuanaland and Rhodes' political dealings in the Cape. Chapters 4 and 5 concern his interest in British political parties and lobbying activities and show that events in South Africa drove activity in Britain and *vice versa*, and that both were subject to influence from the settler world beyond South Africa and Britain. The structure of the study is a methodological tool because it locates Rhodes in the context of, and in debates about the future of, the British Empire, then shows how his thinking was implemented in practice in a colonial setting in South Africa and how he sought to influence the imperial framework in Britain to enable his sub-imperial activities in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2. 'Greater Britain' in Rhodes' Theory and Practice

Rhodes publicly supported imperial federation during the 1880s, particularly through the letters between Parnell and himself that were published in *The Times* in 1889.¹

'Confessions of Faith', written whilst still a young man at Oxford, asserted 'that we [the English] are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race'.² This section demonstrates that Rhodes formulated a sophisticated schema for imperial unity that was in keeping with a movement that advocated imperial federation which was politically mainstream in British imperial politics to the extent that it contained a Prime Minister (though with questionable commitment to its cause) and leading members of Liberal cabinets. The movement was diverse and its principal umbrella group was the IFL, which ultimately failed in 1893 because of wrangling between its members over whether imperial federation should be constitutional or simply related to trade or defence. The position of the United States was also contentious, particularly in Canada. It was in part the South African war that catalysed tariff reform and defence coordination.³ Rhodes' correspondence with Stead set out his vision of a united empire and the network of supporters and lobbyists that Rhodes formed were men of similar outlook; indeed, they tended to have been in some way shaped by the major debates and issues of the day in British politics, particularly Ireland. This was true of a diverse collection of Liberal Unionists, Ascendancy magnates and Irish nationalists, all of whom could be found in Rhodes' circle to a greater or lesser extent. There was an ideological explanation for their presence around Rhodes, above and beyond career and personal advancement: the cause of imperial unity for Greater Britain. This section looks

¹ See detailed discussion of this episode in chapter 4.

² 'Confession of Faith' in Flint, *Rhodes*, p. 248.

³ Thompson, *Empire Strikes Back*, p. 150, p. 91.

at Greater Britain in theory and practice, its intellectual antecedents and how they connect – very strongly – to Rhodes. This study is concerned with the nexus of political connections through which Rhodes was able to operate in British imperial politics from his operational base in Cape Town. As Chamberlain wrote to Rhodes when he was Colonial Secretary, evoking Seeley's *Expansion of England*: 'It must be a great pleasure to everyone who shares your ideas in the subject of the expansion of England that in spite of so many drawbacks you are now able to look forward with confidence to the future of the great country which you have added to the possessions of the crown'.⁴ This chapter shows how the theory of Greater Britain and its practical correspondent imperial federation came to be part of Rhodes' consciousness and demonstrates that these ideas were actually rooted in practical politics in South Africa and in the wider hinterland of settler societies across the British world. It further shows how 'New Imperialism' and 'New Journalism' intersected through Rhodes. It begins by examining Rhodes' place in a world of public discourse, where he was a vocal proponent of imperial unity and constitutional reform using a variety of news outlets and key journalists to promote his views, which supported a subtler lobbying operation that sought to influence imperial public policy for the furtherance of the ideas he first expressed at Oxford in 1877.

This section looks at the origins of Greater Britain: its meaning, how its messages were disseminated through the press and, the pressure groups that supported it. The dissemination and popularisation of the idea of Greater Britain is important because its prevalence shows how it permeated Rhodes' consciousness and that of his circle. It shows how Rhodes developed his own formula for Greater Britain with Stead and how Stead

⁴ This letter is missing from the Rhodes Papers catalogue and consequently may have been overlooked by other researchers. Chamberlain to Rhodes (3 May 1899), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C7B 100.

went about promoting this vision. It shows Rhodes' concrete connections with the adherents and public intellectuals of Greater Britain and how they were themselves drawn to Rhodes. It examines the influence of the politics and literature of the United States on Rhodes' thinking and the relationship between American trade policy and the British Empire. It shows that intra-empire relationships existed between Rhodes and other settler state leaders and how these were limited principally because of the internal dialectics of unionism and federalism that were being played out in the settler states. In summary, this section places Rhodes at the centre of a web of political, strategic, and economic debates concerning the future of the settler states and how the emerging United States related to them and the British Empire at the close of the nineteenth century. It unpacks and explains Rhodes' view that the waves of settlement from Britain to the New World over the course of centuries should be a main factor in public policy, particularly in relation to trade, despite the growing divergence of the United States as typified by the McKinley Tariff. The context for these debates and Rhodes' engagement with them was a period of perceived crisis for the British Empire, which Salisbury had described in 'Disintegration', where he saw the confluence of electoral reform, radicalism and nationalism as the harbinger of imperial collapse. Such imperial strains could have appeared more acute by Britain's occupation of Egypt in 1882 which precipitated the Sudan crisis and resulted in the death of Rhodes' friend General Gordon. In India British supremacy was being challenged by Russia, which had defeated the emirate of Afghanistan at the Battle of Panjdeh in March 1885.⁵ The Russian challenge was intensified by technological advancements that meant large land armies were more mobile than before, making Britain's naval advantage less relevant in some parts of the colonial empire.⁶ Rhodes was

⁵ Cannadine, *Victorious Century*, pp. 387-88, pp. 416-19.

⁶ Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1988), pp. 213-16.

conscious of, and influenced by, this wider imperial strategic context, as is discussed in chapter 4, and saw these factors as important in the wider imperial schema, including Britain's ability to trade and to leverage geopolitical advantage. However, these strategic factors affecting the connectivity of the British Empire via the Suez Canal are not the focus here because they fall outside of Greater Britain which was centred on settler colonies.

The idea of Greater Britain

To term the popular works 'scholarship' and political thinkers as 'movement' is perhaps a misnomer. The idea of Greater Britain was theoretical and structural in the tradition of, and analogous with, liberal imperialism: more a fashion or a mood than a coherent political movement. The foundational works of Greater Britain fall into distinct categories: travel books, such as Charles Dilke's *Greater Britain* published in 1869 and J. A. Froude's *Oceana: Or England and her Colonies* published in 1886; works of history, such as Seeley's *The Expansion of England* published in 1883; and works concerned with the translation of theory into practice such as James Stanley Little's *A Vision of Empire*, delivered and disseminated by the IFL. Such public intellectual advocacy had counterparts, indeed cheerleaders, in the press: principally in the person of Stead and his newspapers *PMG*, which he edited, and later the *RoR*, which he founded, edited and owned. Rhodes had connections with all of these strands either directly through a personal connection involving correspondence, or through his friends and proxies, primarily Stead in this area. Whilst connections between Rhodes and the leading luminaries of Greater Britain discourse varied in their duration and depth, adherents of these ideas were drawn to

Rhodes as a practical politician who could further their cause, as a financial backer, leader and political talisman.

Greater Britain as a mode of imperial activity entered the public consciousness through two principal works: *Oceana* and the *Expansion of England*. In the first chapter of *Oceana*, Froude tracks the origin of the literary ideal of ‘Oceana’, the depiction of those parts of the world that were to become inhabited by settlers from the British Isles, to Sir James Harrington’s work of Republican philosophy *The Commonwealth of Oceana* published in 1656 during the *interregnum*. “‘Oceana, reduced to a like government, is a commonwealth for increase, and upon the mightiest foundation that any has been laid from the beginning of the world to this day’... but Harrington imagined that Oceana would be a single commonwealth embraced in the arms of Neptune, and the spell which can unite all these communities into one has not yet been discovered. The element on which he calculated to ensure the combination – the popular form of government – has been itself the cause which has prevented [it]’.⁷ He goes on to argue that withheld liberties was the reason for the decline of so many great states and refers particularly to the ‘The English in North America’, whom he says:

...were bitterly unwilling to leave us. But when we refused them representation in the British Legislature, when English ministers, looking only, as they were obliged to look, to the British constituencies, hampered their trade, tied them down under Navigation Laws, and finally would have laid taxes on them with or without their own assent, they were too English themselves to submit to a tyranny which England had thrown off.⁸

Froude is ‘[e]arnestly desirous... to see a united Oceana – united as closely as the American States are united’, but argues that the federation of individual colonies, using the

⁷ Froude, *Oceana*, pp. 1-2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Australian example, could be a risk to closer imperial union because of the inward focus that may lead to 'eventual separation and independence' and that if politicians contrived a federation for the empire it would 'snap at the strain'.⁹ Dubow argues that Froude became 'philo-Boer' after his visit to South Africa in the 1870s. He quotes Froude's comparison with the Armada's 'soldiers of liberty... [who were] hardy yeomanry and peasantry and fishermen who were fighting for home and firesides... who risked their lives' for England with Boer farmers whom he said were 'the only true colonists. They alone make South Africa their home. They alone are cultivating the soil'. Dubow contrasts Froude's outward pro-Boer sentiments with Seeley's statement that "'Greater Britain" necessarily implied the "enlargement of the English State, and not simply of the English nationality"'. Froude was sceptical about the ability of colonists to deliver a 'constitutional' settlement with the Boers but he did not exclude the Boers from Seeley's vision of an expanded English nation.¹⁰ 'Froude could only express disdain towards the "Cape politicians [who] strut about with their Constitution as a schoolboy newly promoted to a tail coat, and imagine that they have the privileges of perfect independence, while we are to defend their coasts and keep troops to protect them in case of Kaffir insurrection"'.¹¹ Whiggish interests in the colony transmuted into settler nationalism where the interests of the British settler and Britain were not necessarily perfectly aligned – indeed John X. Merriman described himself as 'a Colonist first, then an Englishman'.¹²

Froude countered the narrative of irresistible Whiggish progress put forward by Seeley, in *The Expansion of England*:

With the accession of the Stuart family commenced at the same time two processes, one of which was brought to completion under the last Stuart, Queen Anne, while the other has continued without interruption ever since. Of these the first is the internal union of the

⁹ Ibid., p. 96, p. 158 and p. 339

¹⁰ Dubow, "British World", p. 6.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., pp. 6-8.

three kingdoms, which, though technically it was not completed till much later, may be said to be substantially the work of the seventeenth century and the Stuart dynasty. The second was the creation of a still larger Britain comprehending vast possessions beyond the sea.¹³

Despite lacking Froude's insight, Seeley's *Expansion of England* was much more influential, affecting the views of leading statesmen who would play a part in Rhodes' own career, principally Chamberlain and Rosebery as noted by their respective biographers.¹⁴ The book was discussed widely in the press reflecting its sales figures. The sales figures are somewhat disputed with Deborah Wormald claiming that Seeley sold 80,000 copies in the first two years, with 11,000 sold in 1914 and 3,000 in 1931.¹⁵ However, she cites A. P. Thornton, who does not make the 80,000 claim but rather quotes the 1914 and 1931 figures from information received from Macmillan.¹⁶ David Wormsley cited a Macmillan source that states that Macmillan's printed '18,000 copies during Seeley's lifetime' and '35,000 of the 1895 "Eversley" edition', as well as 10,000 copies of *Our Colonial Expansion*, the shilling pamphlet which included part of the text but omitted Seeley's discussion of India.¹⁷ Whatever the exact figures, these reported sales remain significant compared to similar books of the period, for instance: 18,000 copies of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* sold in the first ten years following its publication in 1842 (and, according to Trevelyan, over 120,000 copies of Macaulay's collected works were sold by a single publisher to circa 1875); and for a popular fiction comparator, Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* sold 31,000 in its first fifteen months and 100,000 by 1895 ten years after its publication. Gladstone's 1876 pamphlet 'The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question

¹³ Seeley, *Expansion of England*, p. 11.

¹⁴ Leo McKinstry, *Rosebery: Statesman in Turmoil* (London, 2006), p. 122.; Peter T. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain. Entrepreneur in Politics* (London, 1994), pp. 176-78.

¹⁵ Deborah Wormald, *Sir John Seeley and the uses of history* (New York, 1980), p. 154-55.

¹⁶ A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (New York, 1959), p. 51.

¹⁷ David J. Worsley, "Sir John Robert Seeley and His Intellectual Legacy: Religion, Imperialism, and Nationalism in Victorian and Post-Victorian Britain" (PhD, University of Manchester, 2001), p. 26. A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Ph.D. in the Faculty of Arts

of the East' had reputed sales of 200,000 in a month but this is perhaps more comparable to a newspaper than to a monograph.¹⁸ These figures show that there was significant interest in the work that compared respectably with the most widely read works of the nineteenth century. Wormell says that sales of *Oceana* in its first six months were 75,000 copies and David Nicholls says *Greater Britain* sold 10000 copies of the English edition in its first year of publication.¹⁹ These ideas became more widespread through education and its institutions. George Parkin, who was the principal lobbyist and campaign manager for the IFL, published *Imperial Federation: the Problem of National Unity* in 1892, and a school textbook, *Round the Empire* in the same year, which sold 200,000 copies in four editions up to 1919.²⁰

Greater Britain evoked huge popular interest on its publication but it was not a work that sought to prove a hypothesis, as *Oceana* did, rather it emphasised the important role of the United States in the future of, as Dilke termed it, 'Saxondom' – 'the development of the England of Elizabeth is to be found, not in the Britain of Victoria, but in half the habitable globe. If two small islands are by courtesy styled "Great," America, Australia, [and] India, must form Greater Britain... Through America, England is speaking to the world'.²¹ If there were a doctrinal or philosophical message being relayed without being explicitly Dilke's intention, it was of the inescapability of England's expansion with the United States as proxy – 'In the Western territories not yet States, there is land sufficient to bear, at the English population rate, five hundred and fifty millions of human beings'.²² Dilke's

¹⁸ Richard D. Altick, "Nineteenth-Century English Best-Sellers: A Further List", *Studies in Bibliography*, 22 (1969), p. 200-06.

¹⁹ Wormell, *John Seeley and history*, pp. 154-55; David Nicholls, *The Lost Prime Minister: A Life of Sir Charles Dilke* (London, 1995), p. 21.

²⁰ Terry Cook, "Parkin, Sir George Robert (1846–1922)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 25 May 2006), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/35389> (15 September 2020).

²¹ Dilke, *Greater Britain*, v-vi.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

biographer argues that *Greater Britain* represented post-Reform Act radicalism insofar as Dilke observed that the daughter countries and colonies of Britain were ‘laboratories’ for experimentation with social reform that influenced his later career and policy positions in Britain itself.²³ Rhodes would exemplify this in his attempt to shape Britain’s constitution through his support of Home Rule and the IPP, as we shall see.

Dilke’s explicit purpose was to weave an evocative and emotive narrative of transatlantic interconnection based on the global expansion of England and later Britain – for instance: ‘Just within Grant’s earthworks are the ruins of an ancient church, built, it is said, with bricks that were brought by the first colonists from England in 1614’; ‘The names of streams and hamlets in Virginia have often a quaint English ring. On the Potomac, near Harper’s Ferry, I once came upon “Sir John’s Run” and ‘You sail between capes named from the sons of James I., and have fronting you the estuaries of two rivers called after the King and the Duke of York’. This marks *Greater Britain* out as not just a travelogue but a rallying call to the imperial faithful: yet it lacked a framework for future unity, which Dilke would only attempt to compose in *The Problems with Greater Britain*, published in 1890.²⁴ Dilke wrote to Rhodes when he was working on *Problems with Greater Britain* and was overt in expressing his clear support for Rhodes and his frustration at earlier British policies in South Africa – ‘I am very glad that you have taken the Premiership and still more pleased to see today that you have given notice to the effect that the House regrets [that] the Cape Government was not consulted with regard to the Anglo-German Agreement so far as it concerns territories south of the Zambezi. I was greatly opposed to the agreement.’ He ended the missive, ‘If at any time there is anything which you would

²³ Nicholls, *Life of Sir Charles Dilke*, p. 22.

²⁴ Dilke, *Greater Britain*, pp. 13-14; Charles Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain* (London, 1890).

like me to know I wish that you would write to me or cause someone to do so; because one is afraid here, at a great distance, of doing harm to one's friends, and one is often silent in consequence when one wishes to do good'.²⁵ Dilke was offering unqualified support for Rhodes but his own career had been dealt a fatal blow by the Crawford scandal relating to his private life and he was in no position to act in support of Rhodes effectively in government. In his reply, Rhodes speculated that Home Rule would mean an American system in England – 'I see that Home Rule is gaining ground it really means the American Constitution it is rather a big change and the doubt is whether the Conservative nature of the English people will force it when they understand what Home Rule means'.²⁶ Dilke, who had been a close ally and longstanding friend of Chamberlain, had not left the Liberal Party over Home Rule but was adamantly opposed to it and Rhodes' prediction must have evoked ambivalence.

James Stanley Little was an active member of the IFL, in fact he described himself as 'Hon. Secretary of the Haslemere District Branch of the Imperial Federation League,' on the inside cover of his *A Vision of Empire*. He presented the paper to a meeting of the League in Kensington on 17 May 1889. Amongst the attendees were a number of people who would have an impact on Rhodes' career, either directly or indirectly. Sir Charles Warren, Rhodes' antagonist in Bechuanaland in the early 1880s as we discuss in chapter 3, was present, as was Rider Haggard, whose book *King's Solomon's Mines* was associated with Rhodes even though it was written before Rhodes had really reached public prominence in England.²⁷ Little's arguments were based in the realm of practical politics – 'looking a little into futurity, it requires no prophet to see that, with or without England,

²⁵ Dilke to Rhodes (29 July 1890), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C27 5.

²⁶ Rhodes to Dilke (March 1890), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 238.

²⁷ Stanley J. Little, *A Vision of Empire* (London, 1889), p. 5.

the future history of the English race is to be mainly played out beyond the seas'. He was in favour of a full constitutional settlement to improve Britain's international standing – 'had we a real instead of a nominal Imperial Parliament – a Parliament, in fact, which should represent a complex interest of this great empire – I venture to say such an alliance [with the central powers] would come into being tomorrow'.²⁸

There were, however, many critics of imperial federation, one of the most eminent being Edward Freeman, another Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, who took the semantic view that 'imperial federation' was a 'contradiction in terms' and was inherently flawed:

And though each State will have a voice in it, each State will always be liable to be outvoted on the matters which are dearest to its heart. The interests... of a number of distant and isolated states, none of which will have any particular reason for dealing tenderly with one another, are likely to clash with one another much oftener and much more roughly than happens between the particular colonies and the mother-country which has every reason to deal tenderly with all.²⁹

Yet even as Seeley was giving his lectures as Regius Professor in Cambridge in 1881-1882, Freeman was touring the United States to recall the common racial and institutional ties that bound together two English peoples on either side of the Atlantic 'as brethren in a higher brotherhood, born of one ancient stock, speaking one ancient tongue, sharers under different forms in one ancient freedom'.³⁰ There was a difference of opinion in the implications of this shared history – Seeley thought it constitutional, Freeman thought it equivalent to the independent states of the Greek world – but there was a shared

²⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁹ Edward A. Freeman, "The Physical and Political Basis of National Unity", in Arthur White (ed.), *Britannic confederation. A series of papers by Admiral Sir John Colomb, Professor Edward A. Freeman, George G. Chisholm [and others]*, (London, 1892), p. 51 and p.55.

³⁰ Edward A. Freeman, "Lectures to American Audiences (Philadelphia, 1882)", in David Armitage (ed.), *Greater Britain, 1516-1776: Essays in Atlantic History*, (Aldershot, 2004), p. 437.

appreciation of the ideological underpinnings of the context that might have resulted in imperial federation. This suggests that imperial federation was more than a fringe exercise, but constituted a serious political discussion, if perhaps an unlikely political outcome.

Rhodes' formula for imperial federation

Rhodes developed his own vision of imperial federation with Stead, who was the foremost public proponent of imperial federation on Fleet Street. This is evidenced by their personal correspondence conducted around a year after Rhodes had already committed himself to the position publicly via the Parnell letters published in *The Times* on 9 June 1888.³¹ Rhodes had met Stead at a lunch hosted by Sir Charles Mills, the Cape's Agent-General, in 1889, when Stead was still editor of the *PMG*.³² Stead wrote to his wife afterwards in effusive terms – 'Mr. Rhodes is my man!' – 'I have just had three hours' talk with him. He is full of a far more gorgeous idea in connection with the paper than even I have had. I cannot tell you his scheme because it is too secret... He expects to own before he dies 4 or 5 millions, all of which he will leave to carry out the scheme of which the paper is an integral part... His ideas are federation, expansion, consolidation of the Empire'.³³ According to Stead, Rhodes had offered him a 'free gift' of £20,000 for a shareholding in the *PMG*, which Stead refused.³⁴ But following the *PMG*'s loss of a libel case he wrote to Rhodes asking for £2000; Rhodes replied, 'you can rely on me for what you mention'. Rhodes was as good as his word, writing to '[e]xcuse delay but I keep my

³¹ "Mr. Parnell and the Retention of the Irish Members at Westminster.", *The Times* [London], no. 32344 (09 July 1888), p. 7, col. a, Times Digital Archive (3 April 2020).

³² Rhodes to Stead (3 April 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 126.

³³ Frederic Whyte, *The Life Of W. T. Stead (vol I)* (London), p. 270.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

money with my agents I hope enclosed cheque will be all right', but he added 'you must keep my confidence secret. The idea is right but until sure of the lines would be ruined in too many hands'.³⁵ Viewing an editorially sound newspaper as a critical part of disseminating his plan for federation, Rhodes wrote in the following August:

I have read through carefully your plans as to a paper. Is it not more feasible to try and get an interest in an established one and then change its views on the lines we desire. Do not think I in any way withdraw from what I said but I find my subscription is a mite compared with the cost of starting a new paper. I have been heavily drawn on for the new Company as we would not make it a public one for fear the attempt might fail and do not wish anyone to have to complain of the loss of their money so it has ended in our privately subscribing the funds for our attempt at stretching British influence from the Cape to Tanganyika. I also feel if one made a success of this it would be doubly easy to carry out the programme which I sketched out to you a part of which would be the paper you mention...³⁶

Despite the obvious appeal of the scheme to Rhodes, he was very concerned to pursue the most cost-effective course of action (he asks 'what is the lowest sum it could be done for') and in justifying his point he emphasises the public-spirited nature of the enterprise.

Rhodes owned newspapers, such as *the Cape Argus*, and funded pressure groups in South Africa, such as the South African League (SAL).³⁷ The SAL was founded by English loyalists in the wake of the Jameson Raid and had established the Progressive Party in 1897, which became Rhodes' electoral vehicle.³⁸ He funded political parties in England, as well as newspapers and journalists. Many of the forces he sponsored interacted with one another. He was attempting to build public support for his political agenda. For

³⁵ Rhodes to Stead (July 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no 129.

³⁶ Rhodes to Stead (August 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no 130.

³⁷ J.A. Stevens, Acting Secretary, Charter Company, Cape Town to Rhodes (25 September 1901), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C5/37.

³⁸ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 603.

instance, in 1901 he suggested that the branches of the SAL might pass resolutions calling for the resignation of Milner.³⁹

These activities accorded with Rhodes' view that men could be squared. The origin of Rhodes' famous axiom to 'square' that he reportedly used regularly is difficult to locate confidently. Rotberg uses the phrase continually in his biography, often in quotation marks, but it is never satisfactorily footnoted.⁴⁰ Sir Lewis Michell, who knew Rhodes well, quotes him using it in relation to the Sudanese nationalist and religious leader, Muhammad Ahmad, known to western history as the 'Mahdi', 'I do not propose to fight the Mahdi, but to "deal" with him. I have never met any one [sic] in my life whom it was not as easy to deal with as to fight'.⁴¹ Rhodes made this statement in 1892, by which time the Mahdi was already dead and is therefore another example of the difference between his rhetoric and reality. Rhodes appeared to endorse his use of the phrase in the Cape Assembly, which Michell records below:

[Another member] declared that Rhodes had publicly asserted that every man could be squared. This brought Rhodes indignantly to his feet. 'I said,' he remarked, 'that it was easier to deal amicably with a man than to fight him. In other words, if one sat down and reasoned with a man it was almost always possible to arrive at a settlement. I am not ashamed of the phrase!'⁴²

Rhodes does not deny the use of the phrase "squared" but rather clarifies his position on the subject. The impression, also reinforced by Rotberg, is that the phrase transmuted into popular imagination, adding to the myth of Rhodes and so has ceased to be interrogated by his biographers. That 'squaring' entered the lexicon is a reflection of Rhodes'

³⁹ Owen Lewis, Progressive Party, to Rhodes (2 May 1901), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C2B/257.

⁴⁰ Rotberg, *The Founder*, for example p. 19, p. 48, p.139, p. 65.

⁴¹ Rhodes' speech at the Second Annual Meeting of the British South Africa Company (29 Nov. 1892). The 'Mahdi' had been dead since 1885. VINDEX, *His Political Life and Speeches*, pp. 313-14.

⁴² Michell, *Life of Rhodes*, p. 62.

contemporary cultural status as one of the empire's 'heroes [who] were usually single and celibate figures who renounced home comforts' because of a profound imperial duty.⁴³

Though divisive, the myth gave him a certain political armour as is demonstrated by European press coverage of his power and influence at the nadir of his career during the inquiry into the Jameson Raid.⁴⁴

Stead had written extensively on the subject of imperial federation and had even committed the cover page of the *PMG*'s first issue of 1885 to the subject of a 'Programme' for imperial federation. 'The question of the maintenance of the unity of the Greater England that has expanded over so many seas and continents will come before the public in many ways.'⁴⁵ 'Greater England' is an echo and an extension of the Seeleyian perspective on empire; Stead had welcomed the publication of *The Expansion of England* with a front-page leader in the *PMG* in 1884.⁴⁶ But Stead's programme made policy recommendations rather than chart a history. He called for the establishment of a colonial council to behave like the Council of India but to be composed of High Commissioners or Agents-General of Canada, the Cape and the Australasian colonies 'with whom there might afterwards be associated nominated representatives of the West African settlements and the West Indies'. This would be 'cordially welcomed, both in England and in the colonies, as the first practical step towards the establishment of some system of Imperial Federation'. This was to be supplemented by the establishment of two Royal Commissions on maintaining naval supremacy 'in the face of the growth of our

⁴³ Thompson, *Empire Strikes Back*, p. 97.

⁴⁴ For instance, The German press reported in "Delagoa Bay.", *The Times* [London], no. 35186 (24 April 1897), p. 8, col. a, Times Digital Archive (12 September 2019).

⁴⁵ W.T. Stead, "Programme 1885", *The Pall Mall Gazette* [London], no. 6180 (1 January 1885), p. 1, col. b, Gale Primary Sources (4 August 2020).

⁴⁶ "The English Beyond the Sea", *The Pall Mall Gazette* [London], no. 5798 (4 October 1883), p. 1, col. a, Gale Primary Sources (4 September 2020).

responsibilities and the rapidity with which our neighbours are increasing their naval armaments' and another to 'superintend and facilitate' emigration 'from the congested districts of the old country to the wide expanse of fertile land held in trust for the English race by our settlement beyond the seas'. The language is Seeley's rather than Froude's, indeed one of the subheadings was 'Expansion of England' – which was written in the context of the Scramble for Africa, a process that Stead was encouraging. 'The second thing is to extend our protection over all the territory which, after grave consideration, it is decided that we cannot in safety allow to be seized by foreign Powers.' This was 'New Journalism' as the propagandist for 'New Imperialism' – 'if the protection of the British flag was vouchsafed to those territories interlaced with our possessions which have been hitherto left unappropriated, because it was assumed that no one else would think of snapping them up. This assumption holds good no longer'.⁴⁷ He advocated Home Rule for Ireland and in 'Domestic Legislation' he advocated 'decentralization', which was reflective of his broader theme of imperial consolidation and devolution.⁴⁸ It was these ideas that first attracted Rhodes to Stead and Rhodes said at their first meeting that 'he had taken his ideas from the *PMG*, that the paper permeated South Africa, that he met it everywhere'.⁴⁹ They were a reflection of Rhodes' own views which had developed in the context of the Greater Britain debates and his experience of South African colonial politics and sub-imperialism.

Stead is 'generally acknowledged to have pioneered and epitomized' 'New Journalism', a school of journalism that has been subject to accusations that it peddled falsehoods in the

⁴⁷ "Programme 1885".

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Whyte, *Life of W. T. Stead. i.*, p. 271.

hope that they would become true.⁵⁰ This may have been true of inchoate tabloid journalism, which is sometimes the assessment applied to ‘New Journalism’ but it cannot be said of policy proposals that are similar in content and form to a pamphlet rather than a newspaper editorial. Stead’s ‘New Journalism’ had the style of public intellectualism and the content of pressure group publications. His editorials were similar to tabloids only insofar as they were self-consciously and avowedly tendentious and occasionally malicious. They were created for and by an imperial context that saw the working class ‘subjected to various forms of imperial publicity and propaganda, but more frequently (and profoundly) through remittances and return migration, through changing patterns of consumption, and through the imperial networks forged among organised labour’.⁵¹ Stead was responsible for an orchestrated campaign against Dilke due to the scandal caused by allegations about his private life, to which Stead alluded in a letter to Rhodes – ‘I am having rather lively times with Sir Charles Dilke just now’.⁵² The *PMG* was damning of Dilke – ‘[W]e occasionally been compelled to comment upon the conduct of Sir Charles Dilke, whose name we would very much rather never print again until he has either confessed his crime or vindicated his character’.⁵³ The campaign was considered so malicious in some circles that it prompted Olive Schreiner to write to Stead imploring him to ‘Forgive Dilke! It is a blot upon your soul!’⁵⁴ Thus ideological convergence was not necessarily enough for Stead, as we shall see with Chamberlain; he was prepared to attack natural allies single-mindedly in the interest of principles.

⁵⁰ Simon J. Potter, “W.T. Stead, Imperial Federation, and the South African War”, in Ed King Lurel Brake, Roger Luckhurst, James Mussell (ed.), *W.T. Stead: Newspaper Revolutionary*, (London, 2012), pp. 115-16.

⁵¹ Thompson, *Empire Strikes Back*, p. 10.

⁵² Stead to Rhodes (26 March 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C27 (21) 7.

⁵³ “WHY INSULT SIR CHARLES DILKE?”, *The Pall Mall Gazette* [London], no. 7336 (20 September 1888), p. 1, col. a, Gale Primary Sources (6 August 2020).

⁵⁴ Olive Schreiner to Stead (12 October 1892),

<https://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?view=collections&archiveid=24&colid=152&letterid=19&arrangeby=colorder> (2012).

Stead, like Dilke, considered imperial federation as broadly sitting within the Radical agenda and included it in the basic tenants of Radical Liberalism that he set out in the *PMG* in 1884, arguing that the issue was more important than domestic concerns to ‘the vanguard of the Liberal host’:

First among the great fundamental principles which Liberal opinion tends more and more to accept as the basis for national policy is the sympathetic recognition of that great movement which Professor SEELEY has described as the Expansion of England. The building up of new Englands beyond the Sea, the peopling of waste and savage continents with men of our speech and lineage, and knitting of the world-sundered members of the English realm into one fraternal union, that is the first and the greatest work imposed upon us.⁵⁵

Here there is evidence of intent by ‘New Journalism’ to reshape opinion by assertion, that is to say stating an assumption without evidence or obvious veracity other than claims made in his newspaper (‘Liberal opinion tends more and more to accept as the basis for national policy’). Yet this is a manifestation of what contemporary historical commentators consider to be the overwhelming victory of liberal imperialism during the nineteenth century – a fact not only of political reality generally but also of diverse and diffuse ideological persuasion, evidenced by the cross-party support for Britain’s imperial and colonial position and by its adoption often by the colonised themselves.⁵⁶

Technological developments that enabled both rapid communications across the empire due to undersea telegraph cables, as well as publications with ‘global’ reach, and the newsreels, which covered the South African War, helped dynamize the late Victorian press, which was personified by Stead. Indeed, Rhodes is reported to have said of Sir John

⁵⁵ W. T. Stead, "The Old and the New", *The Pall Mall Gazette* [London], no. 5872 (1 January 1884), p. 1 col. a, Gale Primary Sources (17 October 2020).

⁵⁶ C. A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge, 2011).

Pender, who pioneered undersea cables – ‘Pender was “imperialising the map” while I was just feeling my way’.⁵⁷

Stead viewed Rhodes as a core, vital even, component of his campaign for constitutional change and chased him for his formula for imperial federation throughout 1889 with Rhodes replying: ‘He cannot have it this month I am thinking it [sic] and he shall have it by 20th July. I am coming to see you when I am clearer from my work but up to the present have been simply without an hour’s freedom;’⁵⁸ and, in early July, ‘I am getting on slowly with it... it is too important a subject to deal with lightly’.⁵⁹ Rhodes called his scheme ‘Practical Federation’ and divided it, he said, ‘...into two parts first is Home Rule bringing Federation and secondly the chance eventually of differential rates against the outside world between England and the colonies’.⁶⁰ This went further than pressure groups such as the IFL would go due to their internal difficulties and further than was commonplace in the mainstream of British politics. It was a combination of federal systems and institutions with a corresponding framework for trade to include a tariff wall around the empire to encourage intra-empire trade rather than risk strengthening competitors by allowing them to enter the empire’s markets. Rhodes’ vision was more radical still because it included federal unification of the British Empire with the United States of America – ‘What an awful thought it is that if we had not lost America or if even now we could arrange with the present members of the United States Assembly and our House of Commons... [to] hold your federal Parliament 5 years at Washington and 5 at

⁵⁷ Thompson, *Empire Strikes Back*, p. 31.

⁵⁸ Rhodes to Stead (18 June 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol i no 127.

⁵⁹ Rhodes to Stead (6 July 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol i no 128.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

London... the peace of the world [would be] secured for all eternity'.⁶¹ He explained the system:

For the American has been taught the lesson of Home Rule and the success of leaving the management of the local pump to the parish beadle. He does not burden his House of Commons with the responsibility of cleaning the parish drains the present position in the English House is ridiculous. You might as well expect Napoleon to have found time to have personally counted his dirty linen before he sent it to the wash and recounted it upon its return... There are three essentials (1) The plan duly weighed and agreed to. (2) The first organization. (3) The seizure of the wealth necessary.⁶²

Rhodes' proposal was radical but it came in the context of a discussion about a federal system with a customs union in the press that meant it was far from outside the lexicon of public discourse; it was discussed in *The Times*, *PMG* and, from 1890 onwards, in the *RoR*.⁶³ Moreover, Rhodes appears to have met with Salisbury in March 1891 specifically to discuss imperial federation. This was during his early ascendancy and influence but before he had developed his scheme completely with Stead.⁶⁴

Rhodes' correspondence with Stead was one generally about ideas, principally concerning imperial union particularly in the period before the Second Boer War. The closeness and level of trust that built up between them before the war, led to Stead being entrusted with some of the tasks that a private secretary might undertake. For instance, Rhodes asked Stead to train up a future secretary – 'Many thanks for your trouble about my shorthand writer [Harry Palk]. I think it is a good thing if he is stupid, a sharp secretary may become

⁶¹ Rhodes to Stead (14 August 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 140.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ For instance, "A deputation from the Imperial Federation", *The Times* [London], no. 33925 (14 April 1893), p. 9, col. a, Times Digital Archive (12 September 2019); "The First Step Towards Federation", *The Pall Mall Gazette* [London], no. 6187 (9 January 1885), p. 1, col. b, Gale Primary Sources (3 August 2020); "To All English-Speaking Folk".

⁶⁴ Roberts says these were 'Cape Colony and Queensland's schemes for imperial federation' in Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London, 2012), p. 551.

too clever for his chief' and 'I do not want a clever man I want a loyal one, his face tells me that he will be loyal he has no ties'.⁶⁵ These exchanges give an impression of Rhodes later in his life: his views were fully formed, he had acquired an effective framework for operating in business and politics and had seen previously close relationships break down over points of political difference (for example, Merriman). He prized loyalty over all other characteristics and virtues. Simon Potter describes Stead's 'admiration for Cecil Rhodes [as] bordering on idolatry,' which in Stead's defence was not an unusual reaction to Rhodes who was known for his magnetism.⁶⁶ 'However, when it came to imperial federation, Stead expounded the same views consistently and over a period of decades, even if his thinking seldom seemed rooted in the realm of the possible.'⁶⁷

W. E. Forster, who was the first president of the IFL and presided at its first meeting on 29 July 1884, was a Liberal politician and chief secretary for Ireland during 1880-82. Forster has not been paid much attention by recent historiography perhaps because there are no extant papers for him.⁶⁸ However, his tenure in Ireland coincided with the ascendancy of Parnell and the debate in the cabinet over coercion and conciliation; he was aligned with the former despite his radical instincts and background.⁶⁹ Writing to Ripon during his time at Dublin Castle, he observed: 'The greatest of all Irish evils is the cowardice, or at best the non-action of the moderate men; and, indeed, this is the best, if not the sole argument for Home Rule... we English must step in and prevent utter anarchy'.⁷⁰ His view, as suggested here, was that Home Rule had few virtues, which he allied with a strong sense

⁶⁵ Rhodes to Stead (30 June 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i. no. 139; Rhodes to Stead (6 April 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 445.

⁶⁶ Potter, "W.T. Stead and Imperial Federation," p. 116.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁶⁸ Allen Warren, "Forster, the Liberals and New Directions in Irish Policy 1880-1882", *Parliamentary History*, 6/1 (1987), p. 96.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-6.

⁷⁰ Forster to Ripon (17 July 1881) in T. Wemyss Reid, *Life of the Right Honourable William Edward Forster* (London, 1888), p. 330.

of England's benevolent role. He had been responsible for Parnell's arrest on 13 October 1881 and was implacably opposed to negotiation with him on the basis that it enhanced his credibility and therefore the possibility and likelihood of Home Rule.⁷¹ When he addressed the IFL, the politics of Britain and imperial politics were interchangeable:

[W]hy all this talk and fuss [about imperial federation]... because in giving self-government to our colonies we have introduced a principle which must eventually shake off from Great Britain, Greater Britain, and divide it into separate States which must, in short, dissolve the union, unless counteracting measures be taken to preserve it.⁷²

He contended that imperial federation was already a practical reality and referred to Edward Freeman's definition of a federal state as being a polity comprising many entities that is a single entity in relation to other states. Reminiscent of his hostility to Home Rule, he questioned the long-term viability of the then existing arrangement because it was unequal and because settler states have geopolitical concerns of their own, citing Queensland's occupation of New Guinea and New Zealand's stated interest in the annexation of the Solomon Islands, despite British and German protests:⁷³

These two opposing principles - subordination on the one hand, and self-government on the other - we might almost say subjection and freedom - cannot long co-exist. This imperfect, incomplete, one-sided federation must end either in disintegration or in complete and equal and perfect federation.⁷⁴

However, Forster's 'perfect federation' was less pragmatic than Rhodes' formulation because he saw 'manifest' difficulties in creating an 'Imperial Zollverein' until imperial

⁷¹ Allen Warren, "Forster, William Edward (1818–1886)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 23 September 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/9926> (27 October 2020).

⁷² W.E. Forster, "Imperial Federation", *The Nineteenth Century* [London], no. 97 (1 January 1885), p. 1, col. a, JSTOR Primary Sources (15 March 2021).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

federation had been instituted constitutionally.⁷⁵ Rhodes on the other hand thought that trade arrangements could come at an earlier stage, as he demonstrated in 1896 when he adjusted the tariff arrangements of the charter territories. For Rhodes, such measures enhanced the likelihood of deeper, constitutional union.

The *RoR* was established with Rhodes' support and encouragement. When Stead launched the *RoR*, among his stated aims was 'inter-communication' among the component parts of the English-speaking world – '[a]mong all the agencies for the shaping of the future of the human race, none seem so potent now and still more hereafter as the English-speaking man... The English-speaking race is one of the chief of God's chosen agents for executing coming improvements in the lot of mankind'.⁷⁶ Rhodes wrote later 'I am a bad writer but through my ill connected sentences you can trace the key of my ideas and you can give my ideas the literary clothing that is necessary' – such was Stead's role in Rhodes' public articulation of his ideas about British imperial politics.⁷⁷ From Stead's first meeting with Rhodes, they had discussed the internationalisation of the press, showing the closeness and interconnectedness of the public spheres in the settler states and Britain.⁷⁸ Globalisation of the media remains a point of historiographical contention, however. Simon Potter says, for instance, of the 200,000 copies of the *RoR* published in Great Britain (constituting around half the total), the United States and Australia – 'Typically, the reality of Stead's achievements was thus somewhat less globalising than was his rhetoric'.⁷⁹ The achievement of something approaching a trans-anglosphere publication that these figures illuminate, would suggest otherwise; 100,000 copies sold in the United States and

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

⁷⁶ "To All English-Speaking Folk".

⁷⁷ Rhodes to Stead (14 August 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 140.

⁷⁸ Whyte, *Life of W. T. Stead*. i., p. 271.

⁷⁹ Potter, "W.T. Stead and Imperial Federation," p. 120.

Australia was a significant figure. Moreover, Stead and Rhodes' relationship – its origin and collaborative nature – suggests the existence of an internationalised, intra-empire public sphere.

Rhodes' network of imperial federalists

Albert Grey, was a close ally of Rhodes, constitutional thinker and intellectual; examining his papers shows his well-maintained intellectual interest in imperial federation. For instance, he highlighted the below section in his notebook from a Canadian House of Commons motion:

...that Canada and its inhabitants have prospered under a Federal system, allowing to each Province of the Dominion considerable powers of self-government, and would venture to express a hope that if consistent with the integrity and well-being of the Empire, and if the rights and status of the minority are fully protected and secured, sure means may be found of meeting the expressed desire of so many of Your Irish subjects in that regard, so that Ireland may become a source of strength to Your Majesty's Empire...⁸⁰

The motion shows the saliency of Ireland to the settler states and suggests that they saw themselves as examples for Britain to follow, signifying that Home Rule was linked in the settler states to the process of 'recolonization'. Grey's interest in the Canadian parliament's view of Ireland suggests his appreciation of the ramifications of Home Rule for the wider empire. He took an academic interest in systems of government and the rights and responsibilities of those who govern but his instincts were less radical than those of Rhodes – 'The real danger of Democracy is that the classes who have the power will assume rights and reject all the duties'.⁸¹ He was preoccupied with class – 'History is only

⁸⁰ Address agreed by the Senate and House of Commons of Canada in Parliament on Ireland, Grey's General Notebook (16 May 1882), Durham DUL MS Grey, GRE/V/ED60.

⁸¹ Ibid.

one long story of the attempts by certain Persons and classes to obtain control of the power of the society so as to obtain the sickly gratification at the expense of others'.⁸² He may even have seen himself as the aristocratic 'limit' on Rhodes the 'plutocrat' – '[s]ignificant justification of 'the most successful limitation on Plutocracy has come from Aristocracy' – and '[s]ociety can do without Patricians but it cannot do without Patrician virtues'.⁸³ He had argued that 'The Plutocrats are simply trying to get... the power of the state in their own hands'.⁸⁴ Through his work with Rhodes, Grey was putting theory into practice. In a sense the Grey family evidences Ged Martin's point about the existence of an imperial federation movement in British imperial politics for the whole of the nineteenth century – 'There is a clear continuity in ideas, in arguments, and in the people involved. Ideas of Empire federalism were influential, not so much for themselves as for their relationship to overall imperial thinking: to ignore the undercurrent of feeling for a united Empire is to distort the attitudes of many leading men.'⁸⁵ Grey's uncle, the third Earl, was colonial secretary and a keen proponent of imperial federation. Kendle argues that the third Earl Grey's scheme for federalism 'understood the essence of the American example' whereas 'most advocates of change were [reluctant] to contemplate a division of sovereignty'.⁸⁶ The idea of federalism in the settler colonies had developed from the need to secure British North America and integrate the French Canadians into a coherent Anglo-Saxon dominated settler state in the wake of the Canadian rebellion in the 1830s.⁸⁷

Lord Durham, later husband of Earl Grey's sister and Albert Grey's aunt, proposed a federal solution for Canada when he was its Governor General, writing first the *Report of*

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Martin, "Empire Federalism", p. 65.

⁸⁶ Kendle, *Federal Britain*, p. 20.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 21.

Affairs of British North America published in 1839, which recommended a legislative union and reorganisation but not in fact federalism, and later in 1849 *The Colonies of England: A Plan for the Government of Some Portion of our Colonial Possessions*.⁸⁸ He anticipated ‘the other colonies eventually joining the Canadas in a wider union’ but saw the completion of a railway link as a prerequisite and noted the necessity given the growing strength of the United States.⁸⁹ The same themes of rail connectivity and encroachment by neighbouring states were present in the South African context, which fuelled Rhodes’ enthusiasm for South African federation. Grey used the example of Louisiana’s integration into the United States as a model for the French Canadians of Upper Canada – ‘Every provision was made in Louisiana for securing to both races a perfectly equal participation in all the benefits of government’. Durham set out his preference for evolutionary federalism:

... the tendency of a federation, sanctioned and consolidated by a monarchical government, gradually to become a complete legislative union; and that thus, well conciliating the French of Lower Canada... might provide for the protection of British interests... for the gradual transition of the provinces into a united and homogenous community.⁹⁰

The third Earl Grey, when still Lord Howick, took up these ideas as Secretary of State for the Colonies between 1846 and 1852, supporting federal proposals for British North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. It was not until a decade and a half later in 1867 that the first colonial experiment with federalism was successfully instituted in Canada, which some in British politics saw as an integral ‘part of a broadened imperial future’ that would protect Canada against the internal conflict that had recently engulfed the

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Lord Durham, *Report on the affairs of British North America from the Earl of Durham, Her Majesty's high commissioner &c. &c. &c.*, (officially communicated to both houses of the Imperial Parliament, on the 11th of February, 1839.) (Québec (Province), 1839), pp. 97-98.

United States.⁹¹ Even in its earliest iteration, settler state federalism was heavily influenced by the record of the United States.

In 1885 the third Earl Grey submitted a piece to the *PMG* following an interview he gave to Stead two days before. Introducing Lord Grey's article, 'A First Step Towards Federation', Stead wrote: 'For some time past Imperial Federation has been in the air, [e]veryone has been talking about it, and writing about it, for months. It is now about time that the general desire both at home and in the colonies should assume a practical shape. Otherwise, there is some danger that the movement may end in smoke.' Grey argued:

... we should revert to what was the practice... of making large use of a Committee of the Privy Council in the management of colonial affairs... The Imperial Government would not rightly resist what might be found from the proceedings of the Committee to be the general wish of the colonies; and, on the other hand, it would derive from it valuable support resisting unreasonable wishes sometimes put forward by the colonies.⁹²

In an interview with Earl Grey published in the *PMG* only two days before his 'suggestion' for imperial federation, it was recorded 'with sorrow and dismay, that Earl Grey notes the ever-increasing drift of events towards the disruption and the extinction of the empire. A few years more in the Imperial dominion of England over the Islands and continents of the world will be but as the glorious tradition of a ruined realm'. Stead countered: 'Fortunately there may yet be time in which to arrest the fatal progress to disintegration, and to rebuild on broader and more enduring lines the stately fabric of our Imperial unity'.⁹³ The third Earl Grey was retired from public life by 1885 and may have been persuaded to appear in the *PMG* by his nephew or Stead, even if federalism ran deep through the Durham/Grey

⁹¹ Kendle, *Federal Britain*, p. 27.

⁹² "The First Step Towards Federation".

⁹³ "THE FUTURE OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE.", *The Pall Mall Gazette* [London], no. 6185 (7 January 1885), p. 1, col. b, Gale Primary Sources (4 September 2020).

family. His policy ‘suggestion’ reads as an afterthought with an *ex tempore* style and does not seem to be representative of a wider campaign, but rather the regurgitated opinions of a frustrated and ignored elder statesman. As can be seen from Stead’s account of his first meeting with Rhodes, Rhodes had read the *PMG* and imbibed it, which may mean that Grey had stimulated Rhodes’ thinking, giving significance to his interview and ‘suggestion’ that was not clear at the time.

Rhodes’ American influences

Rhodes’ political hinterland was not restricted to the British Empire alone but encompassed the United States, Britain’s most successful but by then independent settler state. He followed American politics closely – for instance, commenting on the 1884 presidential election, ‘I am afraid the Mugwump intrigue was very deep’.⁹⁴ On his ‘great battle’ with the franchise in the Cape he asked Stead to ‘[s]end me Black American and any other idea you have. I can see you saying I like the impudence of the fellow with all my own work not having any consideration but bothering me with his own as well. But I have that impudence for you have I believe a soft corner for all my burdens’.⁹⁵ Rhodes wrote to Stead at the beginning of their acquaintance when they were first discussing imperial federation, instructing him to ‘[r]ead the American Politician by Crawford’.⁹⁶ *American Politician* is not a work of political philosophy or politics *per se*, it is a novel concerning the disputed 1876 presidential election of Rutherford B. Hayes set amongst Boston’s ‘Brahmin’ elite. The novel was written in the idiom of popular romance (for

⁹⁴ The ‘Mugwumps’ were Republican political activists in the United States who switched their support to Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland in the presidential election of 1884; Rhodes to E. Walton (24 August 1898), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 161.

⁹⁵ Rhodes to Stead (1890), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 134.

⁹⁶ Rhodes to Stead (July 1889) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no 129.

examples of its style, ‘sleigh bells tinkled unceasingly’, ‘deep red glow of the sunset’, and ‘slanting moonbeams’) and it charted the nascent relationship between the protagonist, John Harrington, and Josephine Thorn – it was a love story, written in uncomfortably romantic prose:

... the enormous strength of his cold and dominant nature rose with tremendous force to meet and quell the tempest of his passion, and could not; dark circles made heavy shadows under his deep-set eyes, and his even lips, left colorless and white, were strained upon his clenched teeth. “God help me – I love you.”⁹⁷

This theme in the novel may have appealed to Rhodes’ sentimentalism, which has been commented on by his biographers.⁹⁸ Interestingly it did not appear to undermine Rhodes in the eyes of Stead, who probably took the political and ideological aspects of the book as reasons for its place in Rhodes’ thinking. Its protagonist says: ‘The men who succeed are the men of one idea, or at least they are the men who only have one idea at a time. Whereas people who live to amuse and be amused must have as many ideas as possible... The people who supply ideas to an idle public are very valuable, and may have great power’. Such sentiments would flatter a journalist. Harrington goes on – ‘A man who amuses others may often be a worker himself. He raises a laugh or excites a momentary interest by getting rid of his superfluous ideas and imaginations, reserving to himself all the time the one idea in which he believes’.⁹⁹ He differentiates the English from the Americans by virtue of the former’s fascination with society rather than the practical world, with being charming over achieving things. Harrington adds that in America there are only two ‘big’ ideas that practically affect society: ‘money and political influence’.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Francis M. Crawford, *An American Politician* (New York, 1884), pp. 326-7.

⁹⁸ Rotberg gives an account of Neville Pickering’s death and its aftermath using first hand sources, which describes Rhodes as ‘altering hysterically between laughter and tears, said in his high falsetto, “Ah, Barney, he will never sell you another parcel of diamonds”’ in Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 195.

⁹⁹ Crawford, *American Politician*, pp. 100-01.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

In referring Stead to this work so early in their acquaintance, Rhodes was not simply guiding him to a specific way of thinking about a preferred constitutional arrangement, he was offering him an idealised version of himself in John Harrington – ‘the prophet of the new faith’.¹⁰¹ Rhodes’ ability to mesmerise his friends and allies was thus not a coincidence, but rather a deliberate strategy on his part. ‘Americans of the same class are more interesting, less polished, better acquainted with the general laws that govern the development of nations’ – Rhodes was casting himself (and settler state colonists) as Harrington’s Americans, suggesting that European renewal would come from the imperial periphery.¹⁰² Harrington, we are told, ‘from the time he had begun to think for himself — and he was young when he reached that stage — he had formed a rooted determination to be first in his country, to be a great reformer or a great patriot, and he cared to study nothing that was not connected with this idea’.¹⁰³ There is an echo of the Confession of Faith which would have been appreciated by Rhodes, who like Harrington had been an idealist in his youth. Harrington was a free-trader, unlike Rhodes, whose views on trade were pragmatic and instrumental and supported his other objectives. In a discussion with an iron industry plutocrat, Mr. Ballymolloy, Harrington says ‘I am a tariff reform man. It is a great Democratic movement, and I should be bound to support it, even if I were not myself so thorough a believer in it as I am’. In response, the plutocrat encapsulates the Little Englander mentality that Froude argued in *Oceania* was blocking reform – ‘And when you have reformed other things, you’ll be for reforming iron, too, just to keep your hands in. And, indeed, I’ve no objection whatever to your reforming everything you like, so long as you don’t interfere with me and mine’.¹⁰⁴ Ballymolloy gives Harrington the impression that he is won over by his principled argument but on leaving the meeting goes

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 140.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 227-8.

to see the rival Republican candidate and hands him the election to the cries of ‘shame’ and ‘I am certain it was all done by some horrid stealing, or something, now, was not it?’¹⁰⁵ Crawford is deliberate in his description of Ballymolloy as the ‘Irish elector’, perhaps underscoring the significance of Ireland in the British political framework in Rhodes’ mind.¹⁰⁶ The principled politician who shared Rhodes’ appetite for reform, free trade and constitutional reform (in the novel’s case the creation of an American ‘civil service’), was frustrated by his inability to “square” his principal elector. The situation was not unlike the role of the IPP in the parliamentary balance of power. In his final oration of the novel Harrington links constitutional reform with civilisation and peace:

There are times in the life of a great nation when it behoves her chief men to examine and see whether the basis of her constitution is a sound one, and whether she can continue to grow great without any change in the fundamental conditions of her development. It is a bad and a dangerous time for a growing nation, but it is an almost inevitable stage in her life... Let us not think of the possibility of exposing ourselves again to civil war as an alternative against retrogression into barbarism. Civilization is peace, and to extend civilization is to increase the security of property in the world — of property and life and conscience.¹⁰⁷

These words might have been uttered by Rhodes himself. Vindex, the *nom de plume* of the Anglo-Irishman John Stuart Verschoyle, who compiled Rhodes’ speeches published in 1901 with the aid of Hawksley and Maguire (and the introduction and context curated by Rhodes himself), said: ‘Mr Rhodes had done his utmost to aid the progress of civilisation and prosperity in Mashonaland by finding the money out of his own purse for the extension of the Beira railway... He had pushed on the telegraph still more swiftly...

This Telegraph was Mr. Rhodes’s pet project for the rapid extension of civilisation into the realms of savagery’.¹⁰⁸ Rhodes consistently stated it was the ‘manifest destiny of Africa to

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 238.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 343.

¹⁰⁸ VINDEX, *His Political Life and Speeches*, p. 322.

be developed through European agency' and undoubtedly saw himself as part of a civilising project done in public service for the Empire.¹⁰⁹ In his own words – 'I have a big idea that I wish to carry out, and I know full well the reward, a reward which is the highest reward a human being can attain... the trust, the confidence, and the appreciation of my fellow citizens'.¹¹⁰ Aside from American literature, Rhodes saw himself – and his own existential crisis as a man in poor health with a lot of money and ambition – reflected in contemporary American capitalists: 'The only thing possible to carry this idea out is a secret one gradually absorbing the wealth of the world to be devoted to such an object. There is Hirst with twenty millions very soon to cross the unknown border and struggling in the dark to know what to do with his money and so one might go on ad infinitum.'¹¹¹

Rhodes' admiration for the American system was born in part of his interest in local matters being devolved to the areas that they directly concern and strategic considerations being debated and decided on in a central, imperial parliament; in Rhodes' characteristically unpunctuated style, he asserted:

[Americans] do not know what to tackle next to share in a scheme to take the Government of the whole world. Their present President is dimly seeing it but his horizon is limited to the New World north and south and so he would intrigue in Canada, Argentina and Brazil to the exclusion of England. Such a brain wants little to see the true solution he is still groping in the dark but is very near the discovery. For the American has been taught the lesson of Home Rule and the success of leaving the management of the local pump to the parish beadle. He does not burden his House of Commons with the responsibility of cleaning the parish drains the present position in the English House is ridiculous.¹¹²

Reform of the House of Commons was at the heart of his programme: Rhodes felt it should be concerned with strategy and leveraging the general imperial position for

¹⁰⁹ Rhodes to Currie (March 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C3A 140.

¹¹⁰ VINDEK, *His Political Life and Speeches*, p. 360.

¹¹¹ Rhodes to Stead (14 August 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 140.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

competitive advantage against other, aggressor nations, which the British Empire had historically not been adept at initiating. Moreover, Rhodes emphasised the threat posed by settler states going their own way because of constitution inequity and imbalance.

Rhodes' vision was often articulated in a manner that his critics found fanciful, even absurd. For instance, his use of a 'society copied from the Jesuits' to implement his vision is evocative of Umberto Eco, but, as he explains to Stead, this is only one part of his strategy, the other two components being 'the practical solution a differential rate and a copy of the United States Constitution':

In that is Home Rule or Federation and an organisation to work this out working in the House of Commons for decentralisation remembering that an Assembly that is responsible for a fifth of the world has no time to discuss the questions raised by Dr Tanner or the important matter of Mr O'Brien's breeches.¹¹³

He envisaged a group working for decentralisation in the House of Commons, which as we will see in chapter 5 is entirely in keeping with his approach to lobbying for business and imperial interests, which was to create a network of supporters who were, through employment or ideology, his clients and could influence policy through personal networks, pressure groups and the press. This was his Jesuitical organisation, but it relied entirely on him and his patronage to subsist. The creation of a movement therefore to deliver imperial federation was an extension of his *modus operandi*, and thus should be seen as such rather than as a subversive, or perhaps ludicrous, secret society.

This is one of the main reasons that Rhodes has been characterised by some scholars as megalomaniacal because he propagated the idea of a secret society, whilst at the same time

¹¹³ Ibid.

suggesting constitutional reform. His rhetoric added weight to this argument. Rhodes proposed ‘a commercial war with those who are trying to boycott [England’s] manufactures’ because Free Trade would not work ‘until the world comes to its senses’, by which he meant it is universally embraced.¹¹⁴ Thus the form – the Jesuitical society – was conflated with content – imperial federation – in the eyes of historians, which undermined the seriousness and legitimacy of the substantive aspiration; for instance: ‘You might finish the war by union with America and universal peace I mean after 100 years and a secret society organised like Loyola’s supported by the accumulation of wealth of those whose aspiration is a desire to do something’.¹¹⁵ Undoubtedly his personal life shaped his world view – a man with children would generally not pose the question ‘which of these incompetent relations they should leave their wealth to’.¹¹⁶ However, the emphasis in the Rhodes Papers is not on unification with the United States but unification of the British Empire via trade, tariffs and constitutional change.

The context of American trade policy during the period should be seen in the context of America’s economic growth and Britain’s comparative decline. Between 1880 and 1900 Britain’s share of international commerce fell from 25 to 21 per cent compared to the United States’ growth from 10 to 11 per cent and Germany’s growth from 9 to 12 per cent. Both of these economies had industrialised since 1870 putting pressure on Britain’s relative position and the trend was towards rapid American growth which would reach 35.8% of global manufacturing by some estimates by 1913. These trends, exacerbated by the ‘Great Depression’ of 1872-1896, were a theme of the popular press during the period and best-selling books such as Ernest William’s *Made in Germany* and F.A. McKenzie’s

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

*The American Invaders: Their Plans, Tactics and Progress.*¹¹⁷ ‘Declinism’ became an important feature of British political life during the period, which Chamberlain came to typify.¹¹⁸ These trends in global markets and domestic public opinion provided the backdrop for the tariff debates that would follow at the turn of the century and drew attention to the settler states and the wider British Empire as areas of competitive advantage that newly formed and expanding states like Germany, Italy and the United States lacked.

The role of the United States in British imperial politics was not merely a theoretical or hypothetical one, since American public policy was shaping debate in, and the policy of, the British Empire. The Protective Tariffs Act introduced by the future President McKinley in 1890 was to have a significant impact on intra-empire organisation and the thinking of its statesmen and public intellectuals. Rhodes was among them:

I notice Lord Salisbury gave me a favourable answer to the Fair Trades league as to preferential duties with the Colonies. It is the only plan for holding us together via self interest. If you do not look out you will have the New World bound together against us and hedged around with a McKinley tariff.¹¹⁹

Recently historians have argued that the McKinley Tariff should be seen as a ‘nationalistic response to the cosmopolitanism of Britain’s free trade empire’ rather than simply an act of American trade policy as American historians have tended to characterise it. This argument is developed to posit that the McKinley Tariff encouraged calls for more protectionism and imperial federation within the British Empire and for ‘increased

¹¹⁷ Friedberg, *Weary Titan*, pp. 24-37.

¹¹⁸ David Cannadine, "Apocalypse when? British politicians and British “decline” in the twentieth century”, in Peter Clarke and Clive Trebilcock (ed.), *Understanding Decline: Perceptions and Realities of Britain’s Economic Performance* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 263–69.

¹¹⁹ Rhodes to Stead (6 April 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 445.

sovereignty and federation' within the colonies.¹²⁰ The latter part of the nineteenth century saw increased protectionism across Europe as a result of global recession, which coincided with the amalgamation of European monarchies into nation states and the rise of the United States as a major economic and diplomatic power. The McKinley Tariff represents the most significant component of these trends but is by no means unique – rather it is merely remarkable in its scale and effect.¹²¹ Its most damaging effect from the point of view of free trade was its reciprocation clauses that ensured certain areas of trade would be effectively closed to British goods. There was a change in the nature of British exports over the course of the decade 1890-1900, which obviously cannot be entirely attributed to the McKinley Tariff, but it was a factor. The share of Britain's exports to the United States fell from 12.2% to 6.8%, whereas her trade with industrialised Europe (Belgium, Holland, France and Germany) increased from 20.3% to 23.9%, as did trade with non-industrialised Europe (from 13.4% to 16.1%). Exports to the settler states as a group rose from 14.9% to 16.5%, whereas exports with the empire as a whole were down from 18.2% to 15.9%. This, however, appears to represent trends that were already in evidence: trade with the low-income, non-industrialised empire was falling whilst exports to the industrialising empire were growing. Exports to the two largest settler states, Canada and Australia, were almost static at 2.7% to 2.8% and 7.5% to 7.4% respectively. As both economies were industrialising, it might have been expected that the share of British exports to those countries would have grown as was the case with Cape Colony and Natal (3.5% to 4.4%) and New Zealand (1.3% to 1.9%), which would reflect the trend in Europe. It is worth noting that Britain's exports to South American countries fell sharply, for example, Argentina from 3.2% to 2.5%, Chile from 1.2% to 1.1%, and Colombia from

¹²⁰ Palen, "McKinley Tariff", p. 396.

¹²¹ The German Confederation's Zollverein was an example of a trade area with barriers to foreign goods.

0.45% to 0.1%, showing the effects of American trade incursions.¹²² Thus the trade impact of McKinley was mixed for Britain; the impact within the formal Empire was minimal whereas in areas where Britain had previously exercised economic but not political dominance such as South America, there was a significant effect.

Rhodes himself observed ‘that the committee appointed to enquire into the McKindley [sic] tariff report that in certain articles our trade has fallen off 50 per cent and yet the fools do not see that if they do not look out they will have England shut out and isolated with 40 millions to feed and capable internally of supporting about 6 millions’.¹²³ As we have seen, this was not representative of the situation as per the official record. The *ad valorem* rate of the tariff at nearly 50 per cent had some unintended consequences – ‘agricultural exports [from Canada] to England increased from \$3.5 million in 1889 to \$15 million in 1892; during that time, animal and produce exports also increased from \$16 million to \$24 million’.¹²⁴ However, the intent of the tariff was enough for Conservative politicians such as Lord Randolph Churchill to demand a more aggressive trade policy – ‘the oyster of foreign markets should be opened by the ‘strong clasp knife, instead of being tickled with a feather’, he is reported as advocating.¹²⁵ *The Times* had this grim assessment as the Tariff came into effect:

We give an account this morning of some of the most important parts of the M’Kinley [sic] Tariff Act which comes into force to-day, and of the race among importers to get their goods bonded in time to have the benefit of the old rates. This time is now over, and henceforth much of the trade between the United States and this country must be carried

¹²² Brian Douglas Varian, "The course and character of late-Victorian British exports" (Doctor of Philosophy, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2017), p. 27.

¹²³ Rhodes to Stead (14 August 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 140.

¹²⁴ Palen, "McKinley Tariff", p. 396, p. 406.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

on, if at all, under the disadvantageous and almost prohibitive terms which the new act imposes.¹²⁶

Palen says *The Times* accused the tariff of having been designed to appease Irish-American interests, but although the point seems reasonable the issue he cites, 6 October 1890, the day the Bill came into effect, had no mention of an Irish dimension to the measure.¹²⁷ Irish American anti-British sentiment, however, was a factor in Anglo-American relations: Parnell had even spoken to the House of Representatives and had an audience with President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1879, when he visited the United States on a fund-raising mission and spoke in sixty two cities. Bew argues that this visit helped the cause of Home Rule and Parnell's rhetorical excesses worked up Irish-American feeling in support of the IPP.¹²⁸

Ged Martin has shown the extent to which the parliamentary form of imperial federation was common currency in British imperial politics in the nineteenth century, but that American parallels sometimes undermined it. He shows that far from being a fringe notion it was supported at various stages by Russell, Disraeli, Edward Stanley (later fifteenth Earl of Derby), the Duke of Newcastle, and Joseph Hume, the last of whom was father of Alan Octavian Hume, founder of the Indian National Congress. Disraeli even contemplated the idea of limited representation for India as late as 1866,¹²⁹ an idea that

¹²⁶ "We have news this morning of an important", *The Times* [London], no. 33135 (6 October 1890), p. 9, col. b, Times Digital Archive (14 August 2019).

¹²⁷ "The M'kinley Tariff Act.", *The Times* [London], no. 33135 (6 October 1890), p. 13, col. d, Times Digital Archive (12 September 2019). and "The New American Tariff.", *The Times* [London], no. 33135 (6 October 1890), p. 5, col. a, Times Digital Archive (1 October 2019).

¹²⁸ In Cincinnati on 20 February 1879, Parnell is reported to have advocated 'breaking the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England' in Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006* (Oxford, 2007), p. 317.

¹²⁹ Martin, "Empire Federalism", p. 86.

was taken up briefly by Dadabhai Naoroji¹³⁰ in 1906.¹³¹ Whereas on the other hand Gladstone, Derby, Cobden, John Stuart Mill and Labouchere, with whom Rhodes would come into very public conflict, were all opposed to any form of representation.¹³² American influence was evident earlier in the century, holding back the debate in Britain because of federalism's 'republican' basis. 'Vernon Smith opposed the federal clauses of the Australian Colonies Bill of 1850 because "he was not one of those who wished to see England establishing republican institutions all over the world"'.¹³³ The American Civil War also weighed on the debate in Britain as a perceived consequence of federalism.¹³⁴

Rhodes had viewed tariffs and trade policy as a means of influencing constitutional change from early in his political career.¹³⁵ But his preoccupation with tariffs as a matter of Cape and imperial policy was due less to economic and fiscal policy than it was to his view of imperial federation and the general strengthening of the empire's competitive position. In 1894, *The Economist* published an unfavourable commentary on Rhodes' proposal for tariffs relating to Britain and Rhodesia, which he said should be pegged to the current Cape Colony rate in preference to other competitor states. *The Economist* opined that 'the colonies owe something to mother country in return for the blood and treasure she has spent upon them, and for the protection they continue to receive from the British Navy' and argued that 'to represent [any favourable arrangement with Britain] as an act of grace on the part of the colony towards us is utterly ridiculous'.¹³⁶ It favoured European trade

¹³⁰ Dadabhai Naoroji (1825 – 1917), Member of Parliament for Finsbury Central 1892-95 and a President of the Indian National Congress.

¹³¹ Daniel Mark Hunt, "Politics before Representation: Indian Parliamentary Activism 1892-1900" (Master of Studies, University of Oxford, 2016), p. 35.

¹³² Martin, "Empire Federalism", p. 67.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Rhodes to Stead (6 July 1889) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol i no 128.

¹³⁶ "Mr Cecil Rhodes On South African Tariffs", *The Economist* [London], no. 2652 (23 June 1894), p. 761, col. a, Gale Primary Sources (12 September 2020).

and said that imperial tariff reform would have implications for the bilateral arrangements that Britain had made with Belgium and the German customs union, the *Zollverein*:

‘[w]hatever small advantage our manufacturers might obtain in the chartered territories would consequently have to be very dearly paid for through the imposition of retaliatory duties upon our products by foreign Governments. And we are certainly not going to play such a foolish game as that at the bidding of Mr Rhodes’.¹³⁷ Later that year *The Economist* recommended a 20 per cent tariff on diamonds imported from the South African colonies: ‘though his attempt to bring about a differentiation of duties in favour of the Colony of which he is the President, has so far been thwarted, Mr Rhodes is too persistent in his aims to accept any defeat as final. He may in future have to deal with a more pliable Colonial Secretary, in which case there would be the certainty of unpleasant consequences’.¹³⁸

Rhodes set out his view that trade policy is intrinsically connected with nationality and history during his speech to BSAC shareholders in January 1895; a view that stood implacably against the position of *The Economist*:

There are 60 millions of your people in the United States. You created that Government; that is your production, and they cannot get rid of it now. What is your trade with the United States? Your exports there are about £40,000,000 per annum. In South Africa and Egypt we have only 600,000 whites, but your exports there amount to £20,000,000; you have £15,000,000 with the Cape and Natal, almost entirely British goods; and £4,000,000 with Egypt, where you have a fair chance for your goods. You are doing £20,000,000 with these small dependencies, as against £40,000,000 with another creation of your own, which has shut your goods out, and where there are 60 millions of your own people. If they gave a fair chance to your trade, you would be doing £150,000,000 with the United States.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ "British Central Africa", *The Economist* [London], no. 2675 (1 December 1894), p. 1465, col. a, Gale Primary Sources (12 September 2020).

¹³⁹ "Mr Rhodes On Tariff Policy".

Rhodes set out the link that appeared clear to him between the waves of settlement from Britain to the New World and current trade policy, implying that they were interdependent despite the divergence in British and American trade. It made no sense to him that more trade could be done *per capita* between Britain and territories whose populations were not ostensibly ‘British’, or at least in the majority of British extraction, than with the United States, which British immigrants had created. The two examples he chose to make his point were, however, jurisdictions where Great Britain exerted a high degree of direct political control, which was not the case in the United States. *The Economist* sought to undermine Rhodes’ argument by attacking not the argument itself but its statistical underpinnings, the exactitude of which was not fundamental to his argument. ‘This comparison’, it argued, ‘besides being rather unintelligible, is throughout most fallacious. It assumes that only the white people of South Africa consume British products, and it ignores the fact that the Cape receives our product not only for consumption in the colony itself, but also for distribution throughout all South Africa. Its most glaring defect, however, is its gross misrepresentation of the extent of our trade with the Cape and Natal – a matter on which Mr Rhodes might have been expected to speak with accuracy. He puts the value of that trade at about £15,000,000 per annum, and in doing so just about doubles its true amount’.¹⁴⁰ The newspaper then reproduced the value of British exports to the Cape and Natal for the previous five years, which were around half the number Rhodes had stated (£8,584,400 in 1893). Rutherford Harris, wrote to the editor defending Rhodes’ figures accusing *The Economist* of having made ‘a mistake, and taken figures relating to the exports [of] the Cape Colony alone, without adding the exports to Natal!’¹⁴¹ Rhodes’ was aware of the intervention because the original letter was copied to him by Rutherford

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ "Our Trade With South Africa", *The Economist* [London], no. 2684 (2 February 1895), p. 157, col. b, Gale Primary Sources (4 September 2020).

Harris and remains with the Rhodes Papers in the Bodleian Library.¹⁴² *The Economist* had been correct in its limited assertion, its figures had included both Cape and Natal export figures (£7,232,341 for the Cape and £1,352,047 for Natal) and it pointed this out on its letters pages. When Rhodes resigned as Prime Minister in the wake of the Jameson Raid, *The Economist* went as far as to suggest that the BSAC charter should be suspended for five years by Act of Parliament – ‘the administrative anarchy in Rhodesia [should be terminated] by appointing an Imperial Governor, with the powers of an Indian Viceroy’.¹⁴³ Leading by example, Rhodes entered a clause into the charter of the BSAC in the same year which stipulated the tariff on British goods entering Rhodesia should not exceed the level of the Cape Colony tariff at the time of the Charter.¹⁴⁴ Even if his immediate aims for South African and imperial federation had been curtailed by the Jameson Raid, this unilateral measure, which was within his own control, showed his future intent.

American influence and the settler states

Despite his views on trade, there are relatively few examples of Rhodes trying to engage his fellow colonial leaders in Canada and the Australian colonies in intra-imperial collaboration in trade policy. This may have been due to a lack of pretext, for instance his business dealings were centred on southern Africa and his political interests focused on London in order to control the sub-imperial context in southern Africa, or simply the comparative shortness of his period in office in the Cape. However, he did share his views on imperial federation with Sir Harry Parkes, Prime Minister of New South Wales, and Sir

¹⁴² Rutherford-Harris to Rhodes (29 January 1895), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C27 44 (2).

¹⁴³ "Mr Rhodes' Resignation", *The Economist* [London], no. 2758 (4 July 1896), p. 854, col. a, Gale Primary Sources (4 September 2020).

¹⁴⁴ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 91.

John Macdonald, Prime Minister of Canada. The Rhodes Papers contain only these two communications with serving settler state leaders, as well as correspondence with a future Canadian Prime Minister Sir Charles Tupper when he was Canada's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.¹⁴⁵ In his letter to Parkes, Rhodes had sought to influence the development of federal politics in Australia, but without his system of lobbyists on the ground he was ineffective and actually cack-handed. Parkes was a key figure in the federation of Australia and the impression given by Rhodes' letter ('You will excuse the liberty I take in writing to you') is that they did not know each other and had not been in touch before, which is remarkable given the nature and scale of Rhodes' request:

...I wish to congratulate you on your success in the initial stages of federating Australia. I must say I do not like the title of "Commonwealth of Australia"; it indicates a desire for separation, and I would have liked to see you keep the appeal in law to the Privy Council with the condition that at least one Australian Judge should be a member of the Privy Council. I recognise that in the future, if we remain a part of the British Empire, which is my present hope, we must receive special consideration from the mother country. I do not know whether you have considered the question of preferential consideration as to our products, but I believe if we were united in our views we would obtain such consideration.... I think if you would change the name [to] Dominion of Australia, out of regard to the English people, you would enormously strengthen our demands for preferential consideration as to our products.¹⁴⁶

Rhodes proposed a 'Canadian' solution to Australian federation based on the Canada settlement of 1867, whereby the name 'Dominion' would be used to underline the imperial tie and judicial recourse to the 'mother country' would be maintained through the Privy Council. It has been argued recently that imperial tariff reform increased in popularity in the Australian colonies during the end of the nineteenth century due to a combination of local and external factors. Locally there had been a banking crisis which had exacerbated economic difficulties in Australia, in conditions that were already affected by the global

¹⁴⁵ Tupper to Rhodes (16 May 1892), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS. Afr. s 228 C2A 15.

¹⁴⁶ "Mr. Cecil Rhodes And Fiscal Policy", *The Times* [London], no. 37174 (1 September 1903), p. 6, col. b, Times Digital Archive (14 August 2019).

recession of the end of the century.¹⁴⁷ However, the principal preoccupation of Australian politics during the period was federal union, which culminated in the enactment of the Constitution of Australia on 1 January 1901. New Zealand and Fiji had been part of this process but had elected not to join the federation and there was perhaps little enthusiasm in Australian politics for other constitutional initiatives. Parkes' biographer tells an interesting vignette about a lunch meeting that the governor had with George Parkin from the IFL and Robert Reid.¹⁴⁸ A colleague of Parkes said of Parkin's case: "The idea... of a huge Council representing England and the colonies, debating whether we are to go to war &c. seems to me absurd'. In discussing this with Parkes he 'remarked how different the position of Lord Knutsford [the secretary of state for the colonies] is in Canada to what it is in Australia. "That must be so", was [Parkes'] reply, "until we federate". Sir Henry then said, "I could confederate these colonies in twelve months [but] [t]here are difficulties"¹⁴⁹ Parkes identified the problem imperial federation faced: its potential components were at different points in their constitutional evolutions, which led to different needs and expectations and different treatment by Britain. It has been argued convincingly that the McKinley Tariff pushed the Australians toward Canada and *vice versa* in order to find new markets when McKinley cut off the United States to their exports.¹⁵⁰ Australian politicians in the years before Australian federation had lobbied the imperial government to amend the Constitution of Australia to allow bilateral trade arrangements with other settler states, as well as to repeal conflicting trade agreements with some European powers. In 1894, the Defence Minister of Victoria Robert Reid and the Chief Secretary of Queensland Thomas M'ilwraith travelled to Britain; *The Times*

¹⁴⁷ Palen, "McKinley Tariff", p. 402.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Reid (1842-1904), Scottish-born Australian politician, member of Victoria's Legislative Council from 1892; later the colony's defence minister and from 1902 an Australian senator.

¹⁴⁹ A. W. Martin, *Henry Parkes: a biography* (Carlton, Victoria, 1980), p. 383.

¹⁵⁰ Palen, "McKinley Tariff".

quoted Reid speaking to an audience in England: ‘we in Australia want to trade as freely with Canada and South Africa as Kent trades with Surrey, or Surrey with Yorkshire. With the introduction of prohibitive tariffs and with foreign countries taking away our trade in all directions, our cry must be “Britain for the British”’.¹⁵¹ The Canadians had signed a trade agreement with the West Indies in 1890 in response to McKinley and US trade incursions into the British West Indies, which were now directing their own trade policy, which led to a doubling of Canadian trade with the West Indies from \$1.8 million in 1887 to \$3.4 million in 1892.¹⁵² The realignment away from the United States was taking place during a period of rapid industrialisation and technological change – Parkes and Rhodes were both proponents of technological improvements in communications, principally railways, in their home countries. Canada was building its intercontinental railway and a Canadian-Australian cable was completed in 1894. The economies of the settler states were growing accordingly and communications were increasingly integrated.

The Canadians were the trailblazers of imperial federation. This was in part due to the presence of the United States across the border, which represented an alternative and alien republican model that was purchasing neighbouring European colonies throughout the nineteenth century. There was an additional factor in that Gladstone was pulling British troops out of the settler states during the period, which in the Canadian context was not merely problematic for the suppression of internal rebellions from indigenous peoples. The United States indicated, if not consistently but frequently, a desire to annex Canada, typified by the tenure of US Secretary of State William Seward in the late 1860s.

Gladstone’s ideological withdrawals had the effect of increasing fear of the United States

¹⁵¹ "Great Britain and the Colonies", *The Times* [London], no. 34216 (20 March 1894), p. 5, col. f, Times Digital Archive (12 September 2020).

¹⁵² Palen, "McKinley Tariff", p.401.

and anxiety about a decreasing connection with Britain. The McKinley Tariff accelerated these processes. Rhodes wrote to Sir John Macdonald, Prime Minister of Canada, following the Canadian Parliament's motion on customs arrangements to encourage trade in British, rather than American, goods, but Sir John died on 6 June 1898 before receiving the letter. When the letters to Parkes and Macdonald were reprinted in *The Times* in 1903 after Rhodes' death, *The Spectator* opined that '[t]he letters are characteristic and interesting, though we cannot admit that the charge that English politicians could not see the future comes well from the mouth of Mr. Rhodes, in view of his forecast of the result of the war and his attitude during the siege of Kimberley'.¹⁵³ *The Spectator's* assessment may have shown the impact of the public airing of the Liberal Party correspondence discussed in detail in chapter 4 on this particular press relationship.

The challenge to *imperial* federation posed by *colonial* federation is emphasised by the content of Rhodes' final will. At the time of his death in 1902, South Africa was still at war and federation was one of a number of potential outcomes of the conflict. Grootte Schuur, Rhodes' mansion in Cape Town, would 'be retained for a residence for the Prime Minister for the time being of the said Federal Government of the States of South Africa', but in the meantime it was to be used as a park for the people.¹⁵⁴ His intention of funding the education at Oxford of young colonists was designed to '[instil] into their minds the advantage to the Colonies as well as to the United Kingdom of the retention of the unity of the Empire... and foster an appreciation of the advantages which I implicitly believe will result from the union of the English-speaking peoples throughout the world and to encourage in the students from the United States of North America who will benefit from

¹⁵³ "[Untitled]", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3923 (5 September 1903), p. 334, col. b, ProQuest (19 September 2019).

¹⁵⁴ Stead, *Last will and testament of Cecil John Rhodes*, p. 15-6.

the American scholarships to be established for the reason above given'.¹⁵⁵ In order to ensure that his wishes were carried out in the way that he intended he appointed many of his network as trustees, including Grey, Beit, Stead, Hawksley, Milner and finally Jameson who was added by codicil in March 1902 shortly before Rhodes' death. Maguire did not make the list but Rosebery, by then former Prime Minister and ex-president of the defunct IFL, was appointed to give some additional weight.¹⁵⁶ Despite this, as one biographer has pointed out: 'few of the specific objects of the scheme as outlined in Rhodes' will were pursued with much practical activity by the trustees'.¹⁵⁷

Sir Charles Tupper, Premier of Nova Scotia between 1864 and 1867, who led his province into the Canadian Confederation and was Prime Minister of Canada for 69 days in 1896, was a keen proponent of imperial federation. He wrote to Rhodes on 16 May 1892, when he was still Canada's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, to draw to Rhodes' attention the recent resolution by a 'large majority' in the Canadian House of Commons that stated that when Britain accords Canadian products 'more favourable terms than it accords to the products of foreign countries, the Parliament of Canada will be prepared to accord corresponding advantages'. Tupper added a point on intra-empire coordination to lobby Britain into agreement – 'I am quite satisfied that if similar action is adopted in your Legislature and in Australia the question will become one of more practical importance at no distant date'.¹⁵⁸

The content of Tupper's note reflects the tone of Canadian federalism and general attitude to the Empire that was latent before the McKinley Tariff but appears to have accelerated in

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 23-7.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁵⁷ Flint, *Rhodes*, p. 243.

¹⁵⁸ Tupper to Rhodes (16 May 1892) MS Rhodes MSS. Afr. s 228 C2A 15.

its wake, and also the broader context of, and concern about, the rise of the United States as the emerging geopolitical and industrial power in the world.¹⁵⁹ Tupper referenced the need for reciprocity in his article in *The Nineteenth Century* of April 1892 entitled ‘How to Federate the Empire: A Reply to Critics’:

I proposed that when Australasia and South Africa were each united under a central government, as Canada now is, the representatives in London of each of these great outlying portions of the Empire, being members of their respective Governments, should *ex officio* be sworn of Her Majesty’s Privy Council, and thus be placed in a position to be called into consultation with the Cabinet on all questions of foreign policy affecting the countries from which they came.¹⁶⁰

Tupper was proposing a scheme which was remarkably similar in form to the one put forward by Stead in his ‘Programme’ in 1885 and dealt with foreign, defence and trade policy. Tupper emphasised the opposition in the British government to what he considered a reasonable constitutional evolution – ‘This has been treated as a demand from Canada, and as a great concession for the Imperial Government to make’.¹⁶¹ He did not however support parliamentary federation.¹⁶² His proposal was, as he said, inspired by the proposals that Earl Grey had put forward and showed that there was a clear relationship between policy makers in the metropole, the press and colonial statesmen on the issue of imperial federation. The McKinley Tariff undoubtedly added to this concern but was not the whole issue. *The Times* reported Sir Alexander Galt, the first Canadian High Commissioner in London, as saying: ‘Canada now presented herself before us with an enterprising and intelligent population of four millions, enjoying the fullest measure of

¹⁵⁹ There was no correspondence between Tupper and Rhodes included in E. M. Saunders (ed.), *The life and letters of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, bart.* (London, 1916).

¹⁶⁰ Sir Charles Tupper, "How to Federate the Empire: A Reply to Critics", *The Nineteenth century: a monthly review*, no. 182 (April 1892), p. 525, col. a, ProQuest (13 August 2019).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Martin, “Empire Federalism”, p. 68.

civil and religious liberty, guaranteed by her connexion with the British Empire, and rejoicing in her allegiance to the best constitutional Sovereign who had ever reigned'.¹⁶³ Galt had been born in Britain and was thus arguably sympathetic to the imperial connection but his view appears to have been that of the majority of at least Canadian politicians and arguably the Canadian public at large. This was in part due to the sense that the overwhelming position of the American body politic was that Canada would ultimately seek to enter the Union, which was never seemingly a majority position in Canadian public opinion or politics.¹⁶⁴ It did, however, prove a divisive and significant theme or trend in Canadian politics during the second half of the nineteenth century, as George Denison, President of the British Empire League of Canada observed in his memoir.¹⁶⁵ Attempts by some interests to increase reciprocity with the United States was seen in a 'deliberate treasonable design':

The Commercial Union had its birth in treason... and was designed in the hope of inducing the people of Canada to believe in the fallacy that, by tying themselves hand and foot to a foreign and hostile Power, they would get richer by it... [As the United States] had conquered and stolen States in the South, they had desired to betray Canada in the north. The scheme of Imperial Federation was designed to build up Canada in her industry, and absolutely to demonstrate the delusive theory propounded by the authors of that nefarious scheme Commercial Union.¹⁶⁶

In the run-up to the 1891 Canadian election, Denison observed that an 'outgrowth in patriotic feeling has been [caused by] the belief that a conspiracy has been afoot to betray this country into annexation. The McKinley Bill was part of the scheme.'¹⁶⁷ Macdonald's electoral performance – a narrow victory – has been in part attributed to his anti-

¹⁶³ "THE FUTURE OF CANADA.", *The Times* [London], no. 30103 (28 January 1881), p. 3, col. c, Times Digital Archive (2 February 2021).

¹⁶⁴ Palen, "McKinley Tariff", p. 403.

¹⁶⁵ G.T. Denison, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity: Recollections and Experiences (Classic Reprint)* (Toronto, 1909), p. 197.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 93-4.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

annexation rhetoric. ‘Macdonald and his allies were thus able to force the elections of 1891 into a national referendum concerning Canadian-American relations, pulling off a narrow victory over those favouring unrestricted reciprocity.’¹⁶⁸ When the Canadian House of Commons announced its preferential tariff in favour of British goods, Rhodes wrote to Milner enclosing a cutting from *The Times* announcing the change and suggesting it as a model for the Cape on the basis that ‘whichever party gets in’ at the then upcoming 1898 General Election the Customs Union will go through – Rhodes used the Canadian example as a model for the Cape, as he suggested to Milner:

The words of the enclosed [cutting from the Times announcing Canadian preferential tariff in favour of British goods] seem to suit for our upper limit clause. We might say “the duty on goods [sic] growth, produce or manufacture in the United Kingdom (and of the British colonies and possessions) shall not exceed present Cape Tariff.” The part of the clause as to British colonies I have bracketed to be excluded because many of them have most unfair tariffs to the Mother Country and they should not receive this privilege until they change their manners.¹⁶⁹

Rhodes typifies the linkages in policy making across the settler states and shows the interconnectedness of politics across them. It also shows how the actions of individual colonial politicians in settler states could be designed to influence policy elsewhere in other settler states and in British imperial politics more generally.

Summary

Imperial federation was held back for a number of reasons. The principal reason was that processes of unionism and federation were taking place in the settler states which made them somewhat introspective on constitutional issues. This is particularly true of

¹⁶⁸ Palen, “McKinley Tariff”, P. 405.

¹⁶⁹ Rhodes to Milner (July 1898), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 160.

Australia; South Africa was going through a much more difficult and violent process toward constitutional union. Canada is anomalous insofar as it was the first to federate and was thus trying to develop its constitution outwardly when its counterparts were still internally federating. The United States was a military issue only for the Canadians, whereas its influence was economic and political in the other settler states. The McKinley Tariff had the unintended consequence of actually stimulating trade partnerships within the British Empire. However, the Canadian example shows that there was little political will in Britain to create a closer economic union, for which the Canadians were asking, which might have created a model for the other settler states where federalism was more latent. In Britain itself the most prominent proponents of imperial federation – Rosebery and Chamberlain – were unable, or unwilling in Rosebery’s case, to take the initiative forward. Jameson wrote to *The Times* following Rhodes’ death to highlight Rhodes’ suggestion that ‘preferential consideration’ be given to British products in the settler states as the debate around imperial preference was taking shape, led by Chamberlain:

The preferential tariff, embodied in the Customs Convention, having been passed in both Houses of Legislature in this Colony, the enclosed letters written by Mr. Rhodes more than 12 years ago, may prove of interest to your readers, more particularly in view of the attention which is now being devoted in England to proposals similar to those put forward at that time by Mr Rhodes.¹⁷⁰

The legacy of Rhodes’ individual undertakings with settler state leaders is obviously limited insofar as the proposals did not reach fruition in the way he had intended. Yet he had thought it worth attempting to create a united front with other settler states. Rhodes had attempted through his agenda for South African federation and changes to the BSAC’s charter to create a model for the imperial tariff, which he hoped could be adopted as part of

¹⁷⁰ "Mr. Cecil Rhodes And Fiscal Policy".

a more grandiose constitutional arrangement, the details of which are explored in chapter 4. The consequences of Rhodes' commitment to Greater Britain on his life and work can be traced through his career in South Africa, as the following chapters shows.

CHAPTER 3. Theory and Practice in South Africa

The previous chapter showed Greater Britain to be an important component of the dialectical and multipolar debates that were current during the latter decades of the nineteenth century in Britain as well as in the British settler states. These ideas alone, however, do not explain Rhodes' particular, idiosyncratic imperial philosophy, the origins of which are enmeshed in the early period of his career in South African business and politics. Rhodes' ideas needed to take practical form through the diplomatic engagement of the colonial authorities as well as African and Afrikaner interests, with his plans for imperial expansion and colonial consolidation supported by the innovation of railways and telegraphs to create a functioning South African internal market with outlets at the Cape and, Rhodes hoped, Delagoa Bay. The anxiety about barriers to federation and the perceived Boer threat emanating from the politics of both the South African Republic and the Cape Colony, led to the Jameson Raid that almost ended Rhodes' political career. This section, therefore, examines Rhodes' political career in South Africa with reference to his business interests. It takes Bechuanaland as a case study, which was a preoccupation of the whole of Rhodes' political career, almost from its inception in 1880 to his death. Rhodes was initially appointed by the High Commissioner to arbitrate between local interest groups, and later he came into conflict with his successor, Sir Charles Warren, who was more clearly the representative of the *imperial* rather than *colonial* interest. Once Rhodes had been granted the BSAC charter he sought unsuccessfully to have Bechuanaland absorbed into an expanded BSAC domain and the territory served as the staging post for his successful initial incursions into Matabeleland, when the local African rulers supported Rhodes over Lobengula, and the spectacular failure of the Jameson Raid, which caused Rhodes to step down from both the BSAC and from the Cape premiership.

Rhodes' motivation for the annexation of Bechuanaland and his ill-fated intervention in the Transvaal benefit from comparison because his business interests were at different stages of maturity, which makes a single economic explanation for both difficult to justify given the different contexts. The early period of Rhodes' activity in Bechuanaland was also marked by the beginnings of his use of the press in England to advance the cause of imperial expansion in Africa.

Bechuanaland fits geographically and theoretically into the middle of the debate about the South African union. It was geopolitically crucial to the territorial aspirations of Britain, sub-imperial actors such as Rhodes, and Germany and Portugal which had expansionary ambitions for their nearby colonies. Moreover, it was a confluence of South African ethnic and national groups – African, Afrikaner, Cape and imperial interests – which made it a microcosm of the wider country in some respects; Rhodes explained its importance in the Cape Assembly in 1883 soon after he was first elected:

I look upon this Bechuanaland territory as the Suez Canal of the trade of this country, the key of its road to the interior... The question before us really is this, whether this Colony is to be confined to its present borders, or whether it is to become the dominant state in South Africa – whether, in fact, it is to spread its civilisation over the interior.¹

Rhodes' statement shows that there were two significant geopolitical explanations for the importance he applied to Bechuanaland. First, the territory was for him 'the Suez Canal of trade', which he viewed as vital for the extension of the Cape Colony and the British Empire northwards. As his audience was the Cape Assembly, he does not mention the empire, rather he put the 'national' interest of the Cape Colony at the centre of his

¹ Rhodes speaking in the House of Assembly (16 August 1883) in VINDEKX, *His Political Life and Speeches*, pp. 63-64.

argument, which is early evidence of his use of the Cape Colony itself as a ‘bridgehead’, as well as a sign of the evolving colonial ‘nationalism’ of the Cape. Bechuanaland’s vitality to imperial expansion is implied. The second point is contained in the phrase ‘dominant state in South Africa’, which alludes to the balance of power in the settler state world of South Africa and Rhodes’ ambition for the unification of these states led by the Cape Colony, within the British Empire. An alteration in the balance of power whereby the South African Republic controlled the route to the north, as well as the goldfields of Johannesburg, would have made the already difficult undertakings of territorial expansion and a Cape Colony-led union, near impossible. Rhodes sought to avoid such an outcome for his entire political career and it is argued in this section that unionism – that is the campaign for a federation of South Africa – influenced all Rhodes’ domestic decision making in the Cape Colony and on its periphery. His engagement with the Bond, the Afrikaner party in the Cape Parliament, was important because it enabled Rhodes to govern when he was in office between 1890 and 1896, but also the Bond served a dual function as the touchstone for Cape Afrikaner opinion and that of public opinion in the South African Republic. In seeking to appease the Bond, Rhodes was attempting an accommodation with the South African Republic, which became a moot point after the Jameson Raid when his attempts at communal cooperation became less credible. This section examines Rhodes’ early activities in Bechuanaland, including his early engagement with the press, as well as his use of political tactics, including forerunners to the use of lobbyists in the metropole. These early lobbying activities lacked the imperial dimension and network that enabled his influence on British imperial politics later. The section shows how issues that arose in Bechuanaland, principally of land and settlement, might have shaped Rhodes’ view of unionism in South Africa and how Rhodes’ practical engagement with the periphery of empire and imperial expansion shaped his view of

Greater Britain. Finally, the role of Rhodes' business interests is considered in relation to his political activities with reference to Bechuanaland and the Jameson Raid.

In 1892 *The Spectator*, which would go on to campaign vigorously against Rhodes as a result of the South African War, summarised the position Rhodes had established for himself in the new British possessions in and around Bechuanaland – which was to be the apogee of his success there:

In Bechuanaland Mr. Rhodes reigns as Protector, giving orders to native chiefs; in North Mashonaland he reigns as friend and counsellor of the native warrior, Lobengula, for whose friendship he pays £1,200 a year, remitted monthly, in a “globular” packet of sovereigns; in North Zambesia he reigns through Mr. Johnston, who is at once agent of the Company and Imperial Commissioner; and in Mashonaland he reigns through a person as remarkable as himself – Dr. Jameson – who, by the evidence of the facts, as well as of Mr. Rhodes, and all directors of the Company, possesses a gift for administering affairs and conciliating men, such as we often seek in vain among our statemen.²

The Spectator made this assessment before the defining event of Rhodes' career, the Jameson Raid, disrupted this narrative of ordered, benevolent progress and success. The ultimate failure of Rhodes to absorb Bechuanaland into the greater BSAC domain was intrinsically linked to the failure of the Raid and the corresponding diminution of Rhodes' reputation and influence in both South Africa and London. It differs from Rhodes' other significant territorial failure – Delagoa Bay – because Bechuanaland's destiny was entirely in the hands of the British government, rather than a foreign power.

Sub-imperialism in Bechuanaland

² "MR. CECIL RHODES ON MASHONALAND", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3362 (3 December 1892), p. 809, col. a, ProQuest (19 September 2019).

Bechuanaland, to the north of the Cape, was a collection of independent African states that acted as a multi-purpose buffer zone between the Cape Colony and the Transvaal, and between the states of South Africa and European empires to the north-east and north-west. The principal local ruler, Mankoroane, found himself at the centre of this confluence when Boer settlers established two petty republics, Stellaland and Goschen, in his territory. Before long the settlers had appealed to the Government of the Cape for annexation. With the prospect of Transvaal incursions, the Governor of Cape Colony, Sir Hercules Robinson, made Rhodes the deputy commissioner for the territory in 1884 with the remit of satisfying both the settlers and Mankoroane. Characteristic of the complex interplay between the polities of South Africa, Bechuanaland had been the subject of external factors long before Rhodes became involved in its affairs. The 1881 Pretoria Convention had re-established the Transvaal as an independent state and formalised its western borders, which gave renewed impetus to Boer freebooters who had been making claims on the territories of the local African states in Bechuanaland before the First Boer War and the Transvaal's annexation in 1877. The disunity of the local African chieftains and their misplaced use of, and indeed trust of, Boer adventurers as mercenaries, facilitated the incursions.³

These events, moreover, were happening as German activity in South West Africa was intensifying, with the prospect of Bechuanaland forming a territorial bridge between the German protectorate on the Atlantic coast (modern Namibia), established in August 1884, and the Transvaal. A protectorate in Bechuanaland was established by the British in 1884 to re-establish order on the border of the Cape. John Mackenzie, a missionary with an

³ Paul Maylam, *Rhodes, the Tswana, and the British: Colonialism, Collaboration, and Conflict in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1885-1899* (1980), pp. 17-18.

experience of, and interest in, the Twana, had been appointed deputy commissioner and proclaimed British sovereignty over the petty republics, thus antagonising both the Transvaal and the Cape Colony before resigning in 1884.⁴ Rhodes was appointed in his place and came to a settlement with some of the settlers quickly. *The Times* reported on 11 September 1884 that Mr. Rhodes ‘has come to an agreement with the Stellaland burghers. The status quo will be maintained, hostilities being suspended pending the annexation of Stellaland by the Cape Government. Mootsios's territory has been seized by the Goshenites’.⁵ This compelled British intervention and on 29 October 1884 the British appointed Sir Charles Warren Special Commissioner for Bechuanaland, who entered the territory with a force of 5000 men the following January to expel the Boer freebooters.

Rhodes had used his agreement in Stellaland, in which he reaffirmed the Boer settlers’ land rights,⁶ and the combination and intersection of land and sovereignty, to move the territory toward annexation; as he put it in a letter to *The Times* of 1885:

The settlement had in fact gone too far to be disturbed. The original freebooters had in many cases sold their farms, and the occupants at the time of the proclamation of the protectorate were, to a large extent, farmers from the neighbouring States and the Cape Colony, who had acquired their rights by purchase. The fault, if any, lies with the tardy action of the English Government of that day.⁷

The blame Rhodes attached to the ‘English Government’ is a theme that developed during his early engagement with colonial politics and government. The distance from the centre of power, in Rhodes’ view, meant that both local and imperial interests went unserved.

⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

⁵ "South Africa", *The Times* [London], no. (11 September 1884), p. 5, col. d, Times Digital Archive (18 September 2019).

⁶ Andrew Manson, "Christopher Bethel and the Securing of the Bechuanaland Frontier, 1878-1884", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24/3 (1998), p. 504.

⁷ Rhodes, "Bechuanaland", *The Times* [London], no. 31601 (11 November 1885), p. 8, col. a, Times Digital Archive (12 September 2019).

The result in the case of Bechuanaland was uncertain property rights for people who were not themselves ‘freebooters’ but merely the ‘settler’ successors of the freebooters who, Rhodes claimed, had bought their land in good faith. Guaranteeing property rights meant a higher authority than a hastily formed republic, which would ensure the territory came into the British sphere. ‘For, once the land claims were recognized by Mr. Mackenzie [Rhodes’ predecessor as deputy commissioner], it became a matter of little importance to Her Majesty’s Government who was placed in charge of the district’ because a recognised legal framework – that of Great Britain – was by then established. Rhodes concluded that ‘it was now clearly the proper policy to interfere as little as possible in the local dissensions of the inhabitants of this community’.⁸ The position of limited interference in British possessions once integrated into the empire was an entirely consistent position which he maintained through his career, as demonstrated by his otherwise seemingly incongruous support for Home Rule.

But guaranteeing property rights was seen as a cynical ploy in some quarters in England. General Warren had envisaged a scheme for settlement of the Protectorate, including the carving out of around 7000 farms, which the imperial government rejected on the basis of viability and cost.⁹ F. W. Chesson of the Aborigines’ Protection Society wrote to *The Times* accusing Rhodes of confecting a scheme to disown the African chieftains, quoting Warren he said: ‘There is more land given away in the land registry than actually exists in the ground, and any attempt to carry out the agreement under this land register would cause the farms to run right over the lands pledged to Moshette’s and Montsioa’s people, and would also prevent the pledges given by the Secretary of State to Mankoroane from

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Maylam, *Rhodes, the Tswana, and the British*, p. 21.

being carried out'.¹⁰ Rhodes' friend, Ralph (later Sir Ralph) Williams, wrote a defence of Rhodes' position in *The Times* in answer to Chesson's piece:

Mr. Rhodes has repeatedly, both publicly and privately, stated that he would be no party to the unfair despoiling of either Moshette or Mankoroane. I have heard him say... "If you have chosen to award farms in Moshette's country to the north, and in Mankoroane's country to the south, outside your own boundaries, you have given what was not yours to give; and I tell you fairly that I will not advise that either of those chiefs be mulcted of land to satisfy such claims."¹¹

Preserving the rights of indigenous peoples was a line of defence that featured heavily in the story of Britain's imperial expansion. Rhodes was aware of the power of 'native' issues to influence public opinion and therefore political debate, particularly, as he put it, amongst the 'temperance and missionary section of the English people'.¹² Rhodes' appreciated the ability of missionaries to act as a disruptive force against his key aim of South African federation because of their support for African rights over Bond or wider Afrikaner interests. For instance, the Afrikaner paper *Zuid Afrikaan* accused him of behaving like that 'infamous' missionary Mackenzie when he agreed to provide guns to an African chief with whom the BSAC was negotiating.¹³ These alternative imperial bridgehead sought to bring African states into the imperial sphere to, as Trollope observed, 'civilize' Africans through 'teaching a great many hymns', as opposed to Rhodes' model of integrating African states into the South African state system in a way that would satisfy the Bond without particular regard to African interests.¹⁴ The missionary tendency to encourage 'natives' to seek the protection of the Crown was an additional complication

¹⁰ F. W. Chesson, "Sir Charles Warren's Recall", *The Times* [London], no. 31558 (22 September 1885), p. 13, col. d, Times Digital Archive (19 September 2019).

¹¹ Ralph C. H. Williams, "Mr. Rhodes's Work in Bechuanaland", *The Times* [London], no. 31563 (28 September 1885), p. 4, col. f, Times Digital Archive (23 July 2021).

¹² Rhodes to Fife (December 1895), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C3B 274.

¹³ *Zuid Afrikaan* (19 and 26 March 1891, 7 April 1891 and 2 June 1891) in Tamarkin, *Colonial Parish Pump*, p. 211.

¹⁴ Dubow, *Commonwealth of Knowledge*, p. 133.

that Rhodes sought to avoid, particularly later given his experience of Matabele appeals to Queen Victoria. But as Thompson has pointed out: '[the African] acceptance of British supremacy and imperial ideology would seem to have been born of a psychological need for hope: faced with settler rapacity, the imperial state seemed the lesser of two evils'.¹⁵ African rights was a particularly powerful issue in the context of the London press – as the letter pages of *The Times* attests: '...it may involve the inevitable sacrifice of some Bechuana interests. But, as one of your correspondents has pointed out, the lesson to be learnt from Bechuanaland is that something must be done to prevent exactly the same state of things arising both in Zululand and in Swaziland. Either that... or we must withdraw from South Africa.'¹⁶

Rhodes himself took to *The Times* letters pages in 1884 and put forward a coherent defence of his actions to demonstrate his own agency in, and preferred approach to, imperial expansion – 'as the English Government had declined to interfere, it was our duty, as colonists, to spare no effort to retain our hold on the interior, and that this would be lost if we once allowed the formation of independent Republics across our path. The Cape Parliament, however, refused to incur such heavy responsibilities, and has, it should not be forgotten, throughout desired to maintain a policy of non-intervention'.¹⁷ Despite Rhodes admitting that his attempts to annex the territory were frustrated by the Cape Assembly he demonstrated his ability to act as a bridgehead for imperial expansion in opposition to both the perceived prevailing public sentiment in Britain and the explicit policy of the British Government. The bridgehead is far more able to manipulate the settler state when the imperial centre fails or is seen to be failing to act decisively on an

¹⁵ Thompson, "Languages of Loyalism", p. 649.

¹⁶ Frederic Mackarness, "To the Editor of The Times", *The Times* [London], no. 31221 (25 August 1884), p. 8, col. e, Times Digital Archive (12 September 2019).

¹⁷ "Bechuanaland".

area of policy, but in this instance both London and the Cape were opposed to adding to the responsibilities and costs of the empire. Without the backing of the Cape Colony, and its position as a sub-imperial actor, Rhodes' efforts were curtailed. But when he could not rely on either the imperial centre or the sub-imperial settler state, he used the means at his disposal – '... when I subsequently ratified these Stellaland titles, I was attacked as though I had taken a new departure – the real fact being that in doing so I was merely confirming the action of my predecessor'.¹⁸ The pragmatic use of precedence, of law and opportunism was Rhodes' *modus operandi*, as he demonstrated later with the Rudd Concession.

Rhodes was highly critical of the policy of both the imperial government and the colonial government in the Cape, arguing that both posed a serious threat to the status of Britain as the preeminent power in South Africa.

It is only through a course of firmness and impartiality that we can hope to see the day when the separate States of South Africa will be a united Empire under the English flag. The policy at present pursued by Her Majesty's Government is simply a continuation of the action of their predecessors... that the military expenditure must be immediately reduced, and expresses the desire that the Cape Colony should assume the control of the protectorate. The Cape Parliament, however, has evinced no desire to deal with the question, as it shrinks from the heavy responsibilities it would incur, and feels that any settlement it might make would be sure to meet with adverse criticism from the English public.¹⁹

Rhodes allusion to the reduction of military expenditure shows that the decisions of the Gladstone governments, which had such damaging effects on the respective political situations in New Zealand and Canada, reverberated in South Africa as well. In New Zealand, as in South Africa, there had been recent wars that put the very existence of the colony at risk, in the eyes of the settlers at least. In invoking the 'English public' Rhodes

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

was responding to the reality that Gladstonian decision making underlined: during the imperial period, despite Britain's nascent democracy, British public opinion – and thus British political issues generally – influenced decision making across the empire. This was true in settler states as well as territories that were not settled and directly administered. Even in a proto-democracy, governments needed the support of the *demos* and Rhodes' engagement with popular opinion represents the move in British democracy towards popular politics. Decisions about the imperial periphery could be influenced by the agitation of the readers of *The Times*, which might have gestated the view that Greater Britain was in some ways a reality and so formalising it constitutionally was more plausible because of the levels and complexity of imperial decision making.

Rhodes was cognisant of the emotional connection the 'English' *demos* had with the indigenous peoples of the Empire. He was keen to argue, for instance, that 'the claims of every man irrespective of colour or natural descent will be equitably dealt with'.²⁰ Rhodes may have *actually* believed this because it was an observation on the impartiality of English law over and above a commentary on race relations, but for practical purposes whether he believed it or not does not matter. By writing it in *The Times* he felt the message it conveyed had some public relations value with his audience in Parliament, government and the country at large. Some historians have suggested that when Rhodes talked about 'race' he was referring to the difference between the English and the Afrikaners rather than between Africans and Europeans but here, speaking to an English audience where race meant colour, he was unequivocal about race – 'irrespective of colour

²⁰ Ibid.

or natural descent'.²¹ He shared some of the prejudices towards Africans common in his milieu, yet insisted that race should not be a criterion for his Rhodes Scholarships. His most distinctive racist belief is conventionally defined as 'Anglo-Saxonism', yet he was very willing to include Dutch Afrikaners, French Canadians and Irish Catholics as equals in his proposed Anglophone super-state.²² Rhodes saw the connection between land, race and sovereignty and was prepared to manipulate the proposition in both the *colonial* and *imperial* contexts to ensure his strategic objective of expanding the British Empire into the interior of Africa.

The perennial confusion between 'imperialism' and 'colonialism' has led to blanket statements about Rhodes as both, which he certainly was but his actions were not always characteristic of both in every context. If in Stellaland Rhodes had used settlers cynically to ensure the extension of British protection, settlement was not always an end that he sought. For instance, writing in his memoirs, Williams wrote: '[Rhodes] speaks of the country between Khama's and the Zambesi as a fever-stricken country unfit for white settlers, and of any settlement of it as a mad scheme. [Rather he was concerned to] defeat any attempt at German colonisation... and he expresses the view that all this must be

²¹ For example, Flint argued of Rhodes' final will's stipulations regarding the non-racial criterion for choosing his scholars: 'The scholars were to be chosen not merely for scholastic and literary ability, which counted for only four points out of ten, but qualities of manhood, ability at manly sports and moral force of character were to prevail. He insisted that "no student shall be qualified or disqualified... on account of his race or religious opinions," a provision almost certainly penned by Rhodes in the South African connotation, and designed to ensure that Afrikaners (and French Canadians) would not be excluded. The trustees, however, interpreted it literally in subsequent years to include all races in the Commonwealth.' in Flint, *Rhodes*, p. 217.

²² 'Anglo-Saxonism' was a nineteenth century political and racial ideology that claimed Anglo-American exceptionalism had its origins in Anglo-Saxon England's institutions and traditions. For instance, Abbott Lawrence Lowell, professor of government and president of Harvard, argued that the unique Anglo-Saxon capacity for self-government was due to a prolonged period of 'discipline under the supremacy of law'. See discussion in Patrick M. Kirkwood, "'Lord Cromer's Shadow": Political Anglo-Saxonism and the Egyptian Protectorate as a Model in the American Philippines", *Journal of World History*, 27/1 (2016), pp. 1-26.

worked out with the help of the Cape politicians'.²³ Rhodes reiterated these sentiments in another form in his *Times* article:

With such objects in view, I would urge the formation of a Crown colony in Bechuanaland, the retention of a protectorate in the territory which Khama strictly possesses, and the opening up of communications with the Matabele King for the extension of the protectorate through his dominions to the Zambesi. Bechuanaland, though suitable for cattle ranching on a large scale, is not a field for ordinary English emigration, owing to the barrenness of its soil, the scarcity of water, and the distance from a market. Its real value is as the link which may join our settlements to the richer districts beyond.²⁴

There was a logic to his argument. The arguments he put forward were economic and strategic and were not concerned with creating settler societies to compete with the Cape Colony or become antagonists to the Boer republics on Bechuanaland's borders. Ralph Williams continued his theme: in 1885 there '...was no thought then of "Rhodesia," and very little idea of any substantial colonisation of either the countries of Khama or Lubengula [sic]. It was the lake country of Tanganyika and the lakes to the north of it which Rhodes then wished for, and his primary object was to keep the road thither open... He was fully alive to the growing spirit of German colonisation, and... to Rhodes alone are our thanks due that Germany to-day is hemmed in within the narrow borders of South-West Africa and has not spread from west to east across the whole continent'.²⁵ It should be added, however, that Williams was enraptured by Rhodes – 'Throughout my life I have loved and honoured the personality of Rhodes' – but as the First World War approached, when Williams was writing, Rhodes' reputation did not need defending as it has done more recently. Rhodes put forward an argument that ran counter to the one made in *The Times* by himself and Williams in the Cape Assembly on 16 August 1883, which

²³ Sir Ralph Williams, *How I Became a Governor* (London, 1913).

²⁴ "Bechuanaland".

²⁵ Williams, *Governor*, p. 123.

emphasised the importance of increased settlement to the colony's success in terms of trade; as always, he tailored his invective to his audience – '... the question that we must look to is what [trade] will be in the future. There are honourable members here who know what this Colony was when the settlement extended but a very few miles north of Cape Town, and honourable members know what the Colony has grown to now'.²⁶

Rhodes, as is shown in particular in the chapter covering his dealings with Parnell, used the press somewhat cynically, but did so in a practiced and careful way. Ralph Williams wrote, 'We met [at the Queen Hotel in Chester] as a quiet place to work out a good deal of the early scheme of advance into what is now known as Rhodesia, and to write our case in a political battle which was then raging, as was not unusual, in connection with South Africa'.²⁷ At Chester, Rhodes drafted his 1885 letter to *The Times*, which framed his case for Bechuanaland in the vista of imperial expansion into the interior of Africa. He said he was an 'ardent supporter of Imperial Federation' and put forward a preference for light-touch imperialism once the imperial state had absorbed a new territory.²⁸ In making his case in 1883 in the Cape Assembly he had said: 'I respect the Transvaal, but as politicians we have to look to our position as the future paramount state in South Africa; and we see, therefore, that any settlement must be made jointly with the Cape Colony, which must retain the trade of the interior, and must remain the dominant state in South Africa'.²⁹ Cape Colony paramountcy was an objective connected to South African federation from which he never deviated and which dictated allegiances and strategies both with the Bond and the British colonial faction in the Cape.

²⁶ VINDEX, *Cecil Rhodes: His Political Life and Speeches* (London, 1910), p. 63.

²⁷ Williams, Sir Ralph, *How I Became a Governor* (London, 1913), p. 17.

²⁸ "Bechuanaland".

²⁹ Rhodes speaking in the Cape Assembly, 16 August 1883 in VINDEX, *His Political Life and Speeches*, p. 67.

Tamarkin begins his work on Rhodes' relationship with the Bond: 'As J. T. Molteno, a contemporary Cape politician, stated: ... without Hofmeyr and the Bond Rhodes would have been a rich man only, not a world name and an empire-builder... Hofmeyr and the Afrikaner Bond were the basis and foundation of the political power of Rhodes'.³⁰ The implication given here is that the area that he seeks to evince – the split loyalties of Cape 'Afrikanerdom' – is critical to the career in *imperial* affairs of Rhodes. This is a strong argument because much of Rhodes' power in England was due to the impression of power in the Cape and beyond in southern Africa. 'To understand the ideological outlook and political behaviour of Cape Afrikaners in the late nineteenth century, it is vital to comprehend the process of their integration and socialisation into the British imperial and colonial world.' Tamarkin argues that it was these processes, 'which shaped, from a Cape Afrikaner perspective, the common ground and ripened them for the alliance with Rhodes'.³¹ Jan Hofmeyr, the leader of the Afrikaner Bond, recalled an early encounter with Rhodes, which shows how Rhodes had targeted him rhetorically:

...when the war was over we had a talk with one another and I said: 'it is an awful pity that the war broke out.' I was surprised when Mr Rhodes said, 'No it is not. I have quite changed my opinion. It is a good thing. It has made Englishmen respect Dutchmen and made them respect one another.' 'Well', added Hofmeyr, 'when an Englishman could speak like that to a Dutchman, they are not far from making common cause with one another.'³²

Rhodes was appalled by the disaster at Majuba Hill when during the First Boer War the British were defeated by the Boers; as he told Francis Dormer, editor of the *Cape Argus*, in 1881 – 'You don't think we ought to have sat down under that licking... I don't dislike the Dutchmen.... But let us understand one another. We are not going to be trampled upon by

³⁰ Tamarkin, *Colonial Parish Pump*, p. 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

these Dutchmen'.³³ This ability to say and do one thing pragmatically but *think* something else is apparent very early in his political career in the Cape, which is all the more remarkable given the opposition to his collaboration with the Bond from the British faction in the Cape Assembly, notably Merriman. Rhodes observed in 1892 that 'when he first sat as a member in the House, he was told that the Afrikaner Bond was worse than a Fenian organisation and that he ought to have nothing to do with it'.³⁴ Indeed, Rhodes' appointment as deputy commissioner in Bechuanaland was due in part to Hofmeyr's influence over the Cape government because it was him who had engineered the removal of Mackenzie because of his treatment of Stellaland. Rhodes had supported the Assembly motion to annex Bechuanaland to the Cape and so the Bond was aware of his sympathies. He discovered that the population of Stellaland were not necessarily pro-Transvaal but rather they were concerned about their security, as he told Sir Hercules Robinson: 'Annexation to the Colony is the dominating idea with which they were possessed, and I am of the opinion that the minority who manifest an inclination to cast in their lot with the Transvaal, do so not from deliberate preference, but from motives of distrust as to the intentions of H.M. Government'.³⁵ Rhodes was able to use the crisis as a point of differentiation between himself and other colonial bridgeheads such as Mackenzie. When Rhodes resigned as deputy commissioner after General Warren made Mackenzie his assistant over Mackenzie's treatment of the Afrikaner settlers, *Zuid Afrikaan* declared – 'A respectable Colonist – and we have always seen Rhodes as such – can hardly co-operate with the man who praises Mackenzie as a "Christian gentle-man"'.³⁶ The experience of South African factionalism on expansion demonstrated to Rhodes the importance of

³³ Francis Dormer, *Vengeance as Policy in Afrikanerland* (London, 1901), pp. 241–4.

³⁴ Tamarkin, *Colonial Parish Pump*, p. 86.

³⁵ Rhodes to Sir Hercules Robinson (20 September 1884) cited in *ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁶ *Zuid Afrikaan* (19 February 1885) cited in *ibid.*, p. 94.

operating across the political aisle, which he would deploy later in Britain as well as the Cape.

Tamarkin observed that the Bechuanaland crisis changed Rhodes' attitude to the Bond because 'even though Bondsmen were critical of the Transvaal for annexing Goschen and supported the assertion of imperial supremacy in Bechuanaland, he still believed, as he said in June 1885, that they would have preferred the Transvaal to have taken over Bechuanaland'. Tamarkin argues that his attitude was thereafter 'marked by ambivalence', particularly on protectionism:

On the one hand, he tried to please and appease the Bond, but on the other he also was among the founders of the jingoistic Imperial League which agitated for imperial intervention and provoked rage and resentment among Cape Afrikaners.³⁷

The Bechuanaland episode stood as an early lesson in how to manipulate South Africa's factionalism and taught Rhodes that he could deliver opposing and even contradictory messages to different groups without his position being undermined. Tamarkin sees this as a change in strategy but it could well be argued that it represented tactical continuity.

Bechuanaland lobbying

Attitudes in London towards annexations on the imperial periphery were not propitious when Rhodes began lobbying in connection to Bechuanaland in the early 1880s. The civil service, what has been termed the 'official mind', was wary of fiscal and military over-

³⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

extension. The view of the Colonial Office was summed up by its assistant undersecretary, Edward Fairfield³⁸ in February 1891:

There is no precedent for annexing to the British Crown from any large block of country, which like this is wholly or almost wholly destitute of revenue resources, and which therefore is dependent on the caprice of the House of Commons from session to session as to whether it is to have any government at all.³⁹

The feeling was much the same at the highest levels of the imperial government, as Gladstone set out in the run-up to the crisis in Bechuanaland in 1882 – ‘I cannot withhold my assent from your proposal as I see nothing better than Sir H. Robinson's suggestion. I would however make the *Imperial* part of the action as little prominent as possible’.⁴⁰ Robinson had suggested a ‘middle course’ for Bechuanaland, which did not go as far as a protectorate, but rather ‘impos[ed] order by a joint force of local men’.⁴¹ Gladstone’s instinctive hesitancy about the extension of empire conflicted with the strategic importance of the region – ‘I am concerned to hear that the Dutchmen are obstinate’, he wrote in the following December, ‘as I had hoped that their idea of drawing the frontier line according to the inclination of the chiefs would if workable prove a good one. As to the trade route I am not well able to judge, but we could not give up Bechuana Land [sic] against the inclination of the chiefs’.⁴² The context for Rhodes’ ambitions in Bechuanaland was not therefore promising, but the strategic importance was helpful and the action of the newly independent Transvaal unsettled the British Government, as the colonial secretary Lord

³⁸ Edward Fairfield, Colonial Office official and assistant undersecretary from 1892.

³⁹ Edward Fairfield (10 February 1891) in Maylam, *Rhodes, the Tswana, and the British*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ Gladstone to Lord Kimberley (12 July 1882) in H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries: With Cabinet Minutes and Prime-ministerial Correspondence*, Vol. 10: January 1881–June 1883, (Oxford, 2016), p. 296.

⁴¹ Robinson to Gladstone (9 and 11 July 1883) in *ibid.*

⁴² Gladstone to Derby (9 December 1883) in *ibid.*, p. 75.

Derby said – ‘They ask everything, and will concede nothing. They claim all those parts of Bechuanaland to which white freebooters have emigrated’.⁴³

Rhodes engaged the support of key allies in his early lobbying, which was concerned principally with keeping the Transvaal out of Bechuanaland.⁴⁴ First and most important was Sir Hercules Robinson, the High Commissioner, who would go on to be a close ally of Rhodes’, who was lobbied meticulously to ensure his support continued; and second Merriman, who was then a close friend of Rhodes and somewhat more established politically. Merriman would go on to be active in the IFL, but was never a figure of weight in imperial affairs in the way that Rhodes would become. Robinson wrote to Merriman:

I suppose it will end in our having to recognize these ruffianly freebooters, or the equally bad purchasers of the stolen property to whom they have sold; but I confess such a course sticks in my gizzard. It will, I fear, be such a bad precedent and such an encouragement to freebooting which will become a recognized trade. If robbers can go into the native territories, steal land, sell to speculators, and then secure annexation to some settled government in the neighbourhood, there will be no end to such nefarious proceedings... The more I think of the thing the more difficult do I find it to discover any way out of the mess which is free from objection and discredit, and so I am with reluctance coming round to the idea of Colonial Annexation as the least disadvantageous course now open to us.⁴⁵

Robinson played the role of impartial public servant, who was merely seeing the options decrease before him, leading to the inevitable ‘Colonial Annexation’. But his proconsular role was immensely powerful and could shape the imperial government’s perceptions of events – indeed, Gladstone had sought Robinson’s opinion over that of the colonial secretary regarding Basutoland the previous year.⁴⁶ Moreover, Robinson was aware of

⁴³ Derby to Gladstone (28 November 1883) in *ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴⁴ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 155.

⁴⁵ Robinson to Merriman (August 1883) in Sir Percival Laurence, *The Life of John Xavier Merriman* (London, 1930), p. 82.

⁴⁶ Gladstone to Kimberley (2 October 1882) Matthew (ed.), *Gladstone Diaries Vol. 10*, p. 342.

Rhodes' views on the annexation of Bechuanaland before he appointed him deputy commissioner and had previously attempted to convince Derby of the importance of annexation.⁴⁷ The affected acquiescence in his letter to Merriman was disguising his significant role as a bridgehead. In his reply Merriman was more forthright, highlighting the Transvaal as a key risk to the African states:

I am somewhat disquieted [by the idea] of some joint action to be undertaken by the Colony and the Transvaal... a [Bond supported government in the Cape would be] pledged inter alia to a firm native policy... Under such circumstances where would the Bechuanas be? Very much I take it where the lamb was when the butcher and the wolf combined in a joint protectorate.⁴⁸

Merriman's paternalistic position, that of the Cape liberal tradition, towards the Africans is evident. Merriman was in London in October 1883 and Rhodes wrote to him urging him to speak to Derby in order to 'take [Bechuanaland] for the Colony'. However, Merriman's views on 'native' affairs meant he favoured annexation by the Home rather than the colonial government. He did not speak to Derby because he felt that Rhodes' approach would be disadvantageous to Mankoroane.⁴⁹ This early setback in Rhodes' lobbying of the imperial government must have demonstrated the need for his allies and emissaries to share his views, without marked or even subtle ideological differences.

Rhodes' relations with Robinson's successor, Sir Alfred Milner, were not always as close; Milner was a consummate political operator who was able to shape impressions of Rhodes in London as much as Rhodes was himself, as he wrote to Lord Selborne, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies:

⁴⁷ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 155.

⁴⁸ Merriman to Robinson (September 1883) in Laurence, *Life of Merriman*, p. 83.

⁴⁹ Rotberg, *The Founder*, pp. 155-56.

The reason why I write these long private letters, instead of dispatches, is that the essence of S. African politics at this moment consists of certain *personalities*... the acuteness of the present situation is due to *personal* ambitions, hatreds, fears. There is a great deal you ought to know at home... what I am in a hurry to write about to-day is *Rhodes*, especially with regard to the position in the North, which is perhaps going to be of more immediate urgency than the Transvaal... he regards the British Govt. as pledged to hand over the Protectorate (subject to the preservation of certain native reserves) to the B.S.A. Co. The agreement to that effect which was all but completed before the Raid, is, as he contends, still binding...he looks to making the territory of the B.S.A.C. into a separate colony ultimately self-governed... the Colony (which I may remark in passing, though nominally self-governed, will be virtually an absolute monarchy with Rhodes as monarch) he means to unite with the Cape Colony and Natal, and then the three combined will bring *peaceful* pressure upon the Republics to drive them into a S. African federation... Rhodes is the only man big enough to carry out such a work, but, on the other hand, Rhodes uncontrolled, in the same position in which he was before the Raid... will probably fail in carrying it out, because he is too self-willed, too violent, too sanguine and in too great a hurry.⁵⁰

Milner's letter demonstrates how Rhodes had to a large extent lost control of his own image and propaganda in Britain following the Raid, but also the ability of the High Commission to enhance or reduce his standing in London. In writing to Selborne, Milner was ensuring his message reached the Prime Minister Lord Salisbury who was Selborne's father-in-law. Robinson and Milner were both proponents of British expansion in South Africa but Rhodes' handling of them, as well as their characters, led to quite different outcomes. Robinson, who sought the gradual extension of 'colonialism through imperialism', was highly supportive of the charter, telling the Colonial Office that the BSAC would be both inexpensive and subject to imperial influence, at least the latter did not prove to be the case.⁵¹

Rhodes used the bureaucracy of government as a lobbying tool itself, which helped to give the politicians involved a sense of deniability because they were not dealing directly with

⁵⁰ Milner to Selborne (2 June 1897) Cecil Headlam (ed.), *The Milner Papers, South Africa 1897-1899* vol. i, (London, 1933), pp. 105-06.

⁵¹ Kenneth O. Hall, *Imperial Proconsul: Sir Hercules Robinson and South Africa, 1881-1889* (Kingston, Ontario, 1980), pp. 165-68.

Rhodes – for instance Sir William Goodenough, the general officer commanding in the Cape of Good Hope, wrote: ‘I have received a reply from the Secretary of State to the cable message which I sent [regarding your request to insert mention of] the proposed annexation of British Bechuanaland by this Colony [into the Governor’s speech]’; Chamberlain said ‘I need not object [to the insertion of the point into the Governor’s speech] provided H. M. Govt. are not in any way committed thereby as they have not yet arrived at any final decision upon the subject’.⁵² The importance of the Cape Colony as a sub-imperial actor to Rhodes’ plans cannot be overstated, which was appreciated in London. A BSAC official wrote to Rhodes immediately before the 1898 Cape Colony General Election: ‘What I anticipate is that both Chamberlain and Hicks Beach will sit on the fence and watch the result of the Cape Elections and that neither will stir a finger to help you until assured of your party’s success. It’s neither courageous or patriotic but I fear you will find that I am right’.⁵³ Rhodes sought to spend his way to victory – ‘Well it is the crisis of the country. He wants £11,000, so kindly draw draft on Beit.’ Rotberg cites another £10,000 and an instruction to charge the bills to him, not to De Beers.⁵⁴ But although he won the popular vote, the establishment was against him; Innes said at the time: ‘I am not a Rhodes man; and do not think I am ever likely to be one. I have no confidence in Mr Rhodes’ policy in Colonial politics. I do not think he cares about them, and he is prepared in my opinion to use them in any way which will serve his policy in the North. I am prepared to support him in the North, but I am not prepared to put myself as a Colonial politician under the banner of any man who is a mere opportunist’.⁵⁵ Maguire observed in a letter to Rhodes immediately afterwards – ‘It is a shame about the elections

⁵² Lt Gen. Sir William Howley Goodenough to Rhodes (27 April 1895), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C2A /110.

⁵³ Fox to Rhodes (1 July 1898), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C2C4 6.

⁵⁴ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 608.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

but cannot now be helped. We must try and do the best we can under existing circumstances though I fear we shall not find the government so amenable as if the results had been different... I have little doubt they will again postpone coming to any final decision [about the Protectorate] for the moment, though... pressure will have to be exercised to make them change their present policy'.⁵⁶

Without success in the Cape Colony General Election Rhodes was notified of the 'decision of Her Majesty's Government to retain the administration of the Protectorate for the present in the hands of the High Commissioner.'⁵⁷ Chamberlain went on to argue that he was simply implementing the position of his predecessor, Lord Ripon. However, it is clear from his correspondence with Rhodes that Ripon intended the BSAC to take over administration of the Protectorate – 'On coming into office we adopt the policy of our predecessors towards your Company and it is plain not only from the documents you quote but from passages occurring in the published Blue Book C.5918 that they contemplated the ultimate acquisition by the company of administrative authority in the protectorate'.⁵⁸ Ripon had not only approved the approach in general but he had indicated to Grey that he would take the matter to the Cabinet for approval.⁵⁹ What these exchanges with different colonial secretaries at either side of the Raid demonstrates is that Rhodes' ability to influence government had been seriously diminished. Ripon did not of course grant the BSAC administration over Bechuanaland and perhaps a Gladstonian administration never would have; however, on the face of it, Rhodes had persuaded the imperial government under Gladstone to give him administrative control over the Bechuanaland Protectorate, only for Chamberlain to retract these commitments under Salisbury following the

⁵⁶ Maguire to Rhodes (2 September 1898), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C4/13.

⁵⁷ C. P. Lucas to Rhodes (20 August 1898), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C4/19, fos. 43-45.

⁵⁸ Ripon to Rhodes (30 November 1894), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C4/19, fo. 50.

⁵⁹ Grey to Rhodes (8 November 1900), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C27 (121) 17.

implosion of Rhodes' reputation as a result of the Raid. For instance, during intense questioning under Labouchere at the Select Committee investigation into the Jameson Raid, Labouchere said 'You are not prepared to tell us who knew in South Africa about your intentions with regard to the rising' to which Rhodes replied 'No; I have said before. I think it would be unfair'. Labouchere followed up with 'but do you not remember that at the commencement of your examination you took an oath to tell not only the truth but the whole truth?' Rhodes replied 'Did I?' This is not a conclusive exchange but it will have made clear to the political establishment that Rhodes could not be trusted. However, his discretion certainly saved the career of Chamberlain, who was supportive during the inquiry and just before the exchange sought to help Rhodes – 'He also said, in answer to Sir William Harcourt, that he had made a mistake and had been punished for it'.⁶⁰ What this evidence shows is that there was a marked change in the way he was able to influence government from the beginning of his career, when there were no preconceptions about him, to later in his career when he was viewed – at the very least – as a dissembling political figure.

Indeed, Rhodes' diminished position must have made it all the more urgent for him to ensure the reappointment of Sir Hercules Robinson in 1895. Grey had been heavily involved in lobbying to ensure Robinson's reappointment went smoothly: 'I did what I cd to stop it getting further, saw Goshen Knutsford and Balfour, but cd not get at Chamberlain who had gone to Birmingham – I therefore sent a letter to meet him at the station on his return to London on Monday'.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Labouchere's questioning of Rhodes during the parliamentary inquiry into the Raid. *Parliamentary Papers*, (1897), ix (311), 2nd Report of the British South Africa Committee, p. 83.

⁶¹ Grey to Rhodes (8 November 1900) MSS Afr. s 228 C27 (121) 17.

The High Commissioner was the pivotal intermediary between the settler state and the imperial centre, over which Rhodes had to have influence. But it did not help the BSAC's cause in Bechuanaland, as has been noted. Rhodes considered that 'a very unfair advantage was taken of [his] position', as he said in an extensive dictated letter to the Duke of Fife in December 1895:

I must say we have not been fairly dealt with. In order to obtain my greater object, I was willing to concede anything. [But] the natives have been left with the whole country. I do not look at it so much from a pecuniary point of view but from the broad point of South African politics a large country as big as the British Isles will now be... dedicated to these people... They are also a most disloyal lot, saying that they impudently refused to pay hut-tax when Lord Loch demanded it... and these are the people the Queen delighted to know... I believe that, but for the exception of MacDonald [sic], Thompson of Canada and myself, hardly any colonist has audience with her Majesty. Not that I complain of this but when three scallywags of this description sully Windsor Castle it is time to speak out on account of the incalculable harm it does.⁶²

Rhodes' reaction is interesting – the letter is dictated and has an *ex tempore* feel which gives a sense of both his attitude to the British government and to the African leaders who had beaten him in Bechuanaland. He blamed the 'Colonial Office [because] advantage was taken of my greater object' as well as missionaries – rival bridgeheads – for influencing the imperial government and public opinion.⁶³ The greater object was South African 'federal union', which shows that Milner's view of his plans for the BSAC territories were well founded, as Rhodes suggested to Fife, the BSAC deputy chairman, that its lands would be folded into a federated South African state if a federation were to happen.⁶⁴ The letter shows the heights to which his network had grown because Rhodes was able to discuss the Queen directly with one of her close relations. Moreover, Rhodes

⁶² Rhodes to Fife (December 1895) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 228 C3B 274.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

was firmly articulating his non-ideological approach to tactics – he ‘was willing to concede anything’ in order to achieve his strategic aim.

Parallels with Ireland

Parallels between South Africa and Ireland were drawn repeatedly by contemporary observers, hence the importance of assessing why they did this and what effect this had on Rhodes’ political activities in Britain. Under British control, it guaranteed independent access to the interior of Africa. Ireland in the Union guaranteed English security from attack from France and later Germany. Both had strategic significance. However, there are several different points of comparison with Ireland, which can help to understand Rhodes’ future engagement with Home Rule. Bechuanaland shared many of the ingredients for political crisis with Ireland. First, the main issue of political discord was land. Second, the dispute over land was connected with its occupation by recent immigrants. Third, these newcomers were ethno-culturally distinct from the indigenous landholders. Fourth, sovereignty in the area was disputed by rival claimants. Writing in 1890, Stead observed that the Dutch government had sold the inhabitants of the Cape ‘for six and eightpence (or whatever the sum amounted to) a head... “We must indeed have estranged our South African Ireland,” thought I, “before it began to hark back to a loyalty that was held so cheap”’.⁶⁵ His point was made typically in the popular style he propagated, but the comparison was a serious one that hit upon the systemic problem encountered by Britain as a proto-democracy:

⁶⁵ "Our South African Ireland", *The Pall Mall Gazette* [London], no. 7760 (30 January 1890), p. 1, col. b, Gale Primary Sources (4 August 2020).

We could not help having a Dutch question; we found it there when we conquered the country, just as we found an Irish question when we conquered Ireland. But what did we do to solve it? Exactly what we are doing in Ireland in 1890, We simply tried to govern our Dutch subjects well-that is, according to what seemed well to us. We had the best intentions. But somehow a Nemesis always dogged our efforts... both parties -ins and outs alike- were reduced to reliance on the Dutch vote, and had to behave towards Mr. Hofmeyr (who now appears as dictator), and to his Bond, much as our own parties were even then behaving towards Mr. Parnell and his Nationalist phalanx, not without the same sort, of accusations and counter accusations.⁶⁶

Hofmeyr and Parnell occupied similar roles, both were nationalists who used the democratic framework of the British system against the British state. Yet in some ways in the context of Bechuanaland, it was not the Afrikaners who were akin to the Irish but rather the African population who were invaded and settled by the Afrikaners (who take on the role of Ireland's ascendancy) and Britain (or rather England) is drawn in ever more closely by this group and strategic necessity. The 'othering' of the Irish by the British establishment was not uncommon – 'Lord Talbot, when viceroy, abandoned human analysis altogether and thought the Irish "as mischievous and full of tricks as monkeys, and as little to be depended upon", an analysis previously essayed by Lord Auckland, who, at the time of the Union, had felt "somewhat triste" about the extent to which "our new countrymen can be humanized"'. Even Palmerston had referred to attempting to 'civilize some thousands of natives' on his estate in County Sligo.⁶⁷ In Ireland, as in South Africa, landowners were able to disrupt wider political processes: as a chief secretary suggested it would be wise to bring 'in a counterpoise to the class of farmers who have quite an inordinate and dangerous influence on the parliamentary action of the representatives'.⁶⁸

Throughout the 1880s, Gladstone had indicated his preference for Irish conciliation: he told a colleague that 'every Irishman worth a farthing had opposed the Union in 1799-1800

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Hoppen, *Governing Hibernia*, p. 26.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 231-32.

and that if he had been an Irishman he should have done so to the utmost. He believed in Nationality as a principle whether Italian, Greek, Slav, or Irish'. Lewis Harcourt recorded that 'Mr Gladstone declaimed against the Union this evening & said that all the misfortunes of Ireland have occurred since and in consequence of it'.⁶⁹ This attitude appears to have transmuted into colonial policy. Gladstone was instinctively willing to preserve the rights of the African states over capitalist interests such as Rhodes. The Home Rule debate in Ireland had a direct bearing on the situation in Bechuanaland, due to the factionalisation of the British political and party system. In February 1895, Grey wrote to Rhodes:

Wishing to be able to tell Chamberlain & co that Ripon was ready to move at once provided the Opposition w'd not be nasty, I went to Ripon and talked over your letter with him – he thoroughly approves your proposals, and is anxious to help in every way he can... Ripon has therefore suggested that it wd be a mistake to approach the Unionist leaders just now, as if word were to reach Loch⁷⁰ that anything was intended, he wd send in the Protest which is very undesirable for political reasons to have submitted to Parl. I agree that action now, in view of Loch's proximate departure wd be mischievous, but the moment I can discuss the matter with the Unionist leaders without necessarily the risk of evoking a protest from the High Commissioner, I will do so.⁷¹

Grey was himself a Liberal Unionist and his personal link with the group made his lobbying of them obvious but their existence as a coherent political entity was due only to the Home Rule crisis. There were other personal links to Rhodes and South African affairs, for instance Sir Donald Currie, the Liberal Unionist Member of Parliament for West Perthshire, was a major shareholder in De Beers with 10,552 shares, only a few thousand fewer than Rhodes himself owned.⁷² Rhodes was in the ideologically unusual

⁶⁹ Derby (13 January 1886) and Lewis Harcourt (14 January 1886) in *ibid.*, p. 241.

⁷⁰ Henry Loch, 1st Baron Loch (1827-1900), High Commissioner to Southern Africa (1889-1895).

⁷¹ Grey to Rhodes (8 November 1900) MSS Afr. s 228 C27 (121) 17.

⁷² Rhodes to the Board of De Beers (19 April 1899), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C7B 210.

position of supporting Home Rule whilst using the Liberal Unionists to encourage the government to commit Bechuanaland to the BSAC's control.

Economic determinism

In the months immediately before the Jameson Raid Rhodes was at his most powerful. Although he had failed up until then to acquire Delagoa Bay, he had persuaded the British government of the strategic importance of the bay and its railway. Selborne's report of his discussions with Salisbury about the developing confrontation due to the Transvaal's closure of the crossing points on the Vaal River⁷³ in October 1895 shows the position to which Rhodes had risen and the influence he had over the Prime Minister:

Salisbury fully aware of all the circumstances of the case except a recent telegram to Robinson. I explain to him [the] propose[d] line of action and asked for his authority to carry it out... He asked me 'does Rhodes ask for the support?' I replied 'Yes, the Cape Ministry ask for it officially and that is Rhodes.' He then said 'I entirely agree in the line of action proposed. It is the right one. You have my authority to proceed, and I'm convinced that Chamberlain will agree with me. Transvaal government is unfriendly to us and it is a great mistake to run away from them. The Cape Government must be supported to the end in this matter.'⁷⁴

A. N. Porter argues that '[o]n the eve of the Jameson Raid therefore [Britain's foreign policy decisions were designed to make] clear to those European powers, like Germany, who lacked actual territorial possessions in southern Africa that they had no business there. The future development of South Africa... was to take place under the auspices of the British Imperial Government'.⁷⁵ Rhodes had been pressing for such a diplomatic position for his entire political career.

⁷³ The crossing points were used to avoid the Transvaal's government high rail charges.

⁷⁴ Memorandum on the Drifts Question by Selborn (15 October 1895) in Porter, *Origins of the South African war*, pp. 55-56.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Rhodes' expansionary activity was funded primarily by his mining wealth, which is well known. Ian Phimister argues that the origin of the capital was London speculation during the two booms in gold mining shares in 1888-89 and the second half of the 1890s made possible because '[m]oney was cheap and could be borrowed for speculative purposes'.⁷⁶ Phimister shows that Consolidated Goldfields, Rhodes' goldmine holding company founded in 1892, was the premier beneficiary of the boom: in November 1895, 'Consolidated Goldfields announced a profit of £2,161,778' which *The Economist* described as 'larger than any ever realised by any limited liability company in the City of London'; the principal revenue source was 'profits from the sale of shares'. *The Economist* concluded Consolidated Gold Fields 'has had quite exceptional opportunities, and has used them to the fullest extent, of making enormous profits by share-dealing transactions'.⁷⁷ By way of comparison in 1894 the entire 'Kaffir Circus'⁷⁸ made profits of only £2,500,000, only slightly more than Consolidated Goldfields' 1892 speculation profits.⁷⁹ Phimister explains the process of market making which firms, led by Wernher, Beit and Company, engaged in. The very limited liquidity of most South African mining stocks meant that a relatively small trade volume could dramatically affect the price. Wernher, Beit and Company maximised their ability to manipulate stock prices by establishing syndicates, whereby participants in the syndicate would pool their holdings in already illiquid stocks thus becoming the vast majority of the active component (as opposed to long term holdings) in any given stock. Moreover, profitable mining firms tended to hold back capital in order to maintain the ability to move the market. This meant

⁷⁶ Phimister, "Markets, Mines, and Magnates," p. 8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁸ Contemporary colloquial collective noun for South African mining stocks; in other usage, a term of racial abuse.

⁷⁹ Phimister, "Markets, Mines, and Magnates," p. 20.

also that a small group of stellar performers, with enormous share yields, acted as a magnet for speculators to the wider market, which included ‘fringe’ firms, which were neither well capitalised nor profitable. The practice of using preference or ‘vendor’s’ shares meant that the original owners of the companies were often the only shareholders entitled to dividends. Thus, the only motivation for investment was speculative capital growth in the value of the stock, not a long-term holding based on dividends contingent on the growth of a firm’s profits. ‘The combined effect of a highly leveraged capital structure and the restricted nature of mining markets where the best shares were retained by groups or the syndicates they controlled, was the creation of a speculative arena extremely sensitive to intervention and direction.’⁸⁰

Wernher, Beit and Company had operated through the Paris-based Porges-Kahn syndicate, which they closed in June 1895 before the crash took place in the following August. In the aftermath of the crisis *The Economist* opined: ‘Financial companies, controlled by capitalists, act in some cases towards the mines controlled by these same capitalists in the various capacities of engineers, buyers, bankers, secretaries, and even auditors. The truth of the whole matter is that the mines and their workings have simply been used as a lever for the share market’.⁸¹ The Rhodes Papers are peppered with references to syndicates, shares and debentures.⁸² Dealing issues were routinely discussed in the same letters that dealt with imperial expansion or political calculations because the participants were the same; for instance, Maguire offered in one letter to resign from Parliament to devote more

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸¹ "FOR AND AGAINST THE UITLANDERS.", *The Economist* [London], no. 2802 (8 May 1897), p. 667, col. b, Gale Primary Sources (7 July 2019).

⁸² There are 53 entries for ‘syndicates’, 60 entries for ‘shares’ and 15 entries for debentures in the catalogue. The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts Report of correspondence of Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 227 B21.

time to business because he had failed, in Rhodes' view, to handle a share sale properly.⁸³ In general, shares take a backseat in the correspondence to other business and political issues but Beit and Wernher would separately write to Rhodes to update him on market conditions, for instance: '...the market looks as black as possible and people have no money to speculate'.⁸⁴ However, there is discussion of market manipulation – Wernher wrote to Rhodes about a proposal for BSAC share manipulation that had been put to him: '[o]f course it would never do that the Directors would take the slightest cognisance of such a transaction or would even [take] an option directly i.e. in their own names. Those who wish to participate would have to give the option say to us and we would have to pass it on in one name and on the same terms'.⁸⁵ The evident nervousness about BSAC directors shows the delicacy of the matter. However, the fact that Wernher raises the issue of the directors' involvement implies that a scheme of this form was somewhat novel.

Beit regularly updated Rhodes on his holdings, usually in response to his enquiries, which reveal the level of interconnection between the companies that Rhodes operated, the key individuals who ran and financed them, and imperial expansion. Writing in 1891, Beit explained the ownership of the Matabeleland Concession, which was divided into 30 shares and how it related to options in the Central Search Company and BSAC, as shown in the table below.

Name	Company		
	Matabeleland Concession (30 shares in total)	Central Search (90,000 shares in total)	Entitlement to BSAC shares (200,000)
Gold Fields of South Africa	8 1/2	25500	66666-13-4
Exploring Company	7 1/2	22500	50000
C. J. Rhodes	3 1/4	9750	25000
C. D. Rudd	3	9000	23333-6-8

⁸³ Maguire to Rhodes (22 July 1893), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C9 39.

⁸⁴ Werhner to Rhodes (13 May 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C24 15.

⁸⁵ Werhner to Rhodes (3 July 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C24 28.

A. Beit	2 3/4	8250	21666-13-4
Lord Rothschild	1	3000	6666-13-4
R. Maguire	1	3000	6666-13-4
Leask	3	9000	Exited (rights transferred to Gold Fields of South Africa)

Gold Fields of South Africa had funded the concession expedition and received just over 28 per cent of the proceeds; the Exploration Company was the vehicle of Lord Gifford and George Cawston, which received 25 per cent; Rhodes, Rudd, Beit, Maguire and Lord Rothschild received further individual shares and were also shareholders in Gold Fields of South Africa.⁸⁶

It was Rhodes' practice in business to rely on his various interests to support one another, as De Beers did his sub-imperial activities by acting as both an investor in BSAC and as collateral for debt.⁸⁷ This was not, however, the instinctive policy of the Board of De Beers, which frustrated Rhodes' efforts to diversify outside of diamonds into gold – he vented his frustration in a letter to the Board in April 1899: 'I think it is my duty as Chairman of your Company [with] a personal holding [of] over 20,000 shares in the Company to place on record my protest against a persistent manner in which the whole of my policy in connection with De Beers has been opposed by the London board almost ever since it has been created and point out the enormous injury that the companies suffered [from] their opposition to my proposals... I feel that it is essential that we should gradually, with wisdom and care, make investments in undertakings other than diamonds, so that in case our mines, through unforeseen circumstances, are rendered less valuable, we should be in a position to say to our shareholders that we have not all our eggs in one

⁸⁶ Beit to Rhodes (22 Jan 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C9 14.

⁸⁷ Colin Newbury, "Out of the pit: The capital accumulation of Cecil Rhodes", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 10/1 (1981), p. 26.

basket'.⁸⁸ Rhodes' argument was articulated in terms of company risk management but the proposals he had put to De Beers would have aided his sub-imperial activities over the course of the 1890s. Typically of Rhodes, the list of major shareholders shows that he owned only 13,537 shares at the time, fewer than the 20,000 he mentions in his letter and far fewer than Lord Rothschild (who owned 35,572) and Barney Barnato (who owned 33,576, listed under Isaac & Solomon Joel). Beit had a holding of 11,858.⁸⁹ Objections from Rothschild had led to Rhodes' funding of the BSAC from his personal funds in its early years.⁹⁰ However, the mutually supporting nature of Rhodes' business and political affairs is clear, if not unproblematic.

The discussion about the motivation for the Jameson Raid and the South African War is at the centre of historiographical debates about Rhodes' motivation for business and politics: did business facilitate politics or vice versa? As Phimister argues:

This invites reconsideration of those interpretations of the coming of conflict in South Africa in 1899 which have ascribed to the City 'a thirsty impatience [for war]'. It raises a question mark over the many accounts of the 1890s which foreground mining company hostility towards Boer policies. The fact that the arch-speculator George Farrar was a leading conspirator behind the Jameson Raid, intended to overthrow Kruger's government in December 1895, strongly suggests that production costs were not the main issue in dispute.⁹¹

Phimister develops the argument set out by Alan Cartwright in the 1960s that hesitancy regarding the depth of the goldfields and the likely return, indeed the possibility of failure, led Rhodes and Rudd to establish Gold Fields of South Africa in February 1887 as a speculative exercise: 'Rhodes had earlier stressed that Rudd should obtain "us a good

⁸⁸ Rhodes to the Board of De Beers (19 April 1899) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 228 C7B 210.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Newbury, "Out of the pit", p. 33.

⁹¹ Phimister, "Markets, Mines, and Magnates," p. 22.

remuneration or else the Company is not worth working for”, and this Rudd certainly did. The two partners were to get three-fifteenths of any profits the company made, plus a further two-fifteenths in return for their service as managing directors’.⁹² This point is used retrospectively to explain the shift of Gold Fields’ capital from gold mining interests to diamond mining interests; by 30 June 1888 £141,907 was invested in diamonds versus only £98,660 in gold.⁹³ However, the quote used by both Cartwright and Phimister to evidence the point – ‘[obtain] us a good remuneration or else the Company is not worth working for’ – is taken from a letter by Rhodes written on 7 February 1897 cited in Cartwright, in which Rhodes clearly envisages substantially-yielding reefs at the Witpoortjie farm in which Gold Fields had invested.⁹⁴ Proving that there is many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip, this letter suggests rather that the investments in 1888 in diamonds were less speculative and more conservative given limited opportunities for productive investments in gold mines.

Yet the implications of Rhodes’ early failure in gold mining did play a part in the expansion northwards, as a letter written by Rudd on 4 August 1888 suggests:

After some discussion with Rhodes regarding The Gold Fields of South Africa we have come to the conclusion that our best chance of a big thing is to try and make some terms with Lobengula for a concession for the whole of his country. Rhodes has arranged for such Imperial support as can be granted and it is thought best that I should start with an expedition at once.⁹⁵

⁹² The point is clearly expressed by Phimister – ‘It was precisely because Rhodes had initially been unsuccessful on the Transvaal Rand that he sought a ‘Second Rand’ north of the Limpopo to recoup his losses’. Phimister, “Rhodes, Rhodesia and the Rand”, p. 76.

⁹³ A.P. Cartwright, *Gold Paved the Way: The Story of the Gold Fields Group of Companies* (London, 1967), p. 45.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

This is evidence at most, however, of only some of the arguments that Rhodes put to Rudd. Rudd would have needed some commercial inducement to participate in a scheme northward. It does demonstrate that gold was a factor, if only a secondary one for Rhodes. Mining was an important part of the circular process of imperialism because it funded expansionary activity. At the annual general meeting of Gold Fields of South Africa in November 1889 – which was reportedly of a different nature to the one of the preceding year where the diamond investments had been revealed and shareholders were understandably angry – Rudd was remarkably frank: ‘We based our investments on that theory, but our theory was wrong and Mr. Rhodes and I felt we had not done as well as men of our experience and knowledge might have done on the Witwatersrandt. I therefore agreed that, if they granted this company half of any concession I might get in Matabeleland, I would go’.⁹⁶ There is evidence that shares affected other decisions, such as the motivation for the invasion of Matabeleland, for instance Jameson wrote to Lord Harris, chairman of Gold Fields – ‘the getting [of] Matabeleland open would give us a tremendous lift in shares and everything else. The fact of its being shut up gives it an immense value both here and outside’.⁹⁷ This was undoubtedly the case for some of the shareholders, but it is not clear how an increase in Gold Fields’ shares would have benefited firstly Rhodes financially or secondly the cause of expansion more generally without the shares being realised.

Phimister sees a relationship between the advent of deep-level mining on the Rand, which necessitated the amalgamation of Gold Fields with two smaller deep-level mining concerns to form Consolidated Gold Fields of South Africa, and the war in Matabeleland:

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁹⁷ Jameson to Harris (19 July 1893) in T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7* (1967), p. 94.

‘The close association of Gold Fields with the BSAC was undisturbed by the amalgamation of August 1892, and was underscored from July 1893 onwards when Consolidated Gold Fields' shares began to fall in sympathy with Chartereds'. Undoubtedly this factor gave Rhodes added (if not primary) incentive for manufacturing war with the Ndebele’.⁹⁸ This may have been a consideration: without money there was no empire, but the money was not an end in itself as Blainey claims. Blainey points out that in September 1895 the two largest deep-level companies, Consolidated Gold Fields and Rand Mines, had a total market capitalisation of £26,602,000 at a time when deep-level mines had not yet earned a profit, whereas the seven biggest dividend paying mines had a total market capitalisation of only £17,034,000. By Christmas 1895 the market capitalisations of Consolidated Gold Fields and Rand Mines had roughly halved. Blainey adds ‘the profits which these two companies made in 1895 came overwhelmingly from selling mining claims at inflated prices or from speculating in mining shares on a rising market’, rather than mining activities *per se*, much less deep level mining.⁹⁹ Blainey argues: ‘It is possible then that the share collapse in the tail months of 1895 accelerated plans for the revolt and made Dr Jameson more impetuous and Rhodes less cautious... a rebellion could bestow the twin prizes of profit from deep mining and profit from the share market’.¹⁰⁰

Rhodes and Beit had in fact begun the ‘heavy selling of [BSAC] shares from July 1895’ following the findings of Consolidated Gold Field's mining expert, John Hays Hammond, on the prospects of Southern Rhodesia, which showed there was no ‘Second Rand’.¹⁰¹ As Rutherford Harris was reported as saying: ‘if we have to depend on Hammond's geological report to raise money for this country, I don't think the outlook is encouraging’. In his

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 81.

⁹⁹ Blainey, “Lost causes”, p. 361.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 361.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

autobiography Hammond says Rhodes replied: ‘Hammond is absolutely right. He's said everything he's justified in saying and the public will see that it's the report of a conscientious engineer, and give full credit to every word he says. If you don't like his report, you'd better go ahead and sell your Chartered shares’.¹⁰² And that is what Rhodes and Beit did, along with the major players in BSAC including Abercorn, Maguire, Rothschild and Gold Fields of South Africa, who exited their holdings. Rhodes and Beit alone sold nearly 280,000 shares, which looked suspicious following the Raid.¹⁰³ Phimister extends this economic argument for causation of the Jameson Raid by pointing out that the deep-level mining firms had grievances against the Transvaal government and that of the 26 deep-level mines on the Rand, 12 were held by Consolidated Gold Fields and 10 were held by Beit’s Rand Mines.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Phimister points out that Rhodes and Rudd received as management fee two-fifteenths of the company's net annual earnings, which earned them £333,000 in the year ending 30 June 1895.¹⁰⁵ However, the anticipated crash in BSAC shares, if indeed that were the reason for the share sales immediately before the Raid rather than Hammond’s mineral deposit report, undermines the argument that the Raid was a purely economically driven initiative because of the known impact on the BSAC share price.

Beit owned half of Rand Mines through his H. Eckstein and Co., Wernher, Beit and Company’s South African affiliate. The letter written by the Johannesburg Reform Committee inviting Jameson to intervene in the Transvaal was signed by five men, four of whom were employed by Rhodes and Beit: Lionel Phillips was chairman of Rand Mines

¹⁰² John Hays Hammond, *The Autobiography of John Hays Hammond I* (New York, 1935), p. 278.

¹⁰³ How Chartered shares were sold before the Raid (13 January 1898), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C27 (143) 7.

¹⁰⁴ Phimister, “Rhodes, Rhodesia and the Rand”, p. 362.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

and senior Johannesburg partner in Eckstein and Co.; John Hays Hammond, a Californian, was a consulting engineer to Consolidated Gold Fields; Colonel Francis Rhodes was manager in Johannesburg of Consolidated Gold Fields and Rhodes' elder brother; Charles Leonard, the president of the reformist National Union, an Uitlander pressure group was a solicitor for Rand Mines Limited. The fifth signatory was George Farrar, in whose East Rand Proprietary Mines Company Beit was a large shareholder.¹⁰⁶ Rhodes contributed £61,000 and Beit's firm between £175,000 and £200,000 towards the cost of the Raid.¹⁰⁷ Phimister argues that Rhodes motives for orchestrating the Jameson Raid were overwhelming economic:

Rhodes had three main financial interests: diamonds in Cape Colony, lands and mines in Southern Rhodesia, and gold in the Transvaal. The latter was his only economic interest which he could not personally nourish with political power, and yet by 1895 it had become his most important asset and the one that required political support for its very existence. That was his taunting dilemma; and consciously or unconsciously he risked political power in order to preserve economic power.¹⁰⁸

Rather than take an economically deterministic view, as Phimister does, the evidence suggests that economic interests were inseparable from political ones in this instance. Kruger stood as a barrier to the economic integration of South Africa, the essential precursor to a South African federation in Rhodes' mind, which became less likely the greater the economic influence the Transvaal was able to assert. Therefore, Rhodes acted to prevent the republic's economic strength barring imperial progress in South Africa.

Summary

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 363.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 365.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 366.

Rhodes, the personification of the 'bridgehead', was skilled in using the Cape Colony as an instrument for imperial expansion. He did this through influence in settler politics, through his own political career in the Cape Assembly, but also through studied manipulation and careful lobbying of British representatives in the Cape. This was easier at the beginning of his career and more difficult after the Jameson Raid when his influence was severely curtailed. The case study of Bechuanaland shows that Rhodes was not motivated by personal business factors at the beginning of his career, but rather by a desire to counter the threat of the Transvaal. Despite his business interests becoming enmeshed in the South African Republic, it seems entirely consistent to say that his motivation for acting in 1895 had not changed considerably. His personal business interests would have been a consideration but not the driver. The relationship between Britain and the imperial periphery, which had frustrated expansion, showed Rhodes the need for its reform to better manage the integration of new territories into the empire and to strengthen it against competitors. These experiences undoubtedly suggested to Rhodes that an imperial framework that was characterised by Home Rule and imperial federation, was compatible with the subsistence of the British Empire.

CHAPTER 4. Party Politics in Britain

This section examines Rhodes' attempt to put imperial federation into practice through the correspondence of Rhodes and Parnell, published in *The Times*, and Rhodes' contribution to the Liberal Party, which was reported in *The Spectator* in the last years of Rhodes' life. The Parnell letters advocate imperial federation based on autonomous states within the empire sending representatives to the 'Imperial Parliament' at Westminster.¹ This vision of a federated empire, including an unspecified collection of Britain's overseas territories, would have required a novel formula for assessing the proportion of MPs each component state sent to Westminster. The model was that of the United States of America, which was at the time expanding and proved a paradigm for its admirers, including Rhodes – for example, Nevada, Nebraska and Colorado were admitted to the union in the 1860s and 1870s and North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Washington were admitted in November 1889. Rhodes proposed a semi-federal system for Britain, an adaptation of the union, with parliamentary representation based on individual fiscal contributions to the 'Imperial revenue'.²

These points are referred to in turn in the letters and are discussed below in the following sections: firstly, the relationship between imperial federation and the First and Second Home Rule Bills, and the electoral reforms required to enable it; secondly, the reasons for Rhodes' support for imperial federation, which are related to his personal experience of the Cape and which he recapitulates in the letters; thirdly, Parnell's own relationship with imperial legislation in the House of Commons, and with South African legislation in

¹ Rhodes to Parnell (19 June 1888), Dublin NLI MS Parnell, MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

² Ibid.

particular; and fourthly, the way that Rhodes and Parnell chose to advertise these views in the Victorian newspaper of record, *The Times*, in common with Rhodes' practice of debating imperial and colonial policy in public in the press.

Parnell was the leader of the IPP, but was from a landed Protestant background whose antecedents were from the English county of Cheshire. His association with Rhodes came about through J. G. Swift MacNeill and was probably by chance – Parnell's interest was less in imperial federation (although it was not inconsistent with his official position on Home Rule) and more in acquiring funds to defend himself in his various legal cases and to advance IPP interests where possible. The letters are only a fragment of Rhodes and Parnell's relationship and as such what others said about them is used to elicit their purpose – explicit, implied and disguised – including the roles and views of political opponents, intermediaries and peripheral individuals, for instance Joseph Chamberlain, Swift MacNeill and John Morrogh. The letters are unusual insofar as we know that they served multiple purposes – contract and persuasion; and audiences – private and public. This confounds the already complex problem of dealing with nineteenth century political evidence as Alistair Cooke and John Vincent explain:

The real problem is not that some of politics was conducted behind closed doors. It is that political activity, whether reported in *The Times* and *Hansard* or not, did not mean what those untrained to the exercise of power thought it meant. This is the crucial area where deception, if it is deception, takes place: in full light of day.³

Each political utterance had multiple audiences that were not privy to their objectives.

Cooke and Vincent argue that the British public imposed 'standards of moral judgement'

³ A.B. Cooke and John Vincent, *The Governing Passion: Cabinet Government and Party Politics in Britain, 1885-86* (London, 1974), p. 166.

on their politicians ‘which, if accepted, would have prevented them doing their job at all’.⁴ The Rhodes-Parnell correspondence seems to vindicate this analysis because it at once represents a bargain that does not conform to the public’s high-mindedness and shows a cynical, but politically apposite, attempt to manipulate multiple audiences. Parnell’s contemporary biographer, Richard O’Brien, said Parnell ‘felt that English party leaders thought as much and no more of the “morality” of the “moves” in the game of politics than a chess player thinks of the morality of the moves in a game of chess’ – which would suggest a cynicism in his dealings with his political opponents, particularly his English counterparts.⁵ By examining the content and form of the correspondence in the context of the *modus operandi* of both men, we attempt to identify their objectives. Rhodes’ contribution to the Liberal Party, organised through the backroom political fixer and Liberal Party functionary Francis Schnadhorst, was less politically complex but the resulting fallout from the publication of the letters in *The Spectator* reveals Rhodes’ preference for the use of money, intermediaries and public debate in order to influence specific events – in common with the Parnell correspondence.

This chapter shows how Rhodes attempted to put his theoretical understanding of Greater Britain into practice through contributions to the IPP and the (then governing) Liberal Party. Maguire is a key figure as a Parnellite Member of Parliament, but his intermediary role in Rhodes’ relationship with Parnell has obscured his involvement in this episode and his wider part in Rhodes’ lobbying activities. This section examines the origin of the Parnell relationship and the policy proposals within the letters that set out Rhodes’ framework for imperial federation. This is contextualised by looking at the role Ireland

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ R. B. O’Brien, *The Life of Charles Stewart Parnell, 1846-1891* (New York, 1898), p. 375.

played in British imperial politics and Parnell's ideological view of empire and his use of it in the nationalist cause in the House of Commons, with particular reference to South Africa. Parnell's objectives are examined through the versions of letters that were published in *The Times*, with a detailed analysis of the changes that were made and the reasons for each. This leads onto an examination of Rhodes' network's involvement with the IPP, arguing that Rhodes encountered Ireland in the context of Greater Britain in South Africa. The implications of Rhodes' involvement with the IPP are then assessed against future events. His relationship with the Liberal Party – his donation, how it came about, the publication of the Schnadhorst letters in *The Spectator* and Rhodes' complicity in their publication – is examined in comparison with the Parnell episode. It shows that Rhodes' relationship with the Liberal Party was difficult because of his ardent imperialism and the party's conflicted relationship with the British Empire, reflecting the complex and paternalistic nature of Liberal imperialism; and how Gladstone's domestic policies in Britain shaped Rhodes' view of the settler state world he inhabited and of the future of the wider British Empire.

Parnell's and the IPP's relationship with Rhodes appears to have come about by accident. Rhodes had met Swift MacNeill, a leading nationalist Member of Parliament and Queen's Counsel, during his return passage from London to the Cape in the autumn of 1887. There is no evidence to suggest the meeting was premeditated on Rhodes' part and although there was speculation of premeditation on the Irish side this is unsubstantiated.⁶ The only full account of the meeting on the R.M.S. *Garth Castle* was written by Swift MacNeill

⁶ W.T. Stead, *The Last Will and Testament of Cecil John Rhodes: with elucidatory notes to which are added some chapters describing the political and religious ideas of the testator* (London, 1902), p. 118.

himself in his memoir. Such memoirs come with the usual health warning, but Swift MacNeill is particularly apt at depicting his own foresight and historical instrumentality:⁷

I have entered into this incident at length owing to the interest which attaches to both Rhodes and Parnell by reason of the tragedy of their careers. And in this connection a remark made to me by Mr. Parnell at this time deserves, considering his usual astuteness, to be numbered among the many instances of the fallibility of political predictions. “What a pity,” he observed, “that Rhodes is not in the Imperial Parliament. As it is, he will not live in history.”⁸

In this passage, written decades after the events took place, Swift MacNeill is keenly aware of the supposed historical nature of his meeting with Rhodes. Swift MacNeill is the only source for the circumstances surrounding the meeting, but subsequent correspondence between Rhodes and Parnell shows that Swift MacNeill acted as the intermediary – ‘I shall be obliged if you can tell me that Mr. MacNeill is not mistaken in the impression he conveyed to me, and that you and your party would be prepared to give your hearty support and approval to a Home Rule Bill containing provisions for the continuance of Irish representation at Westminster’, which appears to refer indirectly to the discussions on R.M.S. *Garth Castle*.⁹ Swift’s account tells of the subsequent meetings that took place between the Rhodes and Parnell in 1888:

At last, in June, 1888, I learnt that Mr. Rhodes was in London. I told Mr. Parnell that the £10,000 was safe, and went almost at once to see Mr. Rhodes at Winchester House. He told me that he had refrained from replying to my letter as, on its receipt, he knew that he would shortly be coming to England. He expressed a wish to meet Mr. Parnell, and I arranged that they should both dine with me at the House of Commons.¹⁰

⁷ J.G.S. MacNeill, *What I Have Seen and Heard* (Boston, 1925), p. 259.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁹ Rhodes to Parnell (19 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

¹⁰ MacNeill, *Seen and Heard*, p. 265-66.

Swift MacNeill's summary explains that 'two or three' meetings took place to negotiate the terms of the agreement and the price that Rhodes would pay. Swift MacNeill's role as intermediary is also corroborated by the Morrogh letters to Parnell, discussed below.

Swift MacNeill's account again underscores the supposedly historical nature of the enterprise – 'As he rose from signing the first of the two cheques that covered the amount, Mr. Parnell handed me the original draft of the letters, with the remark: "Keep this. It will be perhaps of value some day." I still have it my possession'.¹¹ If this were the case, it shows that Parnell applied a degree of importance to the terms of the transaction over and above the money that it brought into his party's confers, which was hardly an historically significant outcome in itself.

The Parnell Letters

The correspondence puts forward Rhodes' 'scheme of Imperial Federation,' using Ireland as its 'stalking horse', and elicits Parnell's support for it. This is ostensibly the principal purpose of the correspondence articulated characteristically for Rhodes in the tone of a gambler to his bookmaker. There are other arguments put forward: the efficacy of self-government – the 'Imperial tie [has] been immeasurably strengthened' as a result at the Cape; the prescience of the Radical programme; and a healthy scepticism about conservative instincts – 'English people are not prepared at present to accept any vital change of their constitution'.¹² Rhodes suggests a political framework, a code, in his opening letter; whereas Parnell exhibits only pragmatism – 'Your conclusion as to the only

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Rhodes to Parnell (19 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

alternative for Home Rule is also entirely my own' was the message of inescapable concord that the correspondence sought to demonstrate.¹³

In his account of the meetings that led to the drafting of the letters, Swift MacNeill records that Rhodes and Parnell 'entered almost immediately into the subject of the retention of the Irish members' when they met for the first time.¹⁴ The Home Rule Bill of 1886 had excluded Irish Members from the House of Commons, which Rhodes said 'seemed rightly to be considered, both in England and the colonies, as a major step in the direction of pure separation'.¹⁵ By 1888, Gladstone had changed his position of 1886 that Home Rule should be accompanied by, and importantly conditional on, the removal of Irish MPs from Westminster and he had begun to make statements to this effect.¹⁶ Parnell had met with Gladstone in March 1888, when Gladstone was in opposition, and they discussed an 'American system' as the basis for Home Rule; it was recorded that Parnell had said this could be 'a groundwork' for a solution.¹⁷ The memorandum of the discussion was not, however, made public in its entirety at the time leading to a public spat about what exactly was said (as discussed below). But when Rhodes and Parnell met the IPP had not made any firm decisions on the policy. Moreover, by the time of his meeting with Gladstone in March 1888, Parnell was aware of the possibility of a large financial inducement in favour of the policy from Rhodes due to his discussions with Swift MacNeill the previous year.

¹³ Rhodes to Parnell (23 June 1888), Dublin NLI MS Parnell, MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

¹⁴ MacNeill, *Seen and Heard*, p. 265-66.

¹⁵ Rhodes to Parnell (19 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

¹⁶ For instance, Gladstone's speech at Swansea in June 1887 - 'The question of the retention of members at Westminster is a British question, which will always be British one and as to which the Irish may always be expected to conform to the well-considered wishes of Britain. That being so I think I may present to you one or two other points having a practical connexion with the future bearing of the subject...' in "Mr. Gladstone At Swansea.", *The Times* [London], no. 32091 (6 June 1887), p., col. e, Times Digital Archive (4 September 2021).

¹⁷ Notes and Memorandum by Gladstone (8-10 March 1888), London BL MS Gladstone, Add. MSS 44773, fos. 48-9.

Thus, the prospect of a yet to be confirmed meeting with Rhodes might have influenced his position with Gladstone.

Rhodes put forward a proposal. He supported the formula set out by ‘Lord Rosebery, in his recent speech at Inverness’ where he proposed ‘a reduced Irish representation at Westminster... based on the Irish contribution to the Imperial revenue.’¹⁸ The Rosebery formula was redacted from the letter published in *The Times* by Parnell, perhaps because it would have emphasised the practical problems that a federal formula would pose to the union; or perhaps because Parnell could not be seen to be supporting Rosebery *per se*. Parnell was a more experienced politician than Rhodes, something of which he was conscious if the comment attributed to Parnell by MacNeill is accurate – ‘Rhodes is not in the Imperial Parliament. As it is, he will not live in history.’¹⁹ However, this belies an important reality: whilst Parnell was the more practised politician – and came from a more mature political system – he was nevertheless practically unable to influence events through government policy. Rhodes on the other hand had exercised real influence, in Bechuanaland for instance (as shown in chapter 3), early in his career before he became Cape Premier. This was evident in their respective approaches – Parnell was conscientious and sentient of his party’s reaction to the tenor and tone of the proposals and thus to party management; Rhodes was thinking primarily of the objective, the vision, rather than the tactical means of achieving it. He had after all achieved a certain success in Bechuanaland on the ground without having to rely on the infrastructure of Parliament, as Parnell (never in government or in the party of government) was used to doing.

¹⁸ Rhodes to Parnell (19 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

¹⁹ MacNeill, *Seen and Heard*, p. 266.

Rhodes noted a number of constitutional inconsistencies (though the word ‘reduced’ was omitted from the published version), which he did not think insurmountable. As a pragmatist, Rhodes suggested a compromise to accommodate England’s conservative instincts, rather than introduce a system whereby Irish Members would have a secondary status in the House of Commons:

... though it seems illogical that Irish members should vote on English local matters, still, taking into consideration the large indirect contribution that Ireland would make in connection with trade and commerce, and that the English people are not prepared at present to accept any vital change of their constitution, it would appear more probable that this reduced number of Irish members should speak and vote even on purely English local questions, than that at doubtful intervals they should be called upon to withdraw into an outside lobby.²⁰

Rhodes’ suggestion for electoral reform, also explicit in his first letter to Parnell, would have been unprecedented. Rhodes proposed a radically reconfigured British constitution based, he said, on Lord Rosebery’s recent speech at Inverness. Rosebery had suggested a continuation of Irish representation in the House of Commons based on the ‘Irish contribution to the Imperial revenue’ rather than the formula of enfranchisement then in place.²¹ This formula was not without precedent on the Irish side. When Parnell met with Gladstone at 10:30pm on 5 April 1885 in the anti-imperialist John Morley’s room in Westminster to discuss the financial arrangements of the first Home Rule Bill, he agreed to give up ‘tariff autonomy in return for an expected substantial reduction in Ireland’s contribution to imperial taxation’.²² The proposal laid out by Rosebery, as Rhodes would have been aware, would have meant more than a Home Rule Bill; it would have necessitated a further Reform Bill to amend not just seat allocations but the formula by which seats were distributed for Westminster elections. Such a qualification would mean

²⁰ Rhodes to Parnell (19 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Cooke and Vincent, *The Governing Passion*, p. 400.

that in a future federal arrangement England would retain by far the largest share of seats because of the size of its economy relative to those of the settler states and Ireland. Though how this would have accorded with Rhodes' stated desire to reincorporate the United States into the British Empire is less clear.²³ The proposal was not inconsistent with existing franchise models and the fiscal framework had been discussed by Gladstone and Parnell in 1885. The nineteenth century franchise was based on the income of the individual voter: applying the same principle to nations was its logical extension. It also allowed for a flexible approach to imperial federation. Rhodes' proposal could have included India without reducing Britain to a bit player in the British Empire. However, there is no evidence that Rhodes had such an outcome in mind.²⁴

Ireland and Empire

This framework shows that *empire* provided a conceptual alternative to *nation* for Rhodes and, as Hoppen points out, this had been a concrete reality for the Irish since the establishment of the Union – ‘geographical closeness to and constitutional involvement with Britain gave Ireland a unique position within the imperial universe, and this in turn enabled aspiring Irishmen and women – Catholic as well as Protestant – to find rewarding openings for their talents in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere, opportunities that made it possible to sustain a congenial combination of Irishness, on the one hand, and, on the other, attachment to an empire encompassing a fifth, perhaps even a quarter, of all the human beings on earth.’²⁵

²³ This was explicit in ‘Confession of Faith’ cited in Flint, *Rhodes*, pp. 248-52.

²⁴ In 1900 Dadabhai Naoroji recommended representation at Westminster for the three Indian Presidencies in the Minority Report of the Welby Commission that examined the finances of the Government of India. See Dadabhai Naoroji and William Wedderburn, *British Committee of the Indian National Congress, Minority Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure* (London, 1906), p. 4.

²⁵ Hoppen, *Governing Hibernia*, p. 4.

The complex role played by Ireland and the Irish in the British Empire meant that whereas in the British Isles, as some historians have argued, the Irish were colonised, in the empire they were colonisers. It was in this context, in Greater Britain, that Rhodes encountered Ireland. One such encounter was with John Morrogh, an established Kimberley prospector who would go on to become a director of De Beers and, through Rhodes' facilitation, a Parnellite MP. Salisbury had seen 'Disintegration' from the perspective of constitutional crisis in the Home Nations but Rhodes' perspective was from a young and vigorous settler state.²⁶ Rhodes saw global interconnectedness enabled by technological and political advancements strengthening autonomous states within an imperial framework. Home Rule for him was a chance for some convenient constitutional restructuring, which would present an opportunity for direct representation for the settler states at Westminster.

'My experience in the Cape Colony leads me to believe that the Ulster question is one which would soon settle itself', Rhodes wrote in a style designed to instil confidence.²⁷ Drawing on his experience of colonial autonomy in the Cape he argued that there 'must be effective safeguards for the maintenance of Imperial unity, I am of the opinion that the Home Rule granted should be a reality and not a sham'.²⁸ In Parnell's reply, he said Home Rule should be 'thorough-going and should give Ireland complete control over her own affairs without reservation, and I cordially agree with your opinion that there should be at the same time effective safeguards for the maintenance of Imperial Unity'.²⁹ In the published version the word 'Ireland' was removed, perhaps to de-emphasise separation

²⁶ Salisbury, "Disintegration," p. 376.

²⁷ Rhodes to Parnell (19 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Rhodes to Parnell (23 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

and secession. This line of argument gave Parnell the opportunity to claim that ‘Home Rule’ was simply that, not a means of achieving secession:

I may say at once and frankly that I think you have correctly judged the exclusion of the Irish members from Westminster to have been a defect in the Home Rule measure of 1886, and further, that this proposed exclusion may have given some colour to the accusations so freely made against the Bill, that it had a separatist tendency.³⁰

These insertions may have been designed to portray Parnell as a reasonable constitutionalist and to reduce opposition from the hard-line in Parnell’s own party to the measures proposed. The only other realistic audience would have been Gladstone and the Liberal Party; opponents of Home Rule who had left the Liberal Party under Chamberlain and were now sitting with Salisbury’s Conservatives were ideologically beyond conversion and thus unlikely to have been a target for this exercise in political marketing.

Another important consideration for Parnell was access and involvement in the process to develop the Second Home Rule Bill. As Cooke and Vincent observe: ‘Irish politicians, of course, were not asked to discuss any but the most necessary points of business in 1886, for conversation with them was so far from respectable that if it became public, the government could have been broken’.³¹ Parnell’s meetings with Gladstone, though constructive, were few and his engagement with Chamberlain in the run-up to the crisis at the beginning of the decade had been fraught – for example, when he admonished Chamberlain: ‘You then proceed to give me an extract from this speech... which I find on enquiry you have mutilated in the apparent attempt to make it have your own

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Cooke and Vincent, *The Governing Passion*, p. 164.

interpretation'.³² The published version of the correspondence with Rhodes would show that he was a man who could compromise and thus should be consulted.

Grey, an influential member of Rhodes' network, thought that reform in Ireland was essential, but not a reform that did not deal with fundamental matters of economic and social policy and introduced a new point of national differentiation through Home Rule. He wrote in his notebook reflecting on the Besborough Report:³³ 'The landlords may from year to year practically alter the future Rents as "he pleased"... in some cases the Rise has absorbed the Profits of the T[enant]'s own improvements'.³⁴ Grey kept cuttings of Parnell's speeches³⁵ and underlined the following points from the Irish nationalist firebrand Michael Davitt's speech at Newcastle in 1879 – '...that no settlement of the land question would be satisfactory or final which had not for its object the entire abolition of the landlord system of Ireland ... the system of landlordism had to be crushed... They found the tenant housed in a hovel so miserable, so wretched, and so much deprived of all those comforts that were in England, that they were surprised how a human being could exist in it at all [and]... He told them to see to their children's wants and then to go to the landlord and offer him what they had left'.³⁶ Grey's instinct was to seek structural solutions to these inequities through addressing the underlying problem – 'I have never been a party politician, the reconstruction of national life being my ideal'.³⁷

³² Parnell to Chamberlain (21 April 1884), Birmingham UBL MS Chamberlain, JC8/6/34/2.

³³ The "Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Enquiry into the working of the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act of 1870 and the acts amending the same", chaired by the 6th Earl of Bessborough published in 1881. It found that the 1870 Act gave the tenant no real protection because compensation for improvements could be claimed only on relinquishing the lease and because tenants had to accept rent increases to avoid sacrificing their investment in their holdings.

³⁴ General Notebook, Durham UDL MS Grey, GRE/276/12.

³⁵ Parnell newspaper cuttings from *The Times* in Grey's Notebook (14 November 1879), Durham UDL MS Grey, GRE/276/8.

³⁶ 'Speech by Mr. Davitt at Gateshead' in Newcastle Daily Chronicle (1 December 1879), Durham UDL MS Grey, GRE/276/8.

³⁷ Harold Begbie, *Albert, fourth Earl Grey: a last word* (London, 1917), p. 8.

Parnell's acquaintance with Greater Britain was from the political centre and involved manipulating the concerns of its various components for Irish ends. Sir Bartle Frere's annexation of the Transvaal, which for Irish nationalists was the suppression of a sovereign people by the British Empire, was an opportunity for Parnell early in his parliamentary career. In the parliamentary session of 1877 Parnell had been a leader in 'obstruction', whereby a group within the IPP sought to delay and frustrate parliamentary business. Indeed, it was the South Africa Bill that he and his colleagues chose to disrupt in particular. Parnell and his allies were creating other Irelands in South Africa:

...the magnitude of the Bill was greatly in excess of the apparent requirements of the occasion. What was actually wanted was simply an enabling Bill to authorize Her Majesty's Government to do whatever they pleased in the matter. Instead of being a Bill to give certain options to these States, it was rather a Bill to enable an Order in Council to override the authority of Parliament, to take away from these Colonies, with the exception of Cape Colony, all their legislative power, and to join them together in any way the Crown might see fit. The Cape Colony had a representative system, but what of the unfortunate Transvaal Republic, which had been annexed?³⁸

Parnell's ostensible argument was concerned with an asymmetrical relationship between the states of South Africa. He argued that the Bill would simply make the newcomers colonies of the Cape Colony. He was casting the Cape as England and the Transvaal as another, unfortunate Ireland. By the time Parnell and Rhodes met in 1888, Rhodes was at the forefront of the expansion of the Cape and the annexation of its neighbours. The supposed asymmetry of the South Africa settlement was politicised by Parnell – who was able to make the debate about democracy, as much as empire. He argued that representative democracy was inherently flawed in the context of the union:

³⁸ [Hansard], *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd ser., ccxxxvi, cols 396-397, (3 August 1877, Government of Ireland).

The Bill was a parody on federation, and the manner in which it had been discussed in Committee was a parody upon legislation. It was worse, for it formed a precedent which might be acted upon most disastrously hereafter, whenever a tyrant majority desired to override the rights of a minority. They had shown that, practically speaking, there was no limit to the power of the majority to alter their Rules, and, having altered them, there was no limit to their power of abusing them.³⁹

The twin processes of unionism made Great Britain and South Africa easy points of comparison. Parnell and his colleagues had been formulating a conceptual argument about Ireland's constitutional future, which positioned Ireland as a self-governing state within the British Empire. A decade later when he was in contact with Rhodes, he hoped to make the debate about federalism rather than separation, which was less unacceptable to the British establishment and could more easily operate within the existing constitutional framework. Parnell masterfully shifted his emphasis depending on his audience: in a speech at Cork to nationalist crowds in January 1885 he said 'no man has a right to fix the boundary to the march of a nation' and he wrote in *The Times* in October of the same year that 'the separation of Ireland from England shall not be a consequence of the grant of legislative independence to Ireland'⁴⁰ – his dissembling appears to suggest his constitutionalism was a device for full independence, a Trojan horse to hoodwink naïve Liberals, but he was operating in two distinct registers, with distinct objectives for each piece of rhetoric – in the Irish countryside he was electioneering and in *The Times* he was speaking to the political class as much as English public opinion.

Rhodes was undoubtedly aware of the key legislative matters at Westminster affecting South Africa in the 1870s and 1880s. He lived periodically in England during the 1870s

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ A. Mitchell and P.Ó. Snodaigh, *Irish Political Documents, 1869-1916* (Dublin, 1989), pp. 62-63.

completing his degree at Oxford. Rhodes would have been aware of the obstructive potential of the IPP, along with much of the newspaper-reading public – in relation to the South Africa Bill, Parnell, Joseph Gillis Biggar and John O’Connor Power were described in *The Times* as ‘Parliamentary Obstructors’ in ‘English, Scotch and Imperial Affairs’ and, *The Times* said that of the ‘twenty-one divisions [on the South Africa Bill], only the fourth and fifth had any other meaning than that of delay’.⁴¹ Parnell cut his political teeth obstructing imperial legislation in order – in a conceptual and ideological sense – to identify Ireland as a colonial possession of England, which, given Ireland’s status in the union, was perhaps stretching the point. Despite the position of the then leader of the IPP, Isaac Butt, Parnell and his co-religionists, Biggar and O’Connor-Power ‘did not restrict themselves to blocking Irish legislation, but widened the scope of the tactic to cover Imperial concerns’.⁴²

This defiant activity reached its high point in July 1877 with a twenty-six-hour sitting on the South Africa Bill. The effect on the House of Commons was remarkable: a senior Tory like Gathorne Hardy, for example, was compelled to stay in the House for nearly twenty hours. He was pleased that, in the end, the Bill was pushed through and that ‘if the Recusants had not yielded, the House was becoming ready for the strongest steps... I hope, we produced an effect, but Parnell, Biggar, O’Donnell and worst, Nolan, are made of impenetrable stuff.’⁴³

If Parnell was grudgingly respected, he was also acquiring a reputation as a manipulator of the British political system against the British imperial state. In 1877, Parnell demonstrated his ability to interfere in imperial affairs which could have damaged South African interests.

⁴¹"Parliamentary Obstructives.", *The Times* [London], no. no. 29011 (3 August 1877), p. 11, col. f, Times Digital Archive (14 August 2019).; "Physical Endurance.", *The Times* [London], no. no. 29012 (4 August 1877), p. 5, col. f, Times Digital Archive (14 August 2019).

⁴² Bew, *Politics of Enmity*, p. 307.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Publication of the Parnell letters

Rhodes had some association with *The Times* by 1888. His first appearance came in 1881 when he was awarded his Oxford MA but in this instance his name only appeared on a list of other graduates, there was no editorial input from Rhodes.⁴⁴ He had used the paper to promote his activities in Bechuanaland in 1885⁴⁵ and there is evidence of Rhodes' interaction with the management of *The Times* in the memoirs of his acolytes and biographies – for example, 'I remember you met [Princess Radziwill] at a dinner-party some three years [circa 1895] ago given by Moberly Bell (Manager of the London *Times*)'.⁴⁶ But a close assessment of how Rhodes used the newspaper of record to influence public and political opinion has not been undertaken. Rhodes and his circle were certainly highly aware of 'public opinion'. Writing to Rhodes in relation to his suggestion that Rhodes donate £1000 to the University of Oxford for a prize for the best essay or poem on the subject of the empire, Grey said there are 'distinct advantages to Rhodes in the effect it will have upon Public Opinion... in spite of all he has done the impression still exists in certain quarters that he is rather a self-interested Africander [sic] than a disinterested Englishman'.⁴⁷

Both Rhodes and Parnell show their instrumentalism through the correspondence because they conspired to produce letters which were both public and private material. A redacted version of the correspondence was published in *The Times* on 9 June 1888.⁴⁸ The exchange as published gives the impression that Rhodes had written to Parnell, at the

⁴⁴ "University Intelligence. ", *The Times* [London], no. 30373 (9 December 1881), p. 8, col. a, Times Digital Archive (14 March 2019).

⁴⁵ "Bechuanaland".

⁴⁶ Jourdan, *His private life*, p. 83.

⁴⁷ Grey to Rhodes (29 June 1895), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 288 C3B 251.

⁴⁸ "Mr. Parnell and the Retention of the Irish Members at Westminster."

instigation of Swift MacNeill, and, having made his case about the failings of the First Home Rule Bill, persuaded Parnell that the retention of Irish Members at Westminster was a vital step toward closer imperial union. The reality was not as straightforward. Swift MacNeill mentions the drafting process in his memoir – ‘...[they] then proceeded to draft the formal letters to be exchanged between them’.⁴⁹ However, he does not make reference to the redaction for *The Times*, possibly for one of three reasons: at the time of writing in 1925 Swift MacNeill felt that the information either remained sensitive or would sully the political reputation of Parnell (his personal reputation having been destroyed during the Kitty O’Shea affair); he was not privy to that part of proceedings, which appears unlikely given what is known about his relationship with Parnell; or he simply neglected to mention it given the passage of time.⁵⁰ The original draft of Rhodes’ first letter was written on House of Commons notepaper implying that the letter was written in Parnell’s or Swift MacNeill’s office after the three had met. Some of the exclusions have already been mentioned but it is worth discussing some of language that was redacted – Parnell was to ‘tell’ rather than ‘assure’ Rhodes that the IPP would back continued Irish representation at Westminster, but the word ‘reduced’ was removed presumably to assuage Parnell’s supporters who might have resented their influence at Westminster diminishing. Traces of colonial language implying a subsidiary status such as ‘Council’ in ‘an Irish Legislature Council’ were also removed. Redactions were only made to Rhodes’ letter, not Parnell’s. The impression given is that Rhodes authored the original, using terminology with which he was accustomed from his experience in South Africa, and Parnell redacted the parts that he felt might have been inadvisable in the context of British politics or the internal politics of the IPP. This conforms to evidence from Rhodes’ correspondence that gives the general

⁴⁹ MacNeill, *Seen and Heard*, p. 265-66.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

impression of a lack of attention to detail in terms of grammar, the content of previous letters he has written and more detailed points of argument.

Williams' account of Rhodes' press strategies showed that his interventions in the British press were carefully choreographed (discussed in detail in chapter 2).⁵¹ For instance, during the 1898 Cape General Election campaign he said: 'Is it too late to alter a few points in last night's [sic] speech for English Editions?... I did not say Mr Hofmeyr wants my political death, I said he wanted my death, the word political spoils the whole thing, it is death and nothing else'.⁵² Rhodes was punctilious about rhetoric but was willing to take Parnell's advice on detailed points of policy that might have had implications for the IPP's internal politics. Apart from the careful redaction of politically plosive language, the offers of financial support from Rhodes and John Morrogh were omitted. The letters that were presented in *The Times* provided a satisfactory discussion and reasoned conclusion following an apparently dialectical process, which did not reveal the *quid pro quo* at the centre of the arrangement – the references to payment were removed from the first letter and moved to the last – and the premeditated nature of the exchange of letters was disguised and obscured. The editorial of *The Times* suggested Rhodes had been naïve in trusting Parnell, given his previous statements on the retention of Irish members:

[This assurance] has entirely satisfied Mr. Rhodes, who apparently has never heard of Mr. Parnell's celebrated statement that he could not set a limit to the aspirations of a nation. Those, however, who have made up their minds to believe in Mr. Parnell will not be shaken in that comfortable faith by any amount of evidence. An interesting example of this trusting spirit is to be found in the letter of Mr. Rhodes, a gentleman engaged in mining speculations and politics in South Africa, who has persuaded himself that Irish Home Rule will hasten the ripening of Imperial Federation, and backs his opinion by sending Mr. Parnell a cheque for £5000, to be followed by another of equal amount. It is true that Mr. Rhodes gave this proof of his confidence before the recent trial, and that he

⁵¹ Williams, *Governor*, pp. 134-35.

⁵² Rhodes to F.E. Garrett (1898), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 167.

took the precaution to inquire whether Mr. Parnell ingeniously answered that he was sure Mr. Gladstone would devise such a plan, and that the Irish members would gladly accept it.⁵³

The Times, then edited by George Earle Buckle, had a history of disputes with Parnell by 1888. In the previous year, the newspaper had published a fraudulent letter ostensibly written by Parnell but actually forged by the Irish journalist Richard Piggott that said in relation to the Phoenix Park Murders that Thomas Henry Burke⁵⁴ ‘got no more than his deserts’.⁵⁵ On publication, *The Times* said that this evidence ‘would bind still closer the links between the “constitutional” chiefs and the contrivers of murder and outrage’, referring to the ‘Parnellite conspiracy’.⁵⁶ These letters were immediately denounced by Parnell in the House as ‘villainous and barefaced forgeries’ and an investigation ensued that involved a Parliamentary Commission (‘The Parnell and Crime Commission’), Parnell’s exoneration, the suicide of Piggott in Madrid and a legal claim made by Parnell against *The Times* resulting in the award of £5000 to Parnell by *The Times* in an out of court settlement. This was the context in which the editorial was written.

Rhodes’ network and the IPP

Whatever the view of *The Times* editorial page, Parnell’s own Party was not unduly concerned by the commitments he made to Rhodes, as the paper later reported:

⁵³ "London, Monday, July 9, 1888.", *The Times* [London], no. 32433 (9 July 1888), p. 9, col. a, Times Digital Archive (14 August 2019).

⁵⁴ Thomas Henry Burke (29 May 1829-6 May 1882), Permanent Under Secretary at the Irish Office; murdered with the Chief Secretary for Ireland Lord Frederick Cavendish in Phoenix Park, Dublin on 6 May 1882.

⁵⁵ "Parnellism And Crime.", *The Times* [London], no. 32049 (18 April 1887), p. 8, col. a, Times Digital Archive (14 August 2019).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

A meeting of the National League was held this afternoon, Mr. Alfred Webb... said he thought they were in a better position to-day than ever before. Referring to the recent letter of Mr. Parnell to Mr. Rhodes, in which it was stated that Mr. Parnell was in favour of the retention of the Irish members in Westminster, the chairman said that they were quite safe in leaving the arrangement of these matters in Mr. Parnell's hands.⁵⁷

Jennifer Regan-Lefebvre has argued that Alfred Webb, a Quaker IPP Member of Parliament and newspaper publisher, along with Swift MacNeill and other Irish nationalist Members of Parliament Michael Davitt and Justin McCarthy, consistently proposed a humanitarian and internationalist approach to foreign affairs working alongside Gladstonian radicals and colonial liberals such as Dadabhai Naoroji. Naoroji was a radical Liberal MP who was elected in 1892 and had led a vocal campaign in the House of Commons for 'the rights of India', supported by Irish nationalist Members of Parliament. Rhodes was some distance from Naoroji ideologically, but the content of the proposals set out in *The Times* letters – on taxation and representation in particular – were identifiably radical and would not have alienated Webb.⁵⁸ It is likely, too, that Parnell discussed the extent of the scheme with Webb but there is only circumstantial rather than substantive evidence to support this.

John Morrogh was a business acquaintance of Rhodes from South Africa, on whose behalf Rhodes pledged £1000 in his first letter to Parnell. There is no mention of Morrogh in Swift MacNeill's memoir but it seems likely that Morrogh met Swift MacNeill through Rhodes when he was in South Africa because there appears to be an assumption that Parnell knew something of the offer from Morrogh – 'I am also, under the circumstances, authorised to offer to you a further sum of £1000 from Mr. John Morrogh, an Irish resident

⁵⁷ "Ireland", *The Times* [London], no. 32441 (18 July 1888), p. 7, col. e, Times Digital Archive (14 August 2019).

⁵⁸ Jennifer Ragan-Lefebvre, *Cosmopolitan Nationalism in the Victorian Empire: Ireland, India and the Politics of Alfred Webb* (Paris, 2009), see Chapter 7.

of Kimberley, South Africa'.⁵⁹ Morrogh had separate correspondence with Parnell, which seems to have begun by using Swift MacNeill as intermediary ('Today I have a letter from Mr. Swift MacNeill inclosing [sic] one from you') as was the case with Rhodes and again corroborating the role Swift MacNeill played in the affair.⁶⁰ The copies of John Morrogh's letters to Parnell were either not kept or were destroyed on his death (according to his family) but Morrogh's family did preserve Parnell's letters to him; thus only Parnell's replies survive.⁶¹ On 13 September 1888 Parnell replied to a letter sent to him by Morrogh via Swift MacNeill, which appears to have suggested that his 'contribution should be devoted to the Indemnity Fund' rather than 'the purpose... as you originally intended', presumably as set out in Rhodes' original letter which was to 'contribute to the funds of the party' rather than a more restricted usage such as the Indemnity Fund.⁶² Parnell suggested, as he said his opinion had been sought, that the funds remain for the original purpose. However, it seems that in his reply, perhaps in the spirit of compromise, Morrogh suggested that half of the money – which he paid to Parnell personally, at Parnell's request – go to the National Indemnity Fund.⁶³ Parnell's response was frank and firm and determined to keep the money in his control rather than under the scrutiny of lawyers:

[if you make a gift to the National Indemnity Fund] the lawyers will insist upon swallowing up every farthing of it. Hence any portion of your generous gift allocated to this object would simply be so much money thrown into the sea. On the other hand, our Parliamentary Fund and that for the support of Evicted Tenants as well as for general purposes is much in need of replenishing...⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Rhodes to Parnell (19 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

⁶⁰ Parnell to Morrogh (13 September 1888), Morrogh Family Collection, MSS 13/09.

⁶¹ I was told this by Prof. Antony Wheatley, John Morrogh's great-grandson, who kindly gave me access to the family archive.

⁶² Parnell to Morrogh (13 September 1888) MFC MSS 13/09; Rhodes to Parnell (23 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

⁶³ The Indemnity Fund was intended to offset some of Parnell's costs in his libel action against *The Times*.

⁶⁴ Parnell to Morrogh (13 September 1888) MFC MSS 13/09.

We do not know how Morrogh replied to this message but the cheque had already been received on 4 October by Parnell before his reply to Morrogh on 5 October, as evidenced by a telegram Parnell sent to Morrogh on 4 October.⁶⁵ Evidently appreciating the political sensitivity of his written request to divert the funds to himself, Parnell ended the letter with: 'I trust that you will keep this letter quite private and that you will excuse the plain way in which I put this matter before you'.⁶⁶ This exchange did not deter Morrogh: he became the Parnellite Member of Parliament for South East Cork at a by-election in 1889 and was noteworthy enough to merit a cartoon in *Punch* when he took the Chiltern Hundreds in 1893 following the fall of Parnell and his faction, and after a brief and uneventful political career.⁶⁷

Rhodes' other IPP collaborator was Maguire, who was the most active lobbyist for Rhodes in British imperial politics. Maguire had met Rhodes at Oxford, where they were both members of the Bullingdon Club.⁶⁸ He had then worked as private secretary to Graham Bower, deputy to Sir Hercules Robinson in the 1880s, and had been a source of information and a useful channel for Rhodes. He had then accompanied Rudd and Frank Thompson in August 1888 on the delegation to Lobengula to negotiate the agreement that became known as the Rudd Concession. Colin Newbury argues that 'having returned to England, Maguire helped to limit the damage caused by Lobengula's repudiation of the

⁶⁵ Parnell to Morrogh (4 October 1888), Morrogh Family Collection, MSS 4/10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ "The Chiltern Hundreds", *Punch* [London], no. civ (24 June 1893), p. 300, col. a.

⁶⁸ The Bullingdon Club is a University of Oxford private all-male dining club.

concession,' although he does not evidence the point.⁶⁹ Philip Jourdan described Rhodes' relationship with Maguire:

Mr. Rochfort Maguire... was one of Mr. Rhodes's oldest and most intimate friends. Their friendship commenced at Oxford, and continued uninterruptedly until his death. Mr. Rhodes had unbounded confidence in Mr. Maguire's judgement, and freely discussed his private affairs with him. When in London, Mr. Maguire was constantly with him. Very few, if any, days passed that he did not call at his hotel. He was clear-headed, and a most capable and sound business man, and his advice on business matters was always much appreciated by Mr. Rhodes.⁷⁰

Rotberg says Maguire 'was [Rhodes'] entrée into British society... he was friendly with the Rothschilds... To cover later contingencies, Rhodes needed Maguire, and needed him in Gbulawayo. He was Rhodes' counter to Gifford [a rival concession hunter in Lobengula's kingdom] and everything which Gifford and Cawston represented and Rhodes lacked', which is based on Rotberg's characterisation of Rhodes as essentially uncouth and unclubbable.⁷¹ Maguire and his wife Julia were close enough to Rhodes to be with him at Kimberly in the run-up to the Boer War in October 1899, when Julia Maguire, daughter of the 1st Viscount Peel, was a temporary reporter for *The Times*.⁷² They were guests of Rhodes in August and September 1901 when he rented a lodge at Loch Rannoch in Perthshire, where they were joined by *inter alia* Jameson, Jourdan, Beit, Grey, The Countess of Warwick, and a young Winston S. Churchill.⁷³

Maguire became the Parnellite Member of Parliament for North Donegal in 1890 and then won West Clare in 1892 following Parnell's refusal to resign the leadership of the IPP

⁶⁹ Colin Newbury, "Maguire, James Rochfort (1855-1925)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 8 October 2008), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/34832> (22 August 2018).

⁷⁰ Jourdan, *His private life*, p. 235.

⁷¹ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 258-9.

⁷² Jourdan, *His private life*, p. 235.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

following his disgrace over the O'Shea divorce case and his subsequent death in 1891, showing Maguire's eagerness to remain in the House of Commons, even as a nationalist, after the fall of Parnell. He was defeated in 1895 by John Eustace Jameson of the anti-Parnellite Irish National Federation. Maguire, like Morrogh, was not an active speaker in the House of Commons.⁷⁴ The Duke of Abercorn, chairman of the BSAC and friend of Salisbury whose own estates were in Donegal, was shocked at Maguire's election as an Irish nationalist and said his faith in Rhodes was 'greatly shaken' by it.⁷⁵ Abercorn was a figurehead but was still part of the infrastructure by which Rhodes lobbied for imperial expansion following the granting of the charter (as is discussed in chapter 5). Rhodes' support for Maguire's election suggests that he did not see Ireland for the ideological and political fault line that it was, perhaps not appreciating the inevitable reaction of Abercorn. Abercorn had his own objectives in mind, however, and was able to console himself with large financial gains from trading in BSAC shares.⁷⁶

Maguire was central to Rhodes' activities in politics and public life in Britain and a key link in his network of influence, his role being much more than Rotberg suggests; Rhodes mentions him in correspondence to Stead; Maguire oversaw the purchase of Dalham and he was involved in all activities concerning Parnell – 'Do not forget the copies of the Parnell letters so that I may go over them', as Rhodes wrote in 1898.⁷⁷ Maguire was the intermediary between Rhodes and key members of British governments and politicians generally. For example, when Rosebery heard that Rhodes had been complaining to the

⁷⁴ He was however notable enough to be the subject of a Vanity Fair cartoon by Leslie Ward in 1894.

⁷⁵ Abercorn to Crawston (19 July 1890), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, BSAC II Misc.

⁷⁶ J.S. Galbraith, *Crown and Charter: The Early Years of the British South Africa Company* (Oakland, CA., 1974), p. 115.

⁷⁷ 'I enclose for your perusal a letter from the expedition I have sent to Matabele Land. The writer is an old college friend....' in Rhodes to Rothschild (29 October 1888), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 47; Maguire to Rhodes (11 December 1901), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C27/(132)6; Maguire to Rhodes (9 July 1898), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C2C4 9.

Rothschilds about his not replying to Rhodes' letters, Rosebery wrote – 'I began several letters to you, but, before I finished them, I received long letters from you which put them out of date; and so, being the worst hand in the world at writing letters, I gave it up, and answered through Maguire: a course which I understand was satisfactory and convenient'.⁷⁸ This could have been due to key figures wanting to maintain a 'certain formal distance', as Flint suggested, or because Maguire was actively chasing for replies.⁷⁹ Rosebery wrote '[a]nd now I will conclude [this letter] by expressing my regret that you do not seem to be coming over, as originally reported. Business is settled in 10 minutes talk which it takes 10 months to settle on paper'.⁸⁰ There was also the risk that a communication written to Rhodes would end up in the hands of the press.

Maguire, despite being an avowed imperialist, saw himself as having a particular mission connected to Home Rule, as he said in a letter to Rhodes after being castigated for selling too few shares as the market dropped:

...the House of Commons is and has been a great tax upon my time and has prevented me giving the time I ought to our S. African business so as soon as this Home Rule Bill is done with which I am I suppose bound to see through, I am quite prepared to give up Parliament and devote my whole time to business when I hope you will have less cause for complaint.⁸¹

This missive, written in July 1893 before the Second Home Rule Bill was put before the House of Commons in the following September, may indicate that Maguire had an explicit arrangement with Rhodes in connection to the Second Home Rule Bill. However, this is not explicit in the Rhodes Papers.

⁷⁸ Rosebery to Rhodes (27 March 1894), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 288 C27 (38) 2.

⁷⁹ Flint, *Rhodes*, p. 230.

⁸⁰ Rosebery to Rhodes (27 March 1894) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 288 C27 (38) 2.

⁸¹ Maguire to Rhodes (22 July 1893) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 228 C9 39.

G.P. Taylor states that ‘on the evidence in the Rhodes Papers Rhodes seems to have had no direct contact with Morrogh after 1890, and his correspondence with Maguire is mainly on business matters with political references being brief, general, and rather few and far between’.⁸² There are two references to Morrogh in the Rhodes Papers: in a letter to Rhodes in 1895 that suggests he could be removed from the De Beers board in order to make room for a South Africa-based director and as owner of 1602 shares in De Beers, putting him on the list of major shareholders.⁸³ Morrogh is not mentioned in ‘Randlords’ by Robert V. Kubicek.⁸⁴ There are no further papers held in the Morrogh Family Collection aside from those mentioned above (the correspondence with Parnell, the drawing from *Punch*). Maguire’s papers are also lost, apart from a small collection held by All Souls’ College, Oxford; despite his widow’s bequest to her nephew Earl Peel, there are no papers in Earl Peel’s private collection.⁸⁵ Given the regularity of their meetings and close personal friendship, there would certainly have been extensive correspondence between Rhodes and Maguire beyond what is contained in the Rhodes Papers.⁸⁶ However, it is likely that there was little written contact with Morrogh because his family seem to have preserved what he had.

The Times published extracts from a letter that Parnell (referred to by *The Times* as ‘the Separatist leader’) had written to Rhodes in March 1890.⁸⁷ The newspaper was critical of

⁸² G.P. Taylor, "Cecil Rhodes and the Second Home Rule Bill", *The Historical Journal*, 14/4 (1971), p. 777.

⁸³ Carl Meyer to Rhodes (20 September 1895), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C7A 140; Rhodes to the Board of De Beers (19 April 1899) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 228 C7B 210.

⁸⁴ Robert V. Kubicek, "The Randlords in 1895: A Reassessment", *Journal of British Studies*, 11/2 (1972).

⁸⁵ Will of the Hon. Julia Beatrice Maguire (3 September 1945). The Earl Peel has confirmed that Maguire’s papers are not in his family archive.

⁸⁶ There are 48 mentions of Maguire in the Rhodes Papers and there are additional letters from Maguire in the Baxter Collection.

⁸⁷ "London, Monday, January 12, 1891", *The Times* [London], no. 33219 (12 January 1891), p. 9, col. a, Times Digital Archive (14 August 2019).

Gladstone's position on electoral reform in the run-up to a general election – 'He mutters over the old spells in a voice so diffident as to show that he himself has lost faith in their efficacy' – and refers to the 'bog' into which he has led his followers:

The next time the electoral inequalities of the United Kingdom come under discussion, Mr. Gladstone may be quite certain that England will insist upon the full share of the political power to which her numbers entitle her.'⁸⁸

Gladstone had refused at this stage to produce the memorandum of the conference that he held with Parnell at Hawarden, which Parnell had demanded be released because Gladstone had made a number of references to Parnell's acceptance of the reduction in the number of Irish Members of Parliament at the meeting, to quote *The Times* editorial, in 'his notorious manifesto', which Parnell flatly denied having done.⁸⁹ In order to substantiate his version of events, Parnell referred to a summary of the meeting he provided in a letter to Rhodes in March 1890 'three months after the Hawarden convergence took place'.⁹⁰ This letter does not exist elsewhere but is referred to by Maguire in a letter to Rhodes of 1891.⁹¹ Parnell's quotation of the letter was published in *The Times*:

Mr Gladstone enumerated three alternative modes of dealing with the Irish representation, the third of which was "the retention of a reduced number" in the Imperial Parliament. "Mr Gladstone," the letter proceeds, "told me that the conclusion at "which he and his colleagues had unanimously arrived was overwhelmingly in favour of the last alternative – viz., the reduction of the Irish members to 34."⁹²

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Maguire to Rhodes (30 December 1890), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C27, fo. 12.

⁹² "London, Monday, January 12, 1891".

The other three options that Gladstone said he had discussed ‘with his colleagues’ were the retention of ‘all Irish Members for all purposes’; the retention of ‘all Irish Members for Imperial purposes’; and the retention of a reduced number (34) for all purposes’.⁹³ The letter continued to say that Parnell had rejected the reduction ‘in view of the unsatisfactory state in which the questions connected with the constabulary and judicial body had been left’.⁹⁴ Parnell had been able to do this because he had retrieved the letter from Rhodes via Maguire.⁹⁵

Rhodes’ network was engaged in the public debate about South Africa’s similarity to Ireland during the same period. By the end of the century, Stead had become convinced that war in South Africa was a detrimental step for the Empire, adopting the idea of Morley that the consequence would be ‘a government [in South Africa] which will be Ireland over again with what is called a loyalist district, and outside of that an enormous territory, as I say, saturated with sullen disaffection.’ There were echoes of ‘Disintegration’ in Morley’s commentary in his speech at Arbroath that was reproduced in Stead’s ‘Shall I Slay My Brother: An Appeal to the People of Britain’ when he says, ‘Is a burden of this kind to be added to all the other burdens that lie upon the shoulders of those who administer this Empire?’⁹⁶ Stead takes up the theme, summing up the potential consequences of the war as he sees them:

We shall get off cheaply, if it does not cost us more than 10,000 lives and £20,000,000 sterling. It will entail a permanent increase of our military burdens in South Africa, and

⁹³ VINDEK, *His Political Life and Speeches*, p. 852.

⁹⁴ “London, Monday, January 12, 1891”.

⁹⁵ Maguire to Rhodes (30 December 1890) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 228 C27, fo. 12. Colin Newbery says in his DNB article on Maguire that he ‘benefited from Rhodes’s financial contribution to the Irish nationalist party by an unopposed election to the House of Commons as Parnellite member for North Donegal at a by-election (1890)’. However, he does not cite evidence.

⁹⁶ ‘Mr Morley: Speech at Arbroath’ quoted in W. T. Stead, *Shall I slay my brother Boer? : An appeal to the conscience of Britain* (London, 1899), p. 43.

saddle us with a Dutch Ireland, where we might have had a country as loyal and contented as Scotland. It will render responsible government impossible at the Cape, and will precipitate a civil and a servile war, the end of which no one can foresee. In addition to all this it will weaken our Imperial power by locking up one-half of our available fighting force in the uplands of South Africa, and expose us to be squeezed by our jealous rivals wherever their interests conflict with our own.⁹⁷

He continues, Ireland being the continual theme: ‘A few thousand Boers will die in defence of their fatherland, but the Union Jack will fly once more over Pretoria, and South Africa which might have been an Australia will become another Ireland, a millstone tied around our neck, the only disaffected province in the whole of our Colonial Empire.’⁹⁸

Historiographical implications

Some historians have argued that imperial federalism was never a very credible movement, and that Greater Britain was a literary or theoretical rather than political or substantive construct.⁹⁹ Rhodes was a leading imperial statesman in 1888 and Parnell was a major figure in British politics. Indeed, Parnell held the balance of power at Westminster in successive Parliaments. Their public discussion of the issue may not have made imperial federation likely but it made it plausible. The IFL demonstrated that the support for a federal form of closer imperial union was in the political mainstream. This was due in part to the context of imperial anxiety. Salisbury wrote: ‘[o]f course, when the word disintegration, as a possible peril of the present time, is mentioned, the mind naturally reverts to Ireland: and Ireland is, no doubt, the worst symptom of our malady’.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 62.

⁹⁹ Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 265.

¹⁰⁰ Salisbury, "Disintegration."

Salisbury saw Ireland as the first step to national, and imperial, collapse and federalists, such as Chamberlain, were seeking novel solutions to these imperial tensions.

Rhodes demonstrated this in the letters when he wrote from the viewpoint of the imperial periphery in the Cape Colony, as a politician who was used to engaging in sub-imperial public policy and the expansion of the Cape into the interior of Africa:

I do not think that it can be denied that the presence of two or three Australian members in the House would in recent years have prevented much misunderstanding upon such questions as the New Hebrides, New Guinea, and Chinese Immigration. Now in an [sic] reduced Irish representation at Westminster with numbers proportionate to Ireland's imperial contribution for Imperial purposes would without making any vital change in the English constitution, furnish a precedent by which the self-governing Colonies could from time to time, as they expressed a desire to contribute to Imperial expenditure, be incorporated with the Imperial Legislature.¹⁰¹

Rhodes, in stark contrast to Salisbury, who would give Rhodes his charter for northern expansion, saw the British Empire expanding territorially and consolidating constitutionally, rather than subject to great internal strains caused by nationalism.¹⁰²

Rhodes saw nationalism as an opportunity to be manipulated, commensurate with his experience of the Afrikaner Bond.

The unique circumstances of the Cape Colony might have gestated such a viewpoint. Not only did the native African population outnumber the British there, but in the European population the Afrikaners outnumbered the British also. As such, more so than in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the government that Rhodes supported as an MP and later led

¹⁰¹ Rhodes to Parnell (19 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

¹⁰² The British South Africa Company Royal Charter was granted by Lord Salisbury's government on 29 October 1889.

relied heavily on the British Empire for its legitimacy.¹⁰³ In the other settler states, proto-democracy within the framework of the empire provided legitimacy, but the situation was much more complex in South Africa. For Rhodes imperial federation was not simply a theoretical notion, it was concerned with the practical politics of the Cape and the larger, global polity of which it was a component: Greater Britain. Rhodes' relationship with the Afrikaner Bond shows him dealing with a (sometimes) separatist, culturally distinct group in the democratic forum of the Cape Assembly. Rhodes, as he put it, saw the potential for 'changes which will eventually mould and weld together all parts of the British Empire', which would ultimately strengthen the British position in South Africa.¹⁰⁴ South Africa was a microcosm as much of the Empire, as of Britain.

This section has looked in detail at the correspondence between Rhodes and Parnell in 1888 and the subsequent contact between them. The arrangement that they came to on Irish representation at Westminster in the event of Home Rule has been written off by many historians because it does not conform to Parnell's earlier statements, for example, his speech at Cork in January 1885 – "No man has a right to say to his country, 'thus far shalt thou go and no further', and we never attempted to fix the *ne plus ultra* to the progress of Ireland's nationhood, and we never shall".¹⁰⁵ But Parnell was, as we have seen with his treatment of the press, dealing with multiple audiences. His position at Westminster rested on electoral success in Ireland which meant appealing to as wide a nationalist constituency as possible; and his ability to lobby for nationalist interests successfully at Westminster relied on his being seen as anti-secession. But Cooke and

¹⁰³ Rhodes was Prime Minister of the Cape Colony from 17 July 1890 – 12 January 1896 but was politically active in the ministry of Sir John Sprigg from his election to the Cape Assembly in 1880.

¹⁰⁴ Rhodes to Parnell (19 June 1888) MS Parn. MSS: CJR 1, fos. 1-7.

¹⁰⁵ "Parnell and the National Question", Speech at Cork (21 January 1885), reported in the Cork Examiner (22 January 1885) in Snodaigh, *Irish Political Documents*, p. 62.

Vincent observe that ‘experienced politicians only expected a successful Irish policy to emerge when all other alternatives had been tried and been seen to have failed’.¹⁰⁶ They envisaged a dialectical process where liberals try and fail to secure a settlement and only once they have failed can a party, which is ostensibly more conservative, push through a solution. The Rhodes-Parnell dialogue on Home Rule can be seen as an important part of this dialectic. The Second Home Rule Bill did remove the exclusion of Irish members, which the IPP may not have supported without the intervention of Rhodes.

Irish policy was dynamic during the three decades before 1889. Gladstone had, for instance, done little in the 1880 Parliament to suggest he would back Home Rule. During his first administration his Irish policy had been driven by party political considerations rather than ideological ones – as Michael Bentley put it: ‘[i]n turning to Home Rule, indeed, Gladstone showed few symptoms of 1876 and quite a few of 1868’ when his Church of Ireland policy had acted to unify his party.¹⁰⁷ The position had changed remarkably during Rhodes’ political ascendancy and thus his agreement with Parnell, whilst appearing opportune and perhaps politically naïve because it sat outside of the natural idiom of public debate, conformed to the dialectic of Home Rule politics. Rhodes had seen Home Rule progress from anathema to a near political reality and so understood the need to influence the political establishment through activating both the political establishment and public opinion through the press. Moreover, the evolutionary nature of Home Rule politics must have given the impression that a similar dialectical process could take place for imperial federation.

¹⁰⁶ Cooke and Vincent, *The Governing Passion*, p. 163.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy: Great Britain, 1815-1914 : Perception and Preoccupation in British Government* (London, 1985), p. 248.

The letters were potentially important for the next stage of the IPP's negotiations with the Liberals. It has been argued convincingly that '1886 was, and had to be, a trial run whose genuinely Irish purpose, lay at most in forging a link of expediency between Gladstone and the Parnellites' and one of Parnell's great fears was to be frozen out of discussions as he had been in the run up to the First Home Rule Bill.¹⁰⁸ This had been a major concern of Parnell as Gladstone put together his Ministry in the run-up to the fall of the Salisbury government in 1886.¹⁰⁹ Arguably in 1889, Parnell was running a public relations campaign in the press, with Rhodes as anti-secession ballast, in an attempt to ensure history did not repeat itself.

This episode has been seen by some as a cynical attempt by Rhodes to neutralise Parnell's opposition to the charter.¹¹⁰ Parnell had shown his capacity to intervene in South African affairs but without an accompanying Act of Parliament his ability to influence the charter was always limited. There was not substantial opposition from the IPP benches to the charter but nor was there silence. Rather this section has shown through the multiple purposes and audiences of the evidence that Rhodes was engaged in a genuine attempt to influence the policy of the Irish and Liberal parties in order to make imperial federation a possibility.

The Liberal Party donation

Rhodes' monetary contribution to the Liberal Party has garnered little attention, whereas his relationship with Parnell's IPP has been the subject of several superficial journal

¹⁰⁸ Cooke and Vincent, *The Governing Passion*, p. 163.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹¹⁰ Stead, *Last Will and Testament.*; Rotberg, *The Founder.*

articles and multiple newspaper articles over more than a century since his death.¹¹¹ There are similarities between the two cases. First, Rhodes appears not to have approached the IPP or the Liberal Party about becoming a donor, rather it was the reverse. Second, like the Parnell episode, the letters showing the provenance of the donation were published in a newspaper, *The Spectator*, but with a different purpose: although it appears to have been at Rhodes' instigation, it was designed not to influence policy but to embarrass the opposition of the day who were against the war in South Africa.¹¹²

Francis Schnadhorst was the longstanding political organiser of the Birmingham Liberal Association from 1867 to 1884 until the Home Rule crisis split the party and Chamberlain established the rival Liberal Unionist Association in 1888. He had travelled to South Africa in 1890 and solicited a donation from Rhodes. The donation was made during 1891 when Chamberlain was out of office and before he became colonial secretary and when Rhodes was heavily involved in lobbying the Conservative government over Portugal's interests in South East Africa. He wrote to Schnadhorst in 1891 enclosing 'a cheque for £5000' to be used 'with the extreme caution that is necessary, [to] help in guiding your party to consider politics other than England'. Rhodes said '[t]he future of England must be Liberal, perhaps to fight Socialism. I make two conditions: please honourably observe them:- (1) That my contribution is secret (if of course you feel in honour bound to tell Mr Gladstone you can do so. But no one else, and he must treat it as confidential.) (2) If the exigencies of party necessitates a Home Rule Bill without representation at Westminster, your association must return my cheque'.¹¹³ These were the two explicit conditions, but

¹¹¹ Rotberg does not mention Schnadhorst, for instance.

¹¹² The *Spectator* correspondence began with "C.B.", "THE DEAD-SET AGAINST SIR ALFRED MILNER; [TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR"]", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3795 (23 March 1901), p. 420, col. a, ProQuest (17 September 2019).

¹¹³ Rhodes to Schnadhorst (23 February 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 136.

Rhodes added a P.S. ‘I am horrified by Morley’s speech on Egypt. If you think your party hopeless keep the money, but give it to some charity you approve of. It would be an awful thing to give my money to breaking up the Empire’.¹¹⁴

This letter deals with the issues of socialism, Ireland and Egypt in quick succession and in Rhodes’ style. Rhodes’ ‘P.S.’ regarding Morley’s comment concerns his attack on the Salisbury administration from the opposition benches in the House of Commons:

I want to take advantage of this occasion, as I shall of every other that offers, to beg Her Majesty's Government to consider carefully... [to] fix some date at which British troops may be withdrawn from Egypt, and so lessen those very grave responsibilities in Europe to which the presence of the troops conduce. I would ask them to consider whether their present responsibilities are not felt by them to hamper them in most important transactions; and whether the moment when we prudently, wisely, and in conformity with our own pledges leave Egypt, is not a moment which, instead of weakening us and lowering our prestige before Europe, will greatly strengthen our material power and enlarge our diplomatic influence in Europe.¹¹⁵

Britain was engaged at the time in a diplomatic spat with France over Britain’s occupation of Egypt and so France chose to impinge on Newfoundland’s main industry, fishing.

Labouchere put it thus in the same debate – ‘Then again, in Newfoundland the French have certain rights; they are not particularly anxious to exercise these, but they say, “We are there by Treaty, and we take advantage of our position, while you, in violation of engagements, remain in occupation of Egypt”’.¹¹⁶ The strategic importance of imperial policy in Africa to imperial possessions thousands of miles away would not have been wasted on Rhodes. Egypt was central to the functioning of the imperial project; it was not just ‘the gateway to India’, it was key to Britain’s Mediterranean policy, her European

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ [Hansard], *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th ser., CCCL, col. 1445, (23 February 1891, Army Estimates, 1891-92).

¹¹⁶ [Hansard], *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th ser., CCCL, col. 1428, (23 February 1891, Army Estimates, 1891-92).

alliances and her ambitions in the Middle East. Above and beyond the individual spheres of operations, it helped to hold the component parts together. British control of Egypt materially lowered the time it took to travel from Britain to Australia and New Zealand, as well as securing crucial supply lines. It helped keep open intra-empire trade and thus helped to demonstrate the benefits of empire to its component parts. Egypt was a vital artery in Greater Britain despite not being part of it. Rhodes' preoccupation with Britain's role there was as such more complex than merely an extension of his African territorial ambitions or the 'Cape to Cairo' mantra. Rhodes' reaction to the news of a supposed shift in Gladstone's approach demonstrates as much – his concern was about the wider empire rather than his immediate schemes for Africa:

I gather in England that your party is almost certain to come in, though there may be subsequent difficulty as to the shape of the Home Rule Bill. The matter that is troubling me most is your policy as to Egypt. I was horrified when I returned from Mashonaland to read a speech of Mr Gladstone's evidently foreshadowing a scuttle if he came in. I could hardly believe it to be true and sat down to write to you.¹¹⁷

Even though Rhodes shared ideological common ground with Gladstone on Home Rule his sympathies more generally were with the Liberal Imperialists who espoused greater imperial unity, such as Chamberlain and Dilke, and the Liberal Party that was left after the First Home Rule Bill was a less natural home for Rhodes. Aside from his association with certain senior Liberal politicians, notably Rosebery, his pursuit of imperial expansion was much more Disraelian than Gladstonian in character; as he said to Schnadhorst:

I hope you will do your best to check [Gladstone] from the mad step which must bring ruin and misery to the whole of Egypt, whilst retirement will undoubtedly bring it under the influence of one or other of the foreign powers, which of course by reciprocal treaties will eventually manage the exclusion of our trade. However, if your respected leader remains obdurate when he comes into power, and adopts this policy of scuttle, I shall certainly call upon you to devote my subscription to some public charity in terms of my letter to you, as

¹¹⁷Rhodes to Schnadhorst (25 April 1892), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 141.

I certainly, though a Liberal, did not subscribe to your party to assist in the one thing that I hate above everything, namely, the policy of disintegrating and breaking up our Empire.¹¹⁸

The piqued tone gives the impression that Rhodes did not in fact see himself then as a Liberal even though that is what he claimed in the letter to be. He added ‘the question of Egypt was the only condition I made... We are now one-third of the way with a telegraph through the Continent from the south, only to hear of your policy of scuttle from the north’.¹¹⁹ In his final sentences Rhodes shows the interconnectedness of British foreign and imperial policy, business, capital and technological advance – these factors are not separable in his mind nor in the realm of practical politics nor commercial reality. His mis-recollection of his ‘only condition’ may be simply that – he may not have checked the letter he had originally sent, reflecting his impulsive nature, or it could have been more deliberate and rhetorical, which was a habit of his.

Publication of the Schnadhorst letters

In 1901 just before Rhodes’ death these letters became the subject of political controversy when they were mentioned in the letters pages of *The Spectator* with the accusation that Rhodes had bought off the Liberal Party – in particular the South Africa Committee members Sir William Harcourt and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman – with his £5000 contribution. *The Spectator*, as it said itself in 1892, was ‘not specially fond of Mr. Cecil Rhodes... [he] seems to us to approximate too closely to the type of the Elizabethan buccaneer; he mixes up the advancement of the Empire too closely with big dividends; and he condones slavery – or is it serfdom? – in a way which suggests he thinks that evil

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

system not a bad nexus between white and the black populations'.¹²⁰ In the same article *The Spectator* at once lauded the personal attributes of Rhodes and Jameson, and criticised the 'Company State' as a systemically flawed entity:

The Chartered Company, as State, is in the precise position which Communists desire: it is sole landlord of all mines. Mr Rhodes made a most clever defence for the weight of these royalties, and though it will not hold water as against the miners, it is not in itself quite so unreasonable as it was at first considered. The miner has to pay half of all he gets; but then, it is argued, he gets twice or five times as much as usual... But if nobody is willing to rent a claim, preferring to get one from the Company, then, as human powers of labour are limited, the extra claims bring nothing, and the royalty is a very heavy one indeed, - so heavy, that Mr. Fenwick and his followers would, we fancy, class Mr. Rhodes among the enemies of the human race.¹²¹

The ambivalent position that Rhodes held in the opinion of *The Spectator* is self-evident. On the one hand there is admiration for the breakneck speed of progress and its visionary nature; on the other there is a deep concern about what his actions mean in the wider context of global politics and the politics of ideas. There was unease at the contemporary rise of socialism in Europe, as Rhodes himself points to in his letters to Schnadhorst ("The future of England must be Liberal, perhaps to fight Socialism"), and the actions of an independently minded "Capitalist" such as Rhodes acting autonomously, in some important senses (in the administration of Mashonaland for instance), of London was grist to the communist mill.

The Spectator's commentary on his speech to the BSAC's shareholders in the same issue 'recognise[d] fully his claims as adventurer, orator, and financier; but we should like to know, all the same, what he is really driving at. Is he founding a British Colony, or a

¹²⁰ "MR. CECIL RHODES ON MASHONALAND".

¹²¹ Ibid.

dependent Empire, or a South African Federal Monarchy? Clearly he is going his own way, without much attention to any increase he may make to the British interest'.¹²² The ends seemed to appeal to *The Spectator* – '[f]or the moment he wants swift communication northward with Europe. He is going, he says, to construct a telegraph to Uganda, and he is quite assured that it will pay, as the one to North Zambesia already does'. But the means were in bad taste in its view – 'Uganda once reached – say, in 1894 – he will push his line up the Nile, we presume; but he will only say "through the Mahdi's territory" to Egypt and the junction-point with the European systems. He will conquer the Mahdi? Oh dear no! Mr. Rhodes belongs to this century, and never dreams of violence; he will only "square" the Mahdi, who will like "globular" remittances of sovereigns as well as Lobengula does... They will be finished in about ten years, and then remarks, we shall not scuttle out of Uganda, and probably not out of Egypt either'.¹²³ This article, written in 1892, shows that *The Spectator's* scepticism about Rhodes was longstanding and developed before 1902 by which time he was blamed for the Jameson Raid and the South African War and his reputation and political career were badly damaged. Rhodes' treatment by the press and the literary world during the South African War reflected this position. He was portrayed by literature as 'the King of Diamonds, a very queer card', as *The Spectator* described his depiction in the children's political satire *Great Men*, which cast the leading political figures of the day as anachronistic caricatures, Balfour 'in a stained-glass window as King Arthur playing at golf with Excalibur' and 'Mr. Chamberlain, in a Peer's uniform (which is much too tight)'.¹²⁴

¹²² "Untitled Article".

¹²³ "MR. CECIL RHODES ON MASHONALAND".

¹²⁴ "GREAT MEN", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3811 (13 July 1901), p. 58, col. b, ProQuest (4 September 2020).

Charles Boyd, a journalist and associate of Rhodes in South Africa, had a letter published in *The Spectator* on 23 March 1901, signed 'C.B.', in response to an editorial published on 9 March 1901 in defence of Milner and condemning Rhodes as the political figure in South Africa who had whipped up malcontent amongst the Uitlanders. The editorial said 'we hold it to be most important as regards the future welfare of South Africa that the Uitlanders shall realise clearly that the Imperial Government is determined to protect them and do them right... [otherwise they] may again fall under the influence of Mr. Rhodes, and he may again be given the opportunity of posing as the only man who really understands and sympathises with the British side in South Africa'.¹²⁵ It goes on to imply that Rhodes is politically incompetent – 'he is more than likely to lead [the Uitlanders] into one of those quagmires which the history of the Raid and the Matabele revolt shows us that he has a special capacity for discovering' – and concludes by saying 'Mr. Rhodes should, as far as possible, be prevented from interfering in the Transvaal... [and] pos[ing] as the only true Imperialist, and as the man who prevents "Downing Street" imperilling the most cherished interests of South Africa'.¹²⁶ The article is an appeal to the readership of *The Spectator* and the 'pro-British section' of the South African population to support Milner over Rhodes and desist in the 'personal detraction' of Milner. 'C.B.' responded later that month in protest at the way the article had sought to 'disfigure' Rhodes but was careful not to criticise Milner.¹²⁷ 'C.B.' dealt with the accusation that Rhodes was acting in opposition to 'Downing Street' by referring to the speech that Rhodes had recently given to the SAL in his capacity as its President. He had said in relation to Bechuanaland and its strategic position in the conflict that 'we want to get rid of Downing Street in this question and to deal with it ourselves as a self-governing Colony' rather than 'I want to

¹²⁵ "THE DEAD-SET AGAINST SIR ALFRED MILNER", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3793 (9 March 1901), p. 338, col. b, ProQuest (4 September 2020).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ "THE DEAD-SET AGAINST SIR ALFRED MILNER; [TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR"]".

eliminate the Imperial Factor' as he had been accused.¹²⁸ The difference is one of strengthening the empire through the support and intervention of a settler colony or undermining the empire by seeking to eliminate imperial government where it was needed. *The Spectator* responded by saying it distrusted Rhodes because of his financing of Parnell, his 'pampering' of the Bond, his introduction of 'speculative commercialism and Imperialism' to the empire that led to 'the crimes and blunders of the Matabeleland settlement and the Matabele revolt', and tied the government's hand with the Jameson Raid – '[w]hat would Imperialists have said if before the war some capitalist here, who professed to be an imperialist, had given £10,000 to the leaders of the Bond? But the Bond was not so deadly an enemy of the Empire as Mr. Parnell and his National League'.¹²⁹

'C.B.' responded first with a letter that *The Spectator* did not publish and then with another, perhaps simply to ensure publication, that contained information about Rhodes' Liberal Party donation. In its commentary to the 'C.B.' letter *The Spectator* said '[w]e print his present letter because it contains some new matter of very great importance, with which we have dealt elsewhere in our issue of to-day'.¹³⁰ 'C.B.' had been defending Rhodes against accusations of untrustworthiness and sought to demonstrate his consistency; misquoting the Parnell letters, he said "It would be a horrible thing," he says, "if my money went to helping a scheme which aims at the dismemberment the Empire,"... the same words and thought occurred in a letter to Mr. Schnadhorst regarding £5,000 which Mr. Rhodes had given to the funds of the Liberal party on condition that its leaders

¹²⁸ "THE DEAD-SET AGAINST SIR ALFRED MILNER".

¹²⁹ "THE DEAD-SET AGAINST SIR ALFRED MILNER; [TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR"]".

¹³⁰ "MR. RHODES.; [TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR" from C.B.]", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3814 (3 August 1901), p. 152, col. a, ProQuest (4 September 2020).

should not urge or support our retrogression out of Egypt'.¹³¹ He went on to say that Schnadhorst, like Parnell, agreed to the terms. *The Spectator* provided the following commentary in the same addition, relating the subscription to the course of the enquiry into the Jameson Raid:

No wonder the South African Committee was a fiasco, when Mr. Rhodes could at any moment tell the story of the £5000 cheque and his dealings with official organisation of the Liberal party. When it was noticed how little the Nationalists attacked Mr. Rhodes a witty Member remarked that the gift of the £10,000 was the best example of "an unexhausted improvement" that he had ever seen. But now it seems Mr. Rhodes had improved Liberal Little England lands as well as the Irish. Truly, Mr. Rhodes is a master of political agriculture.¹³²

Campbell-Bannerman responded in terms that were emphatic, claiming, without full knowledge, that the story told by 'C.B.' was from 'beginning to end a lie:'

The story you think it right to accept and adopt in an editorial paragraph, and you draw from it an explanation of the action taken by Sir William Harcourt and myself on the South African Committee. I beg to say, and Sir W. Harcourt authorises me to state for him also, that the story is from beginning to end a lie, and that your deductions are therefore also false.¹³³

In the editor's commentary, *The Spectator* accepted that in all likelihood Campbell-Bannerman and Harcourt did not know about the transaction and so their conduct at the South African Committee was unaffected. However, *The Spectator* did call upon Rhodes and Rosebery to respond. Rosebery certainly knew about the subscription, as is evidenced by a letter Rhodes wrote to him in 1895, long before the publication of the letters:

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² "Untitled item [If this is correct, and "C. B." ought to know, we obtain for..]", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3814 (3 August 1901), p. 143, col. b, ProQuest (4 September 2020).

¹³³ "MR. RHODES'S ALLEGED CONTRIBUTION TO THE LIBERAL PARTY.; [TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR" from Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman]", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3815 (10 August 1901), p. 185, col. a, ProQuest (4 September 2020).

I once told you in the Park what passed between myself and Schnadhorst. I have been looking at letters and found the enclosed. It is passed history but I think you would like it, because 7000 miles away I think in my humble way I had thoughts similar to your own.¹³⁴

The scale of the donation was not significant when compared to party funding initiatives of the day. For instance, the Liberal Unionists had aimed to raise £60,000 for the 1892 General Election but in fact were able to raise £131,785 through, in part, the sale of baronetcies, arranged by Chamberlain and Selborne.¹³⁵ Rhodes' donation to the Liberal Party would have been relatively minor in this context, representing less than 4 per cent of a smaller political party's General Election fund.

Charles Boyd had become president of the Imperial South African Association, a lobby group for imperial, and against Afrikaner, interests in South Africa, and wrote on its letterhead to Rhodes in March 1901, referencing *The Spectator* letters relaying details of his recent meeting with Chamberlain:

I saw Mr. Chamberlain in his private room at the House last week, and had a long talk with him... he says we make sure that the government will do nothing in the way of taxation and will hamper the industry. They realise that the development of the country's natural capital rest on this golden basis. The details of the settlement the government themselves know nothing of so far, and awaiting the reports of experts. The point is that Mr. Chamberlain is getting a better whip-hand of Sir Michael [Hicks Beach, Chancellor of the Exchequer] than he had. I am dining with Mr. Chamberlain next week, and will report anything I hear. You will be pleased with his candour and friendliness.¹³⁶

Thus 'C.B.' was a peripheral member of Rhodes' network of lobbyists and Rhodes had corresponded with 'C.B.' in advance of the publication of the letters. Boyd saw himself as an adviser on press matters – 'The "Manchester Guardian", the "Daily News", and the

¹³⁴ Rhodes to Rosebery (April 1895), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 153.

¹³⁵ T.A. Jenkins, "The Funding of the Liberal Unionist Party and the Honours System", *The English Historical Review*, 105/417 (1990), pp. 920-21.

¹³⁶ Boyd to Rhodes (2 March 1901), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C27.

“Morning Leader” (with its evening representative “the Star”) are the only pro-Boer organs with any following... As the attacks on Sir Alfred Milner in the “Daily News”, I am advised by Mr Lush-Williams, K. C. that we might get the Attorney-General to move against that journal’.¹³⁷ It would appear therefore that Rhodes had prior knowledge despite his protestations in his letter to *The Spectator* – ‘I have been appealed to upon the controversy that has arisen in your paper between a correspondence signing himself “C.B.” and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. I may say that the letter of “C.B.” was written without my knowledge or approval; still, as his statement has been characterised as “a lie”, it is my duty to send you the facts’.¹³⁸ In explaining how he met Schnadhorst in Kimberley in 1890 he set out for *The Spectator’s* readership his own ideas about imperialism and politics – ‘[I] found that his political thoughts were in the direction of what would now be called Liberal Imperialism... I told him that my ideas were Liberalism plus Empire, and I added that I thought the Liberal Party was ruining itself by its little England policy, my thoughts then being on the point of their desire to scuttle out of Egypt’.¹³⁹ He went on to say that he had laid two conditions: Egypt and the retention of Irish members in the event of a future Home Rule Bill because the First Home Rule Bill ‘simply placed Ireland in a subject position, taxed for our Imperial purposes without a voice in the expenditure; and it was hopeless ever to expect closer union with the Colonies if a portion of the Empire so close as Ireland had been turned into a tributary State’.¹⁴⁰ Rhodes added that once he knew that ‘Lord Rosebery [had] joined the Ministry Mr Gladstone was forming... I knew that Egypt was saved’. He continued: ‘[i]t is ridiculous to suppose, as I have seen it stated that I thought I should purchase the Liberal policy for

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Rhodes to *The Spectator* (12 October 1901), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 178.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

the sum of £5,000, or any other sum, and any Liberal making such a suggestion only insults his own party; but I naturally did not want to help a party to power whose first act would be what I most objected to, namely, the abandonment of Egypt. I understood from Mr Schnadhorst that he would consult Mr Gladstone, which quite satisfied me, as I looked on Mr Gladstone as the Liberal Party'. Rhodes attempted to give the impression that Campbell-Bannerman had been in some way dishonest – 'The correspondence speaks for itself, and I leave your readers to decide how far Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was justified in characterising the statement "C.B." as being "from beginning to end a lie".'¹⁴¹

Earlier in the year on 22 June *The Spectator* reported in successive articles in the same column that Rhodes had spoken about federation at Bulawayo and that Harcourt and Campbell-Bannerman had spoken at the National Reform Union of 14 June 1901. Campbell-Bannerman's speech was summarised and quoted as: 'speaking with unusual vehemence and definiteness, strongly condemned the policy of pressing unconditional surrender on the Boers, and charged the Government with carrying on war "by methods of barbarism," with systematically withholding information, and with adopting an "insane policy of subjugation and obliteration," the inhumanity of which was only equalled by its infatuation.'¹⁴² Thus *The Spectator* was opposed to all parties affected by the letters. With the course of the South African War as context, *The Spectator's* view of Rhodes had hardened:

As our readers know, we did not before the outbreak of the war always see eye-to-eye with Sir Alfred Milner in his treatment of the South African problems. We thought, for example, that he would have been better advised had he given no countenance whatever to Mr. Rhodes, and made it plain that he had taken Mr. Rhodes' measure and realised that his

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² "Untitled item [The Times of Tuesday contains a summary of a speech made..]", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3808 (22 Jun 1901), p. 903, col. a, ProQuest (28 August 2019).

blundering and blustering methods were far more likely to ruin than to secure a firm foundation for the Empire in South Africa.¹⁴³

The Spectator urged the Boers to become ‘Imperial citizens’ but counselled they should not be treated as the ‘spoiled children of Empire’. It urged the South African loyalists not to identify imperial loyalty with what it termed ‘Rhodesianism’, the personal devotion to Rhodes – ‘All we plead for is that men shall not necessarily be regarded as anti-British and disloyal merely because they are not Rhodesians. Let us for the sake of argument, admit fully the loyalty of Mr. Rhodes, but do not let us assume that in South Africa there can be no loyalty outside the Rhodesian fold’.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, *The Spectator* had even implored South Africa’s voters to ‘[keep] Mr. Rhodes out of Cape politics’ to prevent him adopting ‘his favourite character of Amalgamator, this time not of Diamond Companies, but of Dutch and English’.¹⁴⁵

Summary

The Schnadhorst donation to the Liberal Party seems much less purposeful than the contribution to the IPP. It appears to have come about not by chance but at Schnadhorst’s instigation and Rhodes used the ‘subscription’ not as leverage as it looked later with the publication of the letters in *The Spectator* but as an opportunity to build support in the party that, although he said he identified with most, was instinctively sceptical of him and his activities. *The Spectator* concluded that Rhodes’ approach was that of ‘an old-fashioned recruiting sergeant’ whereby ‘Mr Rhodes seems to make comparatively little of

¹⁴³ "THE DEAD-SET AGAINST SIR ALFRED MILNER".

¹⁴⁴ "SIR ALFRED MILNER AND SOUTH AFRICA", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3802 (11 May 1901), p. 684, col. a, ProQuest (4 September 2020).

¹⁴⁵ "THE REHABILITATION OF MR. RHODES", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3811 (13 July 1901), p. 52, col. b, ProQuest (4 September 2020).

his conditions at first' but 'when, however, the King's shilling has been taken in the shape of the £5000 cheque, the new recruit is soon reminded of the obligations he has undertaken almost unawares, and he is made to realise the consequences of mutiny. That is just the tone of the second half of Mr Rhodes's second letter'.¹⁴⁶ This is not altogether fair as Rhodes was explicit in attaching conditions, even if Egypt had been re-emphasised later; Schnadhorst had been foolish to accept them without authority, if this is what he had done. The difference between these and the Parnell letters is that Parnell spoke for his party and thus committed to a policy shift on the part of the IPP. It is not at all obvious that the same was true of the Schnadhorst letters and Egypt. Schnadhorst was not necessarily speaking for Gladstone, even though he claimed to, and at any rate Gladstone would not allow himself to be implicated too closely with Rhodes. There seems to have been a genuine attempt on Rhodes' part to influence imperial policy both in the politically sensitive areas of Ireland and Egypt, but Rhodes is not a prominent feature of Gladstone's extensive diaries. Gladstone did record meeting Rhodes at a dinner party given by Gladstone's close friend Stuart Rendel¹⁴⁷ in February 1891; Gladstone's diary entry notes only that he saw Rhodes at the dinner and that Rhodes was 'a notable man'. John Morley, who was also present, recorded that Rhodes sat between himself and Gladstone and that 'Rhodes told Mr. G. that Parnell had promised him he wd. never assent to exclus[io]n of the Irish mem[ber]s. Yet he left Mr. G. to suppose t[ha]t it was indifferent to him'. Morley also

¹⁴⁶ "MR. RHODES'S SUBSCRIPTION TO THE LIBERAL PARTY FUNDS", *The Spectator* [London], no. 3824 (12 October 1901), p. 506, col. a, ProQuest (4 September 2020).

¹⁴⁷ Stuart Rendel (1834–1913), 1st Baron Rendel, Industrialist and Politician, who was Liberal Member of Parliament for Montgomeryshire (1880-1895); in common with Rhodes, he spent large sums on politics – 'He spent £12,000 on the election (to his opponent's £20,000), and thereafter devoted, on his own admission, 20 per cent of his annual expenditure to politics'. See John Grigg, "Rendel, Stuart, Baron Rendel (1834–1913)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 23 September 2004), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/37889> (1 September 2021).

said that Rhodes had talked to him ‘in favour of [an] imperial customs union’.¹⁴⁸ There is little evidence here but the record of a discussion of Irish representation in the House of Commons and an imperial customs union appears to indicate Rhodes was musing on imperial federalism with Gladstone. The dinner took place on 23 February 1891 only days before Rhodes wrote to Schnadhorst to make his £5000 pledge, which would suggest that he felt encouraged by the encounter. It is noteworthy that the only mention of Gladstone meeting Rhodes in his diary is when he was in opposition, not government. There are references in the Gladstone diaries to letters written to a ‘Mr. Rhodes’ but they are not present in the Rhodes archive and Colin Matthew who edited the Gladstone diaries was unable to locate the corresponding letters.¹⁴⁹ There appears to be no further mention of, or record of correspondence with, Rhodes throughout the extensive Gladstone diaries after July 1889. However, this event shows the interconnectedness of Rhodes’ political activities in Britain and the possible implications of his actions. It gives a sense too of the possibility of initial Gladstonian interest in Rhodes before he became famous, indeed infamous.

Given the information available, it appears that the Parnell relationship was much more significant and Rhodes may have influenced the Irish representation at Westminster component of the Second Home Rule Bill, however this is not proved. Rhodes valued the

¹⁴⁸ Morley's diary (19 February 1891) reporting a dinner with Rhodes hosted by Rendel at which Gladstone was also present: 'A downright pleasant evening: the party just the right size, a round table, and the dinner recherché and not too long, and the wine famous. I thought Mr. G looked sadly white and old. Rhodes sat between him and me, and I between Rhodes and my host. The African has a fine head; a bold full eye, and a strong chin. He talked to me during the whole of dinner, in favour of imperial customs union, and when we parted, hoped I would give him another chance of resuming the subject: evidently a man capable of wide imperial outlook, and daring and decided views. I found nothing to dislike in him ... Rhodes told Mr. G. that Parnell had promised him he wd. never assent to exclus[io]n of the Irish mem[ber]s. Yet he left Mr. G. to suppose t[ha]t it was indifferent to him.' H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries: With Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence, Volume 12, 1887–1891*, (Oxford, 2016), p. 366.

¹⁴⁹ Gladstone wrote to a ‘Mr. Rhodes’ on 14 March 1887, 18 June 1887, and 8 July 1889 but it is not certain (though it is likely) that this is Cecil Rhodes. See *ibid.*, p. 18, p. 44, p. 215.

relationship enough to arrange for Maguire to join the Parnellite ranks, but again the nature of this arrangement is not clear. Rhodes may have seen Parnell as the emerging Hofmeyr of British politics and thus as an opportunity for personal influence. More strategically, Rhodes saw the changes to IPP policy as a crucial two-fold step towards imperial federation. It was at once a stalking horse to assess the political will for imperial federation and also designed to be a test case for the problems that a wider imperial parliamentary union might encounter. Whether or not any of these objectives were met, the Parnell letters lifted Rhodes' political standing in Great Britain and with it his influence in British imperial politics.

CHAPTER 5. Company Lobbying

This chapter examines how Rhodes exerted influence over imperial policy using three case studies. The case studies come before and after the defining crisis of his career, the Jameson Raid, and therefore occupy different political contexts. The first is general lobbying on behalf of the BSAC including analysis of his successful campaign for a royal charter based on the Rudd Concession. This campaign can be tracked through the letters that were exchanged by the principals, although much of what *actually* happened in terms of lobbying was done in private meetings and so has to be inferred. The second is Rhodes' ultimately unsuccessful attempt to bring Delagoa Bay under British control by influencing Anglo-Portugal relations to provide an entrepot for Rhodesia. The third is the reaction in Britain to the Jameson Raid during the inquiry that took place at Westminster. This and the inquiry in the Cape House of Assembly have been examined at length in the historiography of the causes of the Second Anglo-Boer War, but are revisited here because they shed light on Rhodes' relationships with Chamberlain, Grey and others less central to this study, and for their utility in explaining the outcomes of Rhodes' assiduous but often hidden lobbying of the imperial government.¹

Despite the devolved and diffuse nature of the British Empire, as epitomised by the Cape Colony, political activity at the periphery of Greater Britain meant political activism in the Westminster Parliament and Whitehall. Rhodes' lobbying activities before the Jameson Raid were principally undertaken by Maguire and Grey, but included Beit and Hawksley, and were relatively successful. The Jameson Raid was a disaster for Rhodes' influence in

¹ For instance Porter, *Origins of the South African war*, pp. 82, 108, 14, 17-18, 26-7, 33-5, 40, 286-7; Jeffrey Butler, *The Liberal Party and the Jameson Raid* (Oxford, 1968), chapter vii.

British imperial politics, but in the aftermath he and his network were able to avoid the worst consequences of their actions by careful management of Chamberlain and thus the Conservative government.

Rhodes was highly critical of the House of Commons' preoccupation with what he considered small and parochial matters – 'they spend their time on discussing Parnell and Dr Tanner, the character of Sir C. Dilke, the question of compensation for beer houses and omnes hoc genus [sic]'.² The disconnectedness of Whitehall from Westminster evidences Rhodes' point about the shortcomings of the 'imperial' parliament. Ministers were able to exercise significant prerogative powers through extra-parliamentary measures, negating, to a large degree, the need for Rhodes to be active in the House of Commons itself.

However, this did not curtail his involvement there. Rather, he operated in different registers in Whitehall and Westminster. This section shows how such activities shaped his vision for an 'imperial' parliament that was part of his wider schema for imperial federation. The necessity for this activity conforms to Freeman's definition of a federal state because Rhodes could only directly influence the Cape's relations with foreign powers through British imperial politics, which was vital during expansion as he competed for new territory with European powers. However, he could, and did, influence Britain's relations with foreign powers through the BSAC's sub-imperial activity.

The lobbying campaign for the charter and the approach Rhodes used when dealing with African state actors is contrasted with his campaign for Delagoa Bay, where a European power is involved, showing the techniques and devices that Rhodes used. This section argues that Rhodes' activities funding political parties – Parnell's IPP and the Liberal

² Rhodes to Stead (14 August 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 140.

Party – were fairly distinct from his BSAC lobbying activities insofar as they had *imperial* rather than more strictly *colonial* and partially commercial objectives, in contrast to the view of his principal biographer.³ However, these two parts of his model of lobbying are indivisible because they were implemented by the same small group of trusted advisers and lobbyists. Moreover, the former helped create the context for the success of the latter. Letters from London to Cape Town between Rhodes and his network reveal some of what happened but there is no evidence to show clearly and in detail what, for instance, Maguire lobbied the IPP to undertake in the House of Commons, or what conversations he had with Chamberlain and Rosebery if those conversations are not referred to in the archival record.

Charter lobbying

Rhodes was still ‘hard at my charter’⁴ for the latter two years of the 1880s and there are fleeting references in the Rhodes Papers that show that Rhodes was engaged himself in active lobbying when he was in England, for example, ‘[m]eanwhile I am to see Sir Michael Hicks Beach’, who was a former and future chancellor and President of the Board of Trade in 1891 when Rhodes met him.⁵ He was able to use Cawston, who had initially been a competitor with Gifford, as an intermediary – ‘You might inform Lord Salisbury that some English traders from Mafeking have recently obtained a concession’.⁶ Rhodes used Maguire (and Abercorn to a lesser extent) in the way that today major corporations use lobbyists – people employed because of their political backgrounds and connections – but with the added dimension of his lobbyists being political actors in their own right, which is somewhat rarer today, with seats in either the House of Commons or the House of

³ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 231.

⁴ Rhodes to Stead (6 July 1889) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol i no 128.

⁵ Rhodes to Stead (24 February 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 137.

⁶ Rhodes to Cawston (11 January 1890), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 231.

Lords. Maguire would provide a commentary on political events where Rhodes was concerned and passed on points of biographical and personal information about other members of Rhodes' coterie who were more eminent and thus less close to Rhodes himself, for instance: 'The market here is very bad... Lord Geo. Hamilton has just lost £25,000 in... South Africa... which makes the Duke of Abercorn sit up a lot'.⁷ Hamilton was the First Lord of the Admiralty under Salisbury at the time and between 1895 and 1903 was Secretary of State for India and the brother of the duke, hence information about him could be of some use in the course of engagement with the imperial government.

As a former Liberal Member of Parliament from the Chamberlain's Unionist faction, Grey had access to both administrations, Liberal and Conservative, in a way that Rhodes did not.⁸ Grey, who was Administrator of Southern Rhodesia from 1896-1898, acted as a lobbyist for Rhodes before he took up his post in Rhodesia as a director of the BSAC.⁹ Rhodes would thus use Grey's personal relationships based on his erstwhile political career to deliver the opinion of expert sources to key ministers, giving a sense of impartiality to his attempts to influence policy and providing a level of detachment from Rhodes himself. Maguire wrote to Grey in October 1889 to keep him abreast of developments with the charter and again later in the month, discussing future policies for what became Rhodesia – 'I have long thought that a native force on the plan of the Indian C3A would be the cheapest and most effective of securing the Pax Britannica in Central Africa but that force should be ultimately comprised of a fighting race such as the

⁷ For example, 'they read your speeches', 'Lord Randolph's letter has had a very bad effect, though it is rather ridiculous that his opinion should be taken on questions of faith...' and 'your speech also is considered pessimistic' in Maguire to Rhodes (12 June 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS. Afr. s. C3A 172; Maguire to Rhodes (23 Aug 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 288 C3A 182.

⁸ For a discussion of Grey's ideological position see chapter 2.

⁹ For instance, 'Kindly have a talk with the bearer Mr Arnot who is from Katanga. He will give you the strongest evidence that the Barotse country goes near where I put it and not where the temporary boundary as arranged with the Foreign Office. You might get Lord Kimberley to see him'. Rhodes to Grey (June 1895), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 279.

Matabeles [sic]'.¹⁰ Maguire and Grey corresponded (Maguire writing on House of Commons Library notepaper) regarding the German position and the BSAC, keenly monitoring Lord Salisbury's approach:

Lord S writes June 14 1890, "The claims of the German Govt are based chiefly on the contention that where one power occupies another power may not, without consent, occupy unclaimed regions in its rear. It could be too much to affirm that this contention is entirely devoid of support from international usage; but its operation cannot be unlimited, while the foundations within which it should be instructed are very hard to draw." This statement as a public dispatch must be considered the opinion of the Foreign Office last year. It obviously does not amount to an acknowledgement of an accepted principle because the boundaries fixed of the Anglo German agreement were not based upon the observation of the canon laid down in the letter of June 3.¹¹

Maguire's insight from the centre of British imperial politics was a valuable asset in BSAC strategy, particularly for Grey who would become Rhodes' chief counsel on geopolitical matters, as is made clear by the advice Grey offers on the prospect of a Dutch republic being created in Portuguese territory as a result of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty:

I send you a copy of a letter I wrote to Lord Salisbury on receipt of your cable of the 29th and his reply – His letter contains some startling assumptions and confirms... that his Govt. would... prevent an unrepentant Dutch Republic [from being] established in any part of the territory within the Portuguese sphere. He defends his part in signing the Treaty which... [states] (1) that Portugal has by Treaty... title to the Sea Board (2) that it is an accepted maxim of International Law that the Power which holds the Sea Board has rights of sovereignty over the interior.¹²

Grey goes on to say that this is a 'novel doctrine to me' – he was the intellectual, urbane face of the BSAC to the imperial government.¹³ Grey was correct in that it was not a precept of the Berlin Conference, which had established a legal framework for the

¹⁰ Maguire to Grey (21 October 1889), Durham UDL MS Grey, GRE/B183/11/7.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Grey to Rhodes (5 June 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 288 C3A 171.

¹³ Ibid.

‘Scramble for Africa’ between the European powers.¹⁴ Of the other directors, Abercorn and Fife were unengaged in the day-to-day activity of the company and Gifford and Cawston were not in Rhodes’ confidence in the same way – hence Grey and Maguire were the only directors other than Rhodes himself who could be described as executive during the early period of the BSAC’s existence. Maguire was entrusted to be Rhodes’ alternative director until his death in 1902.¹⁵ Grey’s letters, like Maguire’s, are packed with useful insights on politics and events relating to the BSAC. For instance, he wrote to Rhodes regarding the visit of Lobengula’s emissaries to Queen Victoria’s court – ‘Doyle had a very satisfactory interview with Ld. S. who assured him entirely that the Queen would see the Indunas... he would insist on our right to be represented by a Resident at Gungunhara’s kraal’. Grey goes on to say that he hoped that the resident’s presence would ‘operate as a de facto recognition of Gungunhara’s independence and may prevent the establishment of a Dutch Republic in the Portuguese sphere’.¹⁶ Such intelligence was critical for Rhodes’ operations in both the *colonial* and *imperial* spheres.

The key figure in enabling Rhodes to achieve the charter was the Prime Minister Lord Salisbury and Rhodes had offered Salisbury’s son Robert a position to manage his affairs in London, which Salisbury had ensured that Robert Cecil would reject.¹⁷ Rhodes was seemingly attempting to gain access to Salisbury by employing his family members. Though he failed with Robert Cecil, he may have succeeded without payment with Lord Selborne, Salisbury’s son-in-law and future (from 1895) parliamentary under-secretary of state for the colonies. Despite being Salisbury’s son-in-law, Selborne was a Liberal

¹⁴ *Parliamentary Paper*, (1886), Cm 4739, Africa. No. 3 (1886). General act of the Conference of Berlin. Signed February 26, 1885.

¹⁵ Newbury, “James Rochfort Maguire”.

¹⁶ Grey to Rhodes (5 June 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 288 C3A 171.

¹⁷ Roberts, *Victorian Titan*, p. 549.

Unionist and sat in the House of Commons until inheriting his peerage in 1895 and acted as the Liberal Unionists' chief whip until they joined with the Conservatives following the fall of the Rosebery administration in 1895. Selborne has been described as '*plus royaliste que le roi*' in relation to Chamberlain and indeed Selborne said himself that he was 'devoted to Mr. Chamberlain'.¹⁸ Like Chamberlain he was supportive of imperial federation. When, later in his career, he was High Commissioner to South Africa he devised a scheme for imperial federation, which was a reaction to the ongoing crisis of Home Rule.¹⁹ In 1915 Selborne entered the coalition government as President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, but resigned over Asquith's handling of the Easter Rising – writing then he said there were 'two other possible solutions, autonomy for Ireland on the Canadian or Australian model, and a system of "devolution" for the whole United Kingdom centring round a United Kingdom parliament, which should take cognisance only of those matters which are the common concern of all the nations of which the United Kingdom is composed'.²⁰ The plan gave a federal structure to the United Kingdom, which garnered the support of Chamberlain.²¹ Selborne could thus be considered to be a key figure in the career of Rhodes in British imperial politics. His access to Salisbury meant that he was well placed to be supportive due to the ideological common ground he shared with Rhodes and future work should be done to explore the possibility of Selborne's guiding hand in Rhodes' interest.

Salisbury was certainly the key figure in British imperial politics who enabled Rhodes' rise at the end of the 1880s. Without Salisbury, there would have been no charter, and

¹⁸ Porter, *Origins of the South African war*; 'Some memories and reflections in old age, by Lord Selborne', Oxford Bodleian MS Selborne, MS Selborne 191 .

¹⁹ D. G. Boyce and J. O. Stubbs, "F. S. Oliver, Lord Selborne and Federalism", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 5/1 (1976), pp. 53-65.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

thereby Rhodes may never have developed beyond the sub-imperialist of Cape colonial politics. Flint says that Lord Salisbury suggested that ‘the public would be reassured... if the proposed company were to include among its directors men of “social and political standing”’.²² This is not footnoted, but similar claims are made elsewhere.²³ Rhodes evidently took this advice and attempted successfully to link the BSAC to the very top of the British establishment. He approached Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Sir Donald Currie and Sir William Mackinnon, who turned him down, but instead recruited the Duke of Abercorn as chairman and the Duke of Fife, the Queen’s son-in-law, as his deputy. In order to defuse initial opposition stoked up by Mackenzie to the charter from the civil society South African Committee, then chaired by Chamberlain, he had recruited Grey to the board and Stead as an acolyte, who were both committee members. Rhodes’ recruitment of Fife led him to meet the Prince of Wales when Fife hosted a dinner in Rhodes’ honour in 1891, which was attended by Gladstone, Salisbury and Hartington.²⁴ The political titans may not however have been there for Rhodes, but rather for the prince. This appears to have been the high watermark of Rhodes’ standing in British imperial politics.

Rhodes may not have received the charter at all were it not for the Salisbury’s ongoing spat with the Portuguese over their east African territories, as is discussed below.

Salisbury had sent Johnston to east Africa with the remit of stopping Portuguese incursions into central Africa.²⁵ In November 1889, Salisbury took soundings from the War Office Intelligence Department about the practicalities of taking Lourenço Marques²⁶ and he told the Queen that he repudiated the ‘archaeological arguments of the Portuguese who claim

²² Flint, *Rhodes*, p. 116.

²³ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 279.

²⁴ Roberts, *Victorian Titan*, pp. 550-51.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 536.

²⁶ Capital of Portuguese East Africa; today called Maputo.

half Africa on the supposed cession to them in 1630 of the Empire of Monomotapa of which event Lord Salisbury can find no account whatever'.²⁷ Salisbury saw Rhodes and the company as a non-taxpayer funded means of keeping Portugal out of Britain's sphere of influence.

The other side of the charter campaign was on the ground in Matabeleland, with which Maguire was closely involved and present with Rudd and Thompson. The events surrounding the Rudd Concession show how Rhodes was willing to concede practically anything to achieve his strategic objective, even if such tactical concessions led to unintended consequences and opposition from those who should have been natural allies. Rhodes had agreed to provide Lobengula with weapons in the Rudd Concession – 'to deliver at my royal kraal one thousand Martini-Henry breech-loading rifles, together with one hundred thousand rounds of suitable ball cartridge, five hundred of the said rifles and fifty thousand of the said cartridges to be ordered from England forthwith and delivered with reasonable despatch, and the remainder of the said rifles and cartridges to be delivered as soon as the said grantees shall have commenced to work mining machinery within my territory'²⁸ – an obligation Rhodes took seriously but also sought to manipulate:

It has just struck me that it would be a great pull to import an English Officer to drill the Matebeli [sic] with their guns. You might ask the king if he would like. It might be sufficient to pick a good drill sergeant out of the Guards he would get great influence with the regiment armed with rifles.²⁹

²⁷ Roberts, *Victorian Titan*, p. 537-38.

²⁸ Nancy Rouillard, *Matabele Thompson, an Autobiography*, Ed. by His Daughter Nancy Rouillard (London, 1936), pp. 219-20.

²⁹ Rhodes to Thompson (4 March 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 200.

This may have been an opportunistic move, motivated by having a degree of control over Lobengula's impis, but it was also keeping to the terms of his agreement and going a step further, which, at little cost to Rhodes, would have brought diplomatic and strategic benefits. He may have made the calculation that if war with the Matebele came, it would be better to have some influence over the troops than not, or at least have an intermediary who could speak to them on terms of mutual respect. Alternatively, he might have thought that war was unlikely or that he would try to avoid it. Moreover, it shows the realism with which Rhodes dealt with Africans as political players: he had committed to give them guns and so they were going to have the potential to be competitive antagonists, therefore he attempted to bring them into his tent by giving them more than they wanted or asked for – a politically clever, if characteristically risky, move delivered through an intermediary and so Rhodes' own heavy-handedness was absent.

However, agreeing to such terms with Africans was not welcomed by his more ostensibly liberal colleagues in the Cape Assembly. Merriman objected to the policy of arming the 'natives' *per se*, as Rhodes observed to Grey: 'Merriman is making some bother over giving the Matabele arms... Without going into all the questions the summary is that the guns were necessary for the concession. The concession is the basis of Charter'.³⁰

Rhodes' political tactics could always be separated from his ideological objectives. In contrast, Merriman was determined on principle not to arm Africans for fear of the eventual consequences. Rhodes considered each step merely a tactic in a wider strategy, telling Grey 'any use you may like to make of the [below] information you are most welcome to do':

³⁰ Rhodes to Grey (30 August 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 211.

I find Mr Merriman has drawn attention to the supply of arms to Lo Bengula [sic] and that as a result of his remarks in the House an inquiry has been instituted into the whole question of supply of arms to natives in the interior. I think it needless here to enter into the merits of the question but I wish to state that I did forward the amount required for the concession.³¹

During the Matabele Rebellion, Chamberlain wrote to Grey to ensure that ‘you will take steps after the rebellion is over to secure something like a thorough disarmament of the Matabele, which I suppose was not accomplished when the country was conquered. It is a mystery to us here how they have obtained such large supplies of arms and ammunition, and this must be enquired into’.³² As Chamberlain undoubtedly knew, it was the basis on which Rhodes and the BSAC had acquired their rights in Lobengula’s domain in the first place.

Despite the provisions of the Rudd Concession, Rhodes’ preference for peaceful occupation of the Mashonaland was evident from the earliest actions of the BSAC:

The men are on the point of marching in. Our news from Lobengula is that of course he does not like it, but still has given his assent. We do run a risk of collision with his people but as we shall go at a considerable distance from his military kraals, I hope the occupation of Mashonaland will be without collision... It might be urged that a slower policy might have been safer, but in view of the Portuguese claim to Mashonaland and the greed of the Boers to occupy the same from the Zoutpansberg I do not think we could have waited. In addition to this you must remember that we were really a Charter without a country and it was incumbent on us to do something.³³

Rhodes added – ‘After weighing all the evidence, I think we shall occupy Mashonaland without bloodshed, but if a collision occurs we have at any rate seven hundred armed and mounted men in the interior and I believe can cope with the situation’.³⁴ Rhodes was

³¹ Ibid.

³² Chamberlain to Grey (21 August 1896), Durham DUL MS Grey, GRE/B181/2/9-13.

³³ Rhodes to Abercorn (2 June 1890), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 240.

³⁴ Ibid.

evidently prepared to fight but his preference was for a peaceful occupation, as he updated Abercorn later that month – ‘The news from Lobengula is good. His only fear is that we should attack him.’³⁵ With regard to policy implementation, he was a political pragmatist who would not risk conflict because it would have delayed the BSAC establishing itself firmly in the territory and at such an early stage in the charter a war may have given the imperial government in London cause to intervene, indeed to revoke the charter.

Rhodes’ deception of Lobengula has been a theme in the historiography of the BSAC and the British involvement in the ‘Scramble for Africa’ because of the basic mismatch of diplomatic capabilities and the use of contracts and treaties in English rather than in a local language (which was not a written language) – ‘the king had been cajoled, bribed, bullied and possibly even blackmailed to give permission for a clique of whites to enter his hitherto closed and fearsome kingdom’.³⁶ Rhodes certainly intended the displacement of Lobengula – ‘I feel if I once had Matabeleland and Mashonaland I could give the lakes greater assistance it all resolves itself into one question and that is Lo Bengulu [sic] for this savage monarch means Mashonaland and from that the lakes in fact Central Africa’.³⁷ His aims were to avoid bloodshed when events outside his control had made the situation less stable and contributed to a future conflict:

...the letter from the Queen [to Lobengula] contained a clause advising the king not “to give away his whole troop of cattle” a savage does not make fine distinction and he naturally took it as a message to repudiate the concession however up to the present he has not done this but he immediately murdered his chief induna who had all through loyally supported us he coupled with this pleasant operation [the murder of] the wife and family of the poor fellow.³⁸

³⁵ Rhodes to Abercorn (25 June 1890), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 242.

³⁶ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 263.

³⁷ Rhodes to Herbert (9 December 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 227.

³⁸ Rhodes to Cawston (30 September 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 221.

Rhodes was writing to Cawston, who was not known for his sympathies with the African population. Rhodes kept the High Commissioner updated on matters relating to Lobengula and it was clear that there was a preference amongst the British authorities in South Africa for manipulating the Matabele king for the purposes of colonialism; otherwise Rhodes would have altered his register when writing to Loch:

I had news from Jameson. He had seen Lobengula, who growled a good deal as to [the] amount of men going in, but in the end said, "I do not refuse to let them go in, but Rhodes should come and see me." Jameson thinks my seeing him would not be of any advantage, but that is merely his desire for procrastination and delay, as of course, he does not like the idea of a large European population in Mashonaland, fearing that it may lead to the loss of his country.³⁹

Rhodes' engagement with Lobengula shows that he was willing to deal with African states on a sovereign basis, even if he sought to undermine it for the benefit of the BSAC, the British Empire and himself. He was operating in a complex world where Africans represented different things in different places: workers in the mines at Kimberley; electors in the Cape; a barrier to union due to Afrikaner interests; and politically salient state actors in his expansion northwards. Rhodes was not acting in their interests, rather he used different approaches that recognised the different statuses of different groups of Africans. He used persuasion rather than violence. This does not influence the way Rhodes' ideological position should be interpreted but it does contrast him with other colonial figures of the day who would not, even tactically for a greater end, deal with Africans and African states on such a footing.

Delagoa Bay

³⁹ Rhodes to Sir Henry Loch (19 May 1890), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 239.

Delagoa Bay took up much more of Rhodes' time than other matters such as his campaign for imperial federation.⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that Delagoa Bay and Portugal have collectively more mentions in the Rhodes Papers (61) than Matabeleland (36) where Rhodes was more successful. This shows the importance that was applied to Delagoa Bay by Rhodes and his circle, who viewed it as essential to the future integrity and sustainability of Rhodesia and the British Empire in central Africa – Milner, not one of Rhodes' circle *per se*, called it 'the most important of all' questions.⁴¹ The prospect of a Transvaal railway to Delagoa Bay, depriving the Cape of interior trade, was another more urgent contemporary cause of concern. Rhodes' devotion of more day-to-day effort to *colonial* expansion in South Africa rather than *imperial* matters, such as imperial federation or tariff reform, resulted from practical politics. The interrelatedness of these territories for Rhodesia's future made the issues pressing for Rhodes.

Delagoa Bay's status as a longstanding Portuguese colony meant that the means of wresting it from Portugal lay with the diplomacy of the British government, rather than the more localised efforts of Rhodes' agents or the BSAC. He employed the use of lobbyists and proxies, and refrained from writing to the Prime Minister Lord Salisbury too frequently on the matter himself.⁴² The episode thus shows the limits of Rhodes' influence when it came to Britain's foreign policy and shows the conflict between Britain's position

⁴⁰ The Rhodes Collection Catalogue, which includes mainly letters written to Rhodes with letters written by him in the collection compiled by Baxter, references Delagoa Bay 35 and Portugal 26 times respectively, whereas Germany has only 5 mentions. This is in common with the other territorial preoccupations in Rhodes' life: there are 107 mentions of Bechuanaland and 36 of Matabeleland. This compares to few mentions of the other settler states (Australia, 21, to do with business not political matters; Canada, 1; no entries for New Zealand; and America, 10). Rhodesia itself receives 170 mentions. in The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts Report of correspondence of Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 227 B21.

⁴¹ Milner to Chamberlain (19 October 1898) in Headlam (ed.), *The Milner Papers, South Africa 1897-1899* p. 287.

⁴² There is only one letter from Rhodes to Salisbury in the Rhodes Papers that covers Delagoa Bay, which was drafted by Maguire (written in his hand).

as a European power and a colonial power. It also underscores the Cape Colony's limited ability to make foreign policy decisions without the direction of the British government. The letters Rhodes wrote to Sir Philip Currie, assistant permanent secretary at the Foreign Office and long-term official who had been Lord Salisbury's private secretary in his role as Foreign Secretary (1878-1880), show a level of exasperation that is not uncharacteristic of Rhodes, but was caused by the evident failure of a range of tactics that he had deployed effectively at other times – proxies, financial incentives and public relations campaigns – which sought to undermine the integrity of his principal opponent, the Portuguese state. The *PMG* had declared 'a clear field for Messrs. Rhodes and Johnston' after Salisbury had sent Johnston to the Nyasaland 'with what was practically *carte blanche* to do the best he could to establish British interests in the territory beyond the recognized limits of the Portuguese possession'.⁴³ Britain would support Rhodes in ways which did not interfere with the general scheme of European colonialism in southern Africa, but it would not take long established possessions from a friendly power on Rhodes' say so. However, that did not stop Rhodes' public relations machine. He was interviewed by the *PMG* following a meeting with Salisbury in London – 'so far are we from bullying [Portugal] that, for his part, [Rhodes] wishes we were dealing with some power of substantial standing like France or Germany. From them we would never have stood, or, rather, they would never have committed, the questions with which our little quondam ally of the South of Europe has been allowed to titillate its *amour propre*'. The article featured on *PMG*'s front page with an illustration of Rhodes. The article ended with a look to the 'future?', recalling Rhodes' saying in relation to the source of the Congo, "all that under the British flag, that is my dream" it seemed only sentiment then. But, as Mr Rhodes says, "Sentiment rules

⁴³ "A CLEAR FIELD FOR MESSRS. RHODES AND JOHNSTON.", *The Pall Mall Gazette* [London], no. 7744 (13 January 1890), p. 1, col. b, Gale Primary Sources (4 August 2020).

half the world.” Half that sentimental dream is now hard, practical fact. The other half, huge tract, is already strewn with those treaties which mark it tracked in the great international paper-chase, and Mr. Rhodes runners follow hard upon the hares’.⁴⁴ Rhodes and *PMG* sought to inspire in the reader the idea that Rhodes could achieve the impossible – he was positioning himself to influence the British government by appealing to the sentiment of the British public.

Rhodes had sought to establish Lobengula’s rights as the local king – thus the font of patronage and ultimate authority in his domain who was solely able to make external agreements – in order to provide a legal basis for the treaties that he and his companies would subsequently contract with Lobengula. This was designed to ensure that the Foreign Office could not disallow any agreements he made with local chiefs on the basis of their status. In the case of his dispute over the limits of Portuguese territory, the local African potentate was Gungunhara, whom Rhodes sought to establish legally as the paramount ruler in the region in order to diminish Portugal’s longstanding legal claims – ‘This Chief rules over the country north of the Limpopo... corresponding almost exactly to the sphere of influence claimed by the Portuguese south of the Zambesi. Over this territory his sway is undisputed... The least estimate however places the number of his fighting Zulus at 15,000. He is thus the most powerful chief south of the Zambesi and it will be understood stands in a very different position to that of the petty chiefs who occupy... central Africa.’ When Rhodes says ‘Over this territory his sway is undisputed’, he was rejecting the Portuguese position which claimed suzerainty over Gungunhara’s domain. He was also attacking the basis of Portuguese treaties with him, arguing that

⁴⁴ “THE MAN OF THE MOMENT: HIS PLANS AND PLATFORM.”, *The Pall Mall Gazette* [London], no. 8091 (24 February 1891), p. 1, col. c, Gale Primary Sources (4 August 2020).

Gungunhara considers the Portuguese to be a client state – ‘So far from being under the protection of the Portuguese he claims that they pay him tribute for their use of the coastline and there is no doubt that such a payment is made through the Portuguese state that it is only as a token of friendship’.⁴⁵ This tactic was both clever and complex. The line of argument recognised the sophistication of some of the African states, which stands in contrast to the position of other statesmen at the time. William Plomer writing in 1933 described ‘a raging thirst for universal Nordic domination’ and compared Rhodes’ vision for his scholarships to Nazism.⁴⁶ Plomer’s reading is in contrast to the pragmatism Rhodes showed during the Second Matabele War. There were widespread atrocities against the white population and some African leaders ordered the killing of all whites in the colony.⁴⁷ Terence Ranger records Rhodes’ view after the conflict had concluded: “I myself considered...that any Chief who ordered any individual murder was equally guilty with the man who actually committed the crime and would not be exempted from punishment”; however, “proof of a general instruction to wipe out the whites must not render the chiefs liable to be tried for murder.” The distinction was an important one for the Ndebele leaders in the Matopos, none of whom were in the event put on trial.⁴⁸ Despite the knowledge of such attempts to eradicate the white population, Rhodes was willing to act pragmatically to end the war. These pragmatic instincts were not universal amongst Rhodes’ extended circle. Cawston, a director of the BSAC, wrote after the initial invasion of Matabeleland: ‘The young warriors still stick to the King... and we shall have to kill a few more of this class to make them respect us. Privately I should like to say cut about 2000 more as we have not killed enough. I hope we shall get a chance to wipe out Wilson’s

⁴⁵ Rhodes to Currie (March 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 228 C3A 140.

⁴⁶ William Plomer, *Cecil Rhodes* (New York, 1933), pp. 171-72.

⁴⁷ Ranger, *Revolt in Rhodesia*, For example, p. 148, p. 256.

⁴⁸ Rhodes to BSAC Cape Town Office (24 June 1897) in *ibid.*, p. 246.

score'.⁴⁹ Rhodes sought to avoid 'bloodshed' at the time, however, as he told the B.S.A.C. chairman: 'I hope the occupation of Mashonaland will be without collision'.⁵⁰

Flint argues that mining capitalism, of which Rhodes was a prime mover, required a 'unified native policy' because of the risks perceived by the white population caused by the incentives of 'liquor and guns' and highlights Rhodes' support for limiting the franchise to newly annexed African populations in the Transkeian Territories Representation Bill of 1886, when he told the House:

For myself I tell the "Bond" that if I cannot retain my position in the House on the European vote, I wish to be cleared out, for I am above going to the native vote for support... Why should we not settle all these differences between Dutch and English, of which the native question is the greatest? What is the use of talking about a united South Africa if the native question remains undealt with?⁵¹

Here Rhodes is nakedly appealing to the Bond for its support, which was contingent on land and 'native' matters. Rhodes connects it with one of his main policy objectives, South African union. Tamarkin has argued convincingly that Rhodes' 'native' policy was designed to appeal to the Afrikaner constituency who were afraid of 'the threat of English- "native" political alliance and fear of ultimate black domination'.⁵² Flint made a similar point but personalised and racialised it – '[Rhodes] was apparently a man bent on conciliating the republics, but above all he had no tenderness, of the kind they associated with the Imperial government, for the black man'.⁵³ Whereas in another context, he was happy to apply rights to natives if it suited him. For his own ends, to cause the Foreign Office to question the rights of Portugal, Rhodes gave Gungunhara geopolitical agency

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 152.

⁵⁰ Rhodes to Abercorn (2 June 1890) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 240.

⁵¹ Flint, *Rhodes*, p. 36, p. 83.

⁵² Tamarkin, *Colonial Parish Pump*, p. 315.

⁵³ Flint, *Rhodes*, p. 83.

and suggested Africans should have a say in who their colonisers were – ‘It appears to be the manifest destiny of Africa to be developed through European agency, but it does seem that the native inhabitants who have full experience of the different methods of the European powers should have some say in the choice of the agents’.⁵⁴ This is again evidence of Rhodes’ willingness to risk long run consequences to achieve his immediate object. He implied the British government was acting ‘without full enquiry on the spot’ to emphasise his own expertise and play on the Foreign Office’s fears of acting without context ‘to hand over to the Portuguese Government a powerful independent tribe who bitterly object to the transfer’.⁵⁵ His use of African interests as a core part of his argument was to an extent playing the Foreign Office at its own game: the paternalistic instincts of the Foreign Office towards ‘native’ states were matched by its reticence about imperial expansion in general. Rhodes’ argument that the consequence would be ‘most seriously damaging [to] British prestige among the native tribes of S. Africa’ shows the political agency of Africans and African polities in the region and their ability to frustrate imperial expansion and consolidation. Rhodes was implying at the same time that handing the territory to Portugal would be a moral failure of liberal imperialism, which still saw itself as the pre-eminent force for good in the world, particularly in South Africa which was considered both wholly within Britain’s sphere of influence and apt for ‘civilization’.

By the late nineteenth century, Portugal was a poor and chaotic European power whose imperial position was based on an historical trading network which had been limited since at least the eighteenth century. Rhodes suggested that recognition of Portuguese rights

⁵⁴ Rhodes to Currie (March 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 228 C3A 140.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

would lead to instability in South Africa. Rhodes used the same tactic to allay possible opposition to his activities in Mashonaland:

The only other matter that I have to deal with is as I mentioned the Makorikori concession of [Frederick] Selous and I think you will agree with me that there was the need of the promptest action, as a campaign conducted in the press by Selous on the basis of an independent Mashonaland would have been most detrimental to our charter. It took me a long time to show him that if he could prove Mashonaland to be independent of Lobengula it would not help the Mashonas, but simply would be helping the Portuguese claims and therefore that he would be helping the Portuguese to get the country.⁵⁶

Maguire took up these issues with Sir Philip Currie again on 10 April 1891, which showed Rhodes' line of argument had cut little ice with the British government – 'Sir P. Currie read me a memorandum from Lord Salisbury to the effect that he could not propose a treaty to the Portuguese which did not place the greater part of Gungunhara's territories within the Portuguese sphere of influence'. At the same meeting the usefulness of Rhodes' highborn directors was superficially clear because the Foreign Office committed to send a copy of the treaty clauses to the Duke of Fife. However, when Maguire 'drew attention to the map affixed to Government buildings in Lisbon', Currie 'characterised [it] as very foolish'.⁵⁷ There is a certain naivety of approach that is communicated via these exchanges. The map, which showed Portugal's perceived sphere of influence connecting Portuguese east and west African colonies, had been seen by the Duke of Abercorn when he had briefly visited Portugal to meet officials. The same map had been presented at the Berlin Conference and accepted by all the powers except Great Britain whose policy it was to repudiate it. Nonetheless, the Berlin position showed it was an accepted part of the Portuguese domestic political narrative and thus was not a surprise or very relevant to the

⁵⁶ Rhodes to Abercorn (31 March 1890), Oxford Bodleian Library MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 235

⁵⁷ 'Report of Interview on 9th April, between Sir P. Currie, Sir R. Herbert and Mr R. Maguire' (10 April 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 288 C3A 151.

Foreign Office. The Duke, however, was never completely engaged in company business – on one occasion whilst Rhodes was explaining to him the Portuguese position and threats to the BSAC, he is reported as turning to Currie, Rhodes’ secretary, and saying ‘[w]e have had a capital black-cock season this year... and Mr. Rhodes’ face was a study’.⁵⁸ But he did have direct access to Lord Salisbury; Cawston wrote to Rhodes relaying a conversation that Abercorn had with the Prime Minister when Salisbury is quoted as saying, ‘Diplomacy will not interfere with your projects,’ which did not turn out to be the case and shows Abercorn’s limitations as a political operator.⁵⁹ In the meeting with Currie, Abercorn and Maguire were seeking to show that Portugal’s ambitions for the region were a threat to those of the British Empire. The Foreign Office reaction was first, to see this as outside the realms of practical reality because of Portugal’s weakness in political, economic and strategic terms; and second, because of the relative closeness and cordiality of Anglo-Portuguese relations when compared to those with other European states in the region, such as the German Empire. For instance, Rhodes wrote to Lord Rothschild in 1889 following the signing of the Rudd Concession – ‘You will notice the Portuguese have protested against our concession but they are an effete nation and will be limited to paper protests’.⁶⁰ This was an effective summary of Portugal’s ability to act independently and affirmatively, but as an old European power with a longstanding diplomatic presence in the region their long-recognised coastal position was impossible for Rhodes to ultimately repudiate when operating in a system of European diplomacy, which did not recognise equivalence with ‘native’ African states. More important to the British government was the European diplomatic dynamic, which it did not want to destabilise. The events that

⁵⁸ Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 315.

⁵⁹ Cawston to Rhodes (29 October 1890), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C3A62.

⁶⁰ Rhodes to Rothschild (20 January 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 195.

ultimately transpired in Portugal as a result of the 'British Declaration', bore out the sensitivity of the situation.

BSAC as a bridgehead

The BSAC played an important geopolitical role during Rhodes' life and can be seen as bridgehead; moreover, its actions shaped policy, behaviour and trends amongst its neighbours. From the beginning of its existence, BSAC operated like that a state because of the nature of its business – administering territory – and the nature of its competitors – colonial powers rather than other commercial enterprises, as Rhodes wrote:

I think also that you should order a good steam for Tanganyika... [for use] from the south to the north end of Tanganyika, and if you will look at the map all the trade of central Africa would naturally go down the lake system to the Zambezi rather than be dragged across Africa by caravans to the German port opposite Zanzibar.⁶¹

As demonstrated here, the single action of the purchase of a steamer could, according to Rhodes, affect the whole nature of trade and trade routes in central Africa, changing the foci of ports and governments. Though not directly impinging on the terms of international treaties such as the Berlin Conference, the BSAC could by mere operational actions and commercial decisions render treaty outcomes different from those intended by the signatories. Rhodes was conscious of the special ability of the BSAC to act geopolitically – 'The only thing I am strong upon is that we do not give up the Stevenson Road to Germany... I feel sure that you and the other members of the board did not join the board for the sake of arranging the sale of candles and soap under the German flag. There is a pleasure in fighting out a policy of British development through the lakes

⁶¹ Rhodes to Abercorn (2 June 1890) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 240.

system in Central Africa, but none, I can perceive on the basis of developing this with our money for another foreign power'.⁶² Moreover, he was quite willing to act for the British government, using the terms of their own treaties against their express wishes, if not interests – 'I quite think a proper solution is to leave it to bona fide occupation, and if that is the arrangement that our Government will make with foreign powers, I feel sure that up to Tanganyika you can rely on our energy in maintaining the position'.⁶³ Rhodes was clear that such international arrangements were flawed and neglected the realities on the ground – 'I object most distinctly to these paper arrangements at Berlin where the African map is marked out in red, green and blue blotches, and under which we always get the worst of it. I feel sure that the eventual development will be done by the English. It is far better to say the country is so remote, and at present so uncivilised, we will leave the question of ownership until the time when a bona fide occupation is proved'.⁶⁴ The Stevenson Road was the key connection between Lakes Nyasa and Tanganyika and was a crucial boundary of the BSAC's domain because it allowed trade around much of the periphery of Company territory. The Company was constantly in negotiation with the other colonial actors, such as the Congo Free State:

I cabled that I strongly objected to the proposed settlement with the Congo State... I can quite understand that it was the anxiety of the board to obtain a connection with Tanganyika through fear of the north end of Nyasa being given to the Germans that led to the Board considering the proposal. This difficulty has now been removed by the fact of our getting the Stephenson Road. The King of the Belgians, I see, provided for this possibility by suggesting that even if we got the Stephenson Road, we should make him a concession of the five-mile road and a port on Nyassa. Even if we had not obtained the Stephenson Road I should have strongly objected because I feel we must regard the Congo State as eventually falling to France. I do not think that even the wealth of the king of the Belgians will be able to carry through his scheme and I doubt whether Belgium will give him the support he desires.⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Rhodes to Abercorn (25 June 1890) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 242.

Rhodes saw the Free State as a temporary actor, with the French empire the most likely beneficiary of the demise of Leopold II's private kingdom. 'He will undoubtedly when he exhausts his present funds attempt to get his country to take it over and failing this it will undoubtedly be sold to the French... In case his kingdom fell to France the French would undoubtedly raise some preposterous claims and joint-ownership of the highway'.⁶⁶

Rhodes objected to the boundaries set between the Congo Free State and Northern Rhodesia 'from the source of the River Kuango up to the point where the exit of the River Luapula from Lake Bangweolo takes place, the line being the centre of the water point parting between the tributaries of the Congo and the tributaries of the Zambezi.'⁶⁷ He communicated these views to Abercorn as chairman but did not need to make the same case directly to the British government.

Rhodes wrote to Dilke on the matter of German interference with the South African Republic, which was of acute concern to Dilke – 'Their true boundary is the twentieth degree of longitude and it will take them all their time to retain even that as the Damaras are entirely opposed to them and the German Company which nominally holds the territory will soon have to liquidate for lack of funds. It is one thing to paint a map and it is quite another to really occupy and govern a new territory'.⁶⁸ Rhodes' efforts to contain the Dutch Republic were centred on *colonial* activity in the Cape rather than *imperial* activity in London. However, London was crucial to his activities outside of the established *colonial* boundaries of the Cape Colony.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Rhodes to Dilke (5 October 1889), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii. no. 225.

I am still waiting for the news of the signature of the Charter which I hope will not be much longer delayed. I think Kruger will find his hands quite full enough without interfering with me. He is still trying to get them to give him Swaziland in return for non-interference in Matabeleland. The Matabele king still continues to slaughter his subjects and makes the minds of our representatives at times very uncomfortable, it is undoubtedly a difficult problem to solve but the plain fact remains that a savage chief with about 8000 warriors is not going to keep out the huge wave of white men now moving north and so I feel that it will come all right.⁶⁹

The position Rhodes set out is one of incredible complexity that depicts southern Africa as a Mitteleuropa in terms of competing interests and trade-offs, reflecting the internal and external dynamics of individual territories, which shows the potential for unintended consequences of South African policy interventions, such as conflict with a European power, which Salisbury's government sought to avoid at all costs.

Rosebery did not regularly correspond directly with Rhodes, choosing rather to use Maguire as an intermediary, but the advice he offered to Rhodes when he was in touch showed that he recognised Rhodes' status as a bridgehead and shaper of British expansion in Africa. In common with the generally cautious approach he took to Rhodes, Rosebery was anxious that Rhodes should not antagonise his neighbours – 'To be quite frank, I think you showed your hands a little too much in your London speech, and alarmed the Germans who are in an acute stage of the African fever':⁷⁰

The Germans are playing in Africa a game not very clear and not altogether friendly. In fact, as you know, all nations are jealous of us – especially colonising nations. Of late the Germans have shown a desperation, for example, to join hands even with the French as against the Niger company. And, to return to the Telegraph, the Portuguese have lost none of the apprehension which they feel for your name or any scheme of yours. This is one of the natural drawbacks of success... [European] [n]ations are so hard up, so crushed by their histories, that one sometimes feels as if they might do something desperate, as convicts have gladly taken the chance of a bullet in order to escape from an intolerable

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Rosebery to Rhodes (27 March 1894) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 288 C27 (38) 2.

existence. We are also compelled to undertake new burdens in administering our navy. But this is a guarantee of peace.⁷¹

Rosebery's manner of communicating with Rhodes gave the impression that Rhodes was himself a geopolitical actor and that his words were followed by the nations of Europe, indeed with some 'apprehension' in Portugal, which rightly feared his territorial ambitions. He was careful to indicate that a more off-the-record discussion might happen in person, highlighting the inherent difficulty of achieving political influence in London, despite the advances in technology, such as the telegraph, that Rosebery refers to in his letter.⁷²

Appreciating the importance of Rosebery to Rhodes' aims Sir Lewis Michell asked Rhodes in a P.S. of a letter, 'Do you see any objection to my speaking my mind to Lord Rosebery on South African questions? I could tell him who I am'.⁷³ The charter recognised the ability of the BSAC to act in the manner of a state – 'to carry into effect diverse concessions and agreements which have been made by certain of the chiefs and tribes inhabiting the said region, and such other concessions agreements grants and treaties as the Petitioners may hereafter obtain within the set region or elsewhere in Africa'.⁷⁴ However, it did not explicitly say that the company could make treaties with European powers. In practice the BSAC had more licence to deal with foreign powers than settler states because there was significantly less oversight and decisions were taken in private by Rhodes and his circle.

Deploying his network

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Sir Lewis Mitchell to Rhodes (11 August 1900), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 288 C2B 238 (a).

⁷⁴ *Parliamentary Papers*, (1898), Cm 8773, British South Africa Company's territories. (i.) Charter of the British South Africa Company, October 29, 1889. (ii.) Order in council, May 9, 1891. (iii.) Order in council, July 18, 1894., p. 3.

Maguire played a pivotal role in the negotiations as Rhodes' man on the spot in the House of Commons and as the link to the practical realities of the project in Rhodesia through his role in securing the Rudd concession. Maguire was at once intermediary, informant and (secondarily) politician in his own right. He was responsible for the day-to-day lobbying efforts of the BSAC. For example, discussing with Hawksley the information that ought to be passed on to Rhodes during the negotiations between Britain and Portugal, which led to the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty:

Do you not think Rhodes should be cabled to the effect "Government contemplating treaty placing Gungunhara under Portuguese influence drawing according to contour of plateau but between 33 ½ and 33 this only down 20 ½ S latitude" I think Rhodes should know the exact situation which is becoming serious as I am confident Rhodes finds he will have great troubles if this treaty is made.⁷⁵

The information Maguire passed from London to Rhodes in the Cape gave Rhodes insight into the imperial government's strategy that may not have been available to colonial officials, even the High Commissioner, in the Cape. This is exemplified by Maguire, when he writes: 'Lippert's concession is not considered of much importance here. According to the copy shown to us by Lord Rothschild it is not even signed by Lobengula'.⁷⁶ Hawksley sent Rhodes a compendium of their lobbying activities in April 1891 which shows that Maguire was very active in lobbying on behalf of the Company; the attachments include a letter from Maguire to Sir Philip Currie and two records of interviews Maguire had with Currie at the Foreign Office (including one with Beit). However, despite the activity on the part of Rhodes' allies and proxies, Hawksley still concluded: 'It seems the Government are bent on making a Convention... Sir Philip Currie

⁷⁵ Maguire to Hawksley (5 April 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C3A 151.

⁷⁶ Maguire to Rhodes (26 June 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s C3A 174.

gave the Duke of Fife, confidentially, a print of the Treaty. I send you a copy herewithin'.⁷⁷

Maguire had access to some of the highest levels of the political establishment. He was based in England following his election to Parliament, but he was more of a henchman, albeit a sophisticated one, than a member of the establishment himself, whereas Grey was an establishment figure in his own right. The nexus of politics and money drew in Lord Rothschild, who had been involved in financing the De Beers merger and was the company's largest shareholder. Furthering Rhodes' imperial activities was financially and strategically useful to him because of the potential for speculative activity but also as a means of diverting Rhodes away from DeBeers activities. He was one of London's best-informed and best-connected figures. Rothschild went beyond the role of mere financier, acting as adviser and well-placed emissary, as Rhodes' letter of January 1889 suggests:

I cabled you to ask you to do your best to keep Sir Hercules Robinson here. I feel the danger of any new change of policy and he has managed so well during the last 8 years, for whilst keeping the confidence of the Africander [sic] party, has steadily fought out the expansion northwards and completely surrounded the Republics, it is almost entirely due to him that we have extended from the Vaal River to the Zambezi and if you look at the map, you will see that by his policy he has completely shut in the Transvaal we shall gradually get a United S. Africa under the English flag.⁷⁸

Rhodes' entreaty 'to ask you to do your best to keep Sir Hercules Robinson here' shows the power that Rhodes considered Rothschild had. The power to keep a High Commissioner in office was beyond most city tycoons, but Rothschild was a highly influential political actor. In February 1896, Salisbury wrote to Selborne explaining how 'Rothschild was appealed to by me... to help Portugal as much as possible in raising her

⁷⁷ Hawksley to Rhodes (17 April 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 288 C3A 151.

⁷⁸ Rhodes to Rothschild (20 January 1889) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 195.

loan. The answer we got was negative and, later, I received the explanation (which I did not hand on) that the House of Rothschild as a matter of tradition never has any transactions with Portugal'. The letter shows the multiple roles that Rhodes' network played in imperial policy. Rothschild was a director of, and main shareholder in, De Beers, but he was also Europe's leading financier and co-operated with the British government on points of policy. Salisbury added that '[i]f this [position] is so, Portugal is likely to know it, and will not be disposed to put herself out of the way to serve a Rothchild's interest'.⁷⁹ On the one hand, had Rothschild been willing to do business with the Portuguese, the purchase of Delagoa may have been more likely. On the other hand, a loan was hardly sufficient inducement to sell a prized colony as the sale would make the inducement null and void. The letter, which was written after the Raid, referred not to Rhodes but to 'the Beit people' and Salisbury explicitly asked Selborne to give them limited information about negotiations with the Portuguese minister, underscoring Rhodes' transformed position post-1895.⁸⁰

Rothschild was in close touch with Maguire and was keen for the British government to come to some sort of financial settlement with the Portuguese over territories including Delagoa Bay:

Lord Rothschild wished me to write on the possible sale by Portugal of their S. African territories. He is anxious to know in case they come into the market and whether there would be any prospect of the Cape being willing to buy them or if not what policy you would advocate on the subject. He wishes to be prepared when the time comes. He thinks it not impossible that the British Government might be willing to buy.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Salisbury to Selborne (27 February 1896), Oxford Bodleian MS Selborne, MS Selborne 15, fos. 61-62.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Maguire to Rhodes (12 June 1891) MS Rhodes MSS. Afr. s. C3A 172.

The scheme to purchase Portuguese South East Africa was of Rhodes' own design and was based on relatively recent precedent. The United States, which was seen by Rhodes as a prototype daughter state of England, had managed its own expansion into 'virgin' territory – a category into which the areas of Portuguese influence might have been included – by the purchase of territory from European imperial powers. The United States had purchased first Louisiana from France in 1803 for \$15,000,000; followed in 1819 by the purchase of Florida from the Spanish for \$5,000,000; the Mexican Cession, constituting the Mexican territory of Alta California, was precipitated mainly by the Mexican-American War but was in part a purchase involving the payment of \$15,000,000 offset against Mexican debts to the United States in 1848; and the Gadsden purchase, again from Mexico but this time involving areas around the Mexican border in current-day Arizona and New Mexico, took place in 1854 for \$10,000,000.⁸² The purchase of Alaska from Russia was in 1867 for \$7,200,000 and the purchase of the Philippines was in 1898 for \$20,000,000.⁸³ The Mexican and Philippines purchases were precipitated by war and so are perhaps not exactly analogous with Rhodes' scheme but the Louisiana, Florida and Alaskan purchases were made from very significant European powers who were in relatively constrained financial or strategic positions. For instance, in 1803 France was fighting a protracted war in Europe, and Louisiana was not seen as a strategic priority. Spain was weakened by the Napoleonic Wars and by revolutions in Latin America, which had left Florida indefensible and subject to American settler encroachment. Likewise, the Russians had lost the Crimean War (1853-1856) and Alaska was not defensible in the event of another war with the United Kingdom, which was Russia's principal adversary in geopolitics at the time and the colonial power in neighbouring Canada. Portugal's position

⁸² Edward Bicknell, *The territorial acquisitions of the United States, 1787-1904 : an historical review* (Boston, Mass., 1904), pp. 24, 36, 71, 73.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 108.

in the 1890s was substantially weaker than that of France, Spain and Russian but it was not strategically overstretched in the same sense and their colonial territories in southern Africa had acquired a new significance because they were all that remained of Portugal's former empire. Therefore, the purchase of colonial territories from European colonial powers was entirely unprecedented but had always relied on the position of the seller being one of strategic realignment to elsewhere in their substantial empires. In contrast, Portugal no longer had other substantial colonial possessions, hence its southern African colonies had acquired new importance.

A new British strategy to purchase areas on its colonial periphery would have been well out of step with past British approaches to imperial expansion which were rarely ever centrally orchestrated, except during times of widescale conflict such as the Napoleonic Wars. Following the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 1891 a purchase became even less likely as it would have been inconsistent with its provisions. In 1893, Rhodes wrote to Rothschild on the issue – 'I am afraid we are going to lose Delagoa Bay. We want it and are prepared to pay for it. With the growth of the Transvaal the longer we wait the more money we shall have to pay and with the completion of the Delagoa line we shall probably never get it'.⁸⁴ Rhodes was hampered by Portugal's domestic position: Portugal's African colonies had been such a crucible in Portuguese politics that it would have been political suicide for any government to make such a sale.

Rhodes' contention was that Portugal was weak and that once other competitors, such as the Germans, were removed, he would be able to settle the matter of Delagoa Bay:

⁸⁴ Rhodes to Rothschild (16 May 1893), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 147.

It is quite possible that the mad folly of the Portuguese on the Zambezi may lead to a collision with us, ending in or taking over Delagoa Bay... but my whole contention is that now Germany is settled with we can afford to show a bold front and not claim further definitions of boundaries. You must remember that the Germans by treaty with Portugal have agreed not to cross the Zambesi and therefore the balance of territory lies for division between us and Portugal.⁸⁵

Cawston met Salisbury in October 1890 and wrote to Rhodes on the anniversary of the charter's issue (29 October 1890) to summarise the meeting. Salisbury had said that "severe pressure had been put on him" by the European Powers, especially France and Austria in order to prevent him from being too hard with Portugal'.⁸⁶ Rhodes had been pushing for intervention rather than a mere 'ultimatum' from Salisbury through conventional lobbying and the press – as Cawston added, 'I think, however, that radical newspaper pressure will help him to be firm'.⁸⁷ In the wake of the failure of his campaign to wrest Delagoa Bay from the Portuguese and the signing of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty, Rhodes wrote to Lord Salisbury directly but received a reply from Sir Philip Currie – 'I am directed by the Marquis of Salisbury to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 12th of September urging Her Majesty's Government to hold the Government of Portugal to the stipulations of the Anglo-Portuguese Agreement in regards to the construction of a Railway from the Portuguese to the British Sphere'.⁸⁸ Rhodes' habit of reproducing the private correspondence of politicians in major newspapers may explain Salisbury's reticence about writing to him directly; certainly there is no record of Salisbury ever writing to Rhodes in the manner of a friend or ally, despite there being evidence of Salisbury's relatively high opinion of Rhodes before the Jameson Raid.

⁸⁵ Rhodes to Abercorn (25 June 1890) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 242.

⁸⁶ Cawston to Rhodes (29 October 1890) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 228 C3A62.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Currie to Rhodes (29 October 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 288 C3A 189.

Rhodes was confounded by the situation, as he confided in Stead, suggesting that

Salisbury was acting not in the national, but political interest over the Portuguese Treaty:

The fault of the Portuguese treaty was that no provision was made for an immediate railway. I have now been trying for over two months to start a light train from Beira but the Portuguese will do nothing themselves and will not allow me to do anything... Meanwhile 2000 people may starve... But of course Lord Salisbury has made a diplomatic success he has got a troublesome question off his hands and the practical question of how these people shall be fed is not now a matter of consideration. When you get harrowing cables as to the starvation then there may be a move.⁸⁹

This private exchange with Stead concerning European colonists at risk of starvation was not directly for public consumption, but is an extension of the altruistic theme that Rhodes used with the Foreign Office and occasionally with the press in relation to Africans. In 1891 his acquaintance with Stead was relatively new and perhaps he felt he had to make his arguments convincing to ensure his continued editorial support.

Rhodes and his colleagues' attempt to wrest strategically important parts of Africa from the Portuguese through pressure on the Salisbury administration was always a challenge. First of all, the Berlin Conference (1884-1885) had established the doctrine of effective occupation, which solidified Portuguese rights in the international arena in Mozambique and Angola, but frustrated their aspirations in central Africa, in present-day Malawi and Zambia, because the doctrine required occupation rather than historical rights and precedence. Portuguese activity after 1885 involved a diplomatic attempt to have their 'Rose Coloured Map', showing Portuguese sovereignty and territorial continuity from the Atlantic to Indian Ocean, recognised by leading European powers. France and Germany both made treaties that 'noted' the Portuguese claim but negotiations with the British had

⁸⁹ Rhodes to Stead (14 August 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 140.

stalled due to the presence of missionaries in the Shire Highlands in northern Nyasaland. The 1890 British Ultimatum was precipitated by Portugal's expeditions led by Serpa Pinto, the Governor of Mozambique and Antonio Cardoso, former Governor of Quelimane, to make treaties with local rulers in Nyasaland. On 8 November 1889, the Makololo attacked Serpa Pinto encouraging him to cross into the Shire Highlands and created a confrontation with the British Consul Sir Henry Hamilton Johnson and his deputy, John Buchanan, resulting in the declaration of a British Protectorate by both men. Salisbury's ultimatum for Portuguese withdrawal was issued on 11 January 1890. The BSAC's charter had been granted in the previous October before the Anglo-Portuguese crisis had developed. Had the sequence been otherwise the charter company may never have existed because Salisbury would have probably sought to de-escalate the confrontation with Portugal. Rhodes appeared to blame Sir Henry Hamilton Johnstone, for the outcome of the Treaty – 'I cannot congratulate you on your work in England... I trace your hand all through... the treaty. It is a disgrace and I will have nothing to do with it... I can only express my opinion that you ought to be thoroughly ashamed of your work... but in spite of your desertion I shall go on fighting and I have not the slightest intention of giving way to the Portuguese.'⁹⁰

Rhodes continued to lobby the British government after the treaty was signed in the hope that the strategic necessity of British annexation of Delagoa Bay would be made clear to Lord Salisbury – 'I cannot feed the people in Mashonaland by the overland route and I cannot feed them from Biera with 90 miles a fly which kills all the Oxon [sic].'⁹¹ I must have a railway or tramway through that piece. As your lordship is aware I offered to lay a

⁹⁰ Rhodes to Johnstone (22 September 1890) cited in Rotberg, *The Founder*, p. 311.

⁹¹ Rhodes was referring in this instance to the tsetse fly, which is lethal to horses and oxen.

tramway and take it up whenever the Portuguese or the Mozambique Co. had completed their railway, this offer was refused. The policy [of Portugal] is to do nothing themselves and to allow me to do nothing'.⁹² The tenor of Rhodes' letter to Lord Salisbury gives a sense of Rhodes' exasperation but also that the two men are well acquainted despite the paucity of direct evidence of Rhodes' interactions with the Prime Minister personally. Rhodes' stock was high in British imperial politics in 1891 and he was inclined to a degree of impertinence – '[s]urely it is not too much to ask you to see to the fulfilment of your Treaty'.⁹³ Rhodes did not want this treaty, he considered it counter to British interests, and the British government was failing to enforce the parts that gave the company some protection. As we have seen before, Rhodes was more successful when operating in a sub-imperial context when the nexus of interests is more complex and outcomes more obviously identifiable with imperial, rather than Rhodes' personal interests, for instance in Bechuanaland. But in that case, he was dealing with African, rather than European, states, on the periphery of a settler state. South East Africa was further from Greater Britain and contested territory over which Salisbury, nervous of wars given his view of the empire's geopolitical weakness, was not prepared to risk war with European powers, not only Portugal.⁹⁴ After the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty the BSAC was left to work through Portuguese companies in order to gain access to Delagoa Bay.⁹⁵ The failure of his ambitions in Portuguese East Africa meant Rhodes reverted to pragmatic arrangements with third parties, working within a framework defined by others in the imperial centre.⁹⁶

Political management of Chamberlain

⁹² Rhodes to Salisbury (12 September 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 260.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Salisbury, "Disintegration."

⁹⁵ Currie to Rhodes (29 October 1891) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 288 C3A 189.

⁹⁶ Hawksley to Carry (28 November 1891), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C3A 196.

By the time Chamberlain became Colonial Secretary in 1895, Rhodes had already established his charter company under an earlier Salisbury premiership and been involved in protracted negotiations with the Salisbury administration regarding Portuguese East Africa. However, the historiographical record has linked Rhodes' career to Chamberlain's tenure at the Colonial Office because of the Jameson Raid and the origins and course of the Second Boer War.⁹⁷ Rhodes wrote to Chamberlain on his appointment – 'I am glad you have taken the Colonial Office, because even if you differ with me as to my part of the world, I know full well you will always come to a decision and before your assumption of office the difficulty was to get anything decided either as to yes or no', which was perhaps a reference to Ripon's handling of Bechuanaland.⁹⁸

However, their world view was remarkably similar as Chamberlain told Selborne on his appointment. As Selborne recalled: '[Chamberlain] meant to make the office he held to be reckoned as highly as the Foreign Office, and that England had not yet realised what the British Empire really stood for or what a part it might play in the world or of what developments it was capable and that he meant to try and make England understand. He kept his word'.⁹⁹ Rhodes' enthusiasm was tempered probably by Chamberlain's previous nervousness about the charter company and its basis, the Rudd Concession:

I beg to ask the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies whether, in view of the character of the concession said to have been recently granted by the Chief Lo Bengula to Messrs. Rudd and Rhodes, by which, in consideration for a sum of £1,200 a year, together with 1,000 rifles and a hundred thousand rounds of ammunition, these gentlemen are reported to have obtained sole rights of prospecting and working for minerals in a territory the size of Italy, Her Majesty's Government will take any steps to call the attention of the Chief to

⁹⁷ Porter, *Origins of the South African war*.

⁹⁸ Rhodes to Chamberlain (9 July 1895), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 276.

⁹⁹ Lord Selborne writing in retirement 'Some memories and reflections in old age' in Porter, *Origins of the South African war*, p. 49.

the disadvantages and dangers to the peace of the country incident to such a monopoly; and, whether, in the event of Her Majesty's Government extending at any future time a protectorate over the Colony now under the sphere of British influence, they will refuse to recognize the concession in question, or any similar concession that may be contrary to the interests of the Chief and people of Matabeleland, and likely to lead to complications and to a breach of the peace?¹⁰⁰

This intervention in the House was made when Chamberlain was out of office and was ostensibly against the hoodwinking of a foreign power by British corporate interests in order to usurp territory; and the BSAC was yet to receive its charter, which was granted in the following October. However, Chamberlain's views of South Africa were nuanced and can be encapsulated in the remarks he made in a speech at the London Chamber of Commerce in May 1888 where he characterised the South Africa 'policy of successive Governments' as the 'policy of shirking', by which Chamberlain explained he meant that Britain had sought to stay out of local wars and minimise its responsibilities but had in fact been involved in 'six serious struggles, which have involved not only a deplorable loss of human life, [but also] the loss of the British taxpayer of something between £7 million and £8 million sterling'. Chamberlain's contention was that Britain had at first 'put things off', then acted 'reluctantly' and finally resolved issues with 'more or less discredit'.¹⁰¹ His comments in the House of Commons have to be taken in this context: he envisaged the need for a systemic solution for South Africa and in March 1889 he saw Rhodes' expansionism as expanding British responsibilities into the interior without any resolution of those issues that were already evident in South Africa. He had yet to identify Rhodes as the panacea, as he would later.

¹⁰⁰ [Hansard], *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd seri., CCCXXXIII, col. 1401, (11 March 1889, Matabeleland).

¹⁰¹ Chamberlain, 'British Interests in South Africa', London Chamber of Commerce (14 May 1888) Joseph Chamberlain, *Foreign & Colonial Speeches by the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P.* (London, 1897), p. 197.

Still Rhodes felt confident enough to open his first letter to the new Secretary for the Colonies with – ‘I am anxious to take over the Bechuanaland protectorate at once it will save you 89,000 [pounds sterling]... and if you give it me I promise to build the railway from Mafeking to Bulawayo in four years and to begin the railway a month after the transfer... if you look at the correspondence that protectorate is promised to Charter, it is merely [a] question [of] when you will hand over’.¹⁰² Typically of Rhodes he presented the ‘correspondence’ in such a way as to produce a *fait accompli*. Rhodes did not add that he was having difficulty persuading Lord Knutsford, Chamberlain’s predecessor, but rather alluded to his dithering – ‘before your assumption of office the difficulty was to get anything decided either as to yes or no’.¹⁰³ The reality was more complex as shown by Rhodes’ correspondence with Sir Robert Herbert¹⁰⁴:

The endless cables as to the relation of my police to yours are very trying. If Lord Knutsford could only recognise that I will never cost him one single shilling and that I will take a new empire for him and that the only thing I ask for is moral support I think he would view things differently but it always seems he is in the most terrible state of alarm that I am going to land you in some terrible difficulties in the interior... I propose to take over your police in the protectorate next May so that you do not have to ask Parliament for another Protectorate vote, but I do hope Lord Knutsford will not keep on sending these endless telegrams showing that he distrusts my actions as it weakens me with the High Commissioner and from what I can learn Sir H. Loch is a very cautious man.¹⁰⁵

This is good evidence of the necessity of intermediaries in Rhodes’ relations with the imperial government. Rhodes’ personal interventions were often emotionally charged and self-defeating; in this instance Herbert was an ideological fellow traveller as both a supporter of his cousin Carnarvon’s plans for federation in South Africa in the 1870s and in Australia, where he had spent his early life.

¹⁰² Rhodes to Chamberlain (9 July 1895), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 161.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Sir Robert Herbert, GCB (1831-1905), Permanent Under-Secretary, Colonial Office, 1871-1892.

¹⁰⁵ Rhodes to Herbert (9 December 1889) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. ii no. 227.

Rhodes' communications with the new Colonial Secretary differed from those with officials insofar as he did not use local evidence to support his arguments in the same way (for example, the historical rights of chiefs such as Lobengula or Gungunhara to support or undermine European territorial claims), as he did with the Foreign Office. Instead, Rhodes identified the costs to the imperial government and the strategic convenience for the British Empire of his involvement. This was clearly demonstrated by Chamberlain in his Chambers of Commerce speech, as even when he was discussing the human cost of war, he referred in the same breath to the financial cost to Britain. Thus, Rhodes focused on the cost to the Exchequer and trade, with only a secondary reference to the African population:

You could put in any clause you like qua natives and I hope you will also ask me to insert the customs clause that the "Duty on British goods shall not exceed the present Cape tariff", this clause I daresay you know the late government rejected I should like you to look at the correspondence. If I get it in, it means when Africa unites British goods will have an exclusive market, for on equal terms the outside world cannot compete with England and the present Cape tariff is such as not to foster bastard factories.¹⁰⁶

The reference to trade was carefully tailored to Chamberlain's world view and is evocative of the debate with which Chamberlain would be most identified with in the twentieth century, 'imperial preference'. The roots of Chamberlain's 'imperial preference' lie in his determination to maintain the corn tax, which was imposed on grain imports during the Second Boer War for the first time since the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.¹⁰⁷ But Chamberlain had been making the case for tariff reform before the war, as in Canada in 1896:

¹⁰⁶ Rhodes to Chamberlain (9 July 1895) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 161.

¹⁰⁷ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 79.

I have laid down for propositions which I think cannot be controverted. First is that there is a universal desire amongst all the members of the empire for a close union between the several branches, and that, in their opinion as an ask, this is desirable – namely, it is essential for the existence of the Empire as such. My second proposition is that experience has taught us that this closer union can be most hopefully approached in the first instance from this commercial side. My third proposition is that the suggestions which have hitherto been made to us, although we know them to have been made in good part, are, when considered from the point of view of British interest, not sufficiently favourable to be considered by this country. My fourth proposition is that a true Zollverein for the Empire, that is a free trade established throughout the Empire, although it would involve the imposition of duties against foreign countries, and would be in that respect a derogation from the high principles of free trade and from the practice of the United Kingdom up to the present time, would still be a proper subject for discussion and might probably lead to a satisfactory arrangement if the colonies on their part were willing to consider it.¹⁰⁸

Rhodes inserted a clause in the BSAC charter in 1896 to the effect that the duty on British goods could not exceed the Cape Colony tariff.¹⁰⁹ This obviously reflected Rhodes' ideological position, but it was also an appeal to Chamberlain's. In common with his practice with Parnell and Home Rule, he sought to demonstrate precedence on matters that were untested but core to his vision of empire.

Rhodes' network of well-placed political and business allies who acted as his personal lobbyists had been in place for some time when Chamberlain entered the Colonial Office. Immediately after Chamberlain's appointment Beit was working to influence him, as Rhodes observed – 'I do hope after your telegrams that Chamberlain will rise to the situation for the [Bechuanaland] protectorate is essential. I assure you if we have the protectorate I do not feel one atom of doubt as to the matter – as a last resource if everything else fails go yourself and see Chamberlain – you are more convincing than most people – and show him the whole position of England in the south depends on it and

¹⁰⁸ Chamberlain, 'The First Step to Federation' (25 March 1896) in Chamberlain, *Foreign & Colonial Speeches*, p. 172-3.

¹⁰⁹ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 91.

next year may be too late'.¹¹⁰ Rhodes was able to move from Mashonaland to Delagoa Bay to Bechuanaland and treat each with the same urgency as the last. But the change of administration brought challenges – having persuaded Ripon of the importance of the BSAC managing the Bechuanaland Protectorate, he had to do so again with Chamberlain – ‘I am told Chamberlain is a strong man and a farseeing [sic] man and we can give Africa to England if he will only take one step’.¹¹¹

Is it not awful to think of the whole future of the British Empire out here may turn on a wretched kaffir [referring to Khama] and the Secretary of State who listens to some fanatic in the House of Commons – the fact is that I have got everything the world can give me and I'm willing to risk it all, does not weigh one bit as against the vote of one abusive fanatic who happens to be a supporter. I wonder how the English empire has held together. You might say oh yes wait but you know we will wait too long, and with its marvellous wealth Johannesburg will make South Africa an independent republic, which you and I do not want. Now surely Chamberlain should see all this. He risks nothing, I risk everything and yet he will not budge an inch to help a big idea which [makes] England dominant in Africa, in fact it gives England the African continent. I wonder again how the English Empire still retains so much of the world.¹¹²

This seems incongruous in retrospect, given the way Chamberlain and Rhodes would go on to work, but at the outset there was no absolute certainty they would co-operate.

Chamberlain had shown himself to be wedded to principle over Home Rule and Rhodes was evidently concerned that ‘the Secretary of State who listens to some fanatic in the House of Commons’ was similarly inflexible in colonial policy. Management of Chamberlain would become an increasing preoccupation for Rhodes and his circle. After the Jameson Raid and in the wake of the Boer War, Milner wrote to Rhodes: ‘your personal advocacy of the scheme in London is essential to its success’ but cautioning ‘I think the present is not a good time to press Chamberlain to undertake any new liability in

¹¹⁰ Rhodes to Beit (9 July 1895), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 1804 vol. i no. 276.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

colonial matters'.¹¹³ Milner was a shrewd political tactician, appreciating the pressure that Chamberlain was under and his unusual position as a quasi-coalition partner in the Salisbury administration:

I quite agree with you that there is an enormous change in British opinion with regard to schemes of this character, schemes involving risk and expenditure in territorial expansion, during the last few years. Things have been going very fast indeed – in the right direction. But there is a real danger of a reaction, if we push them too fast. Just look at the contrast. 10, even five, years ago it was settled policy to spend nothing on such objects.¹¹⁴

Milner's manner of dealing with Rhodes was emphatic, if at once technocratic – for instance, 'But with so many things hanging in the balance all at once I doubt the wisdom of trying anymore just now. I think it not unlikely that, in spite of all these difficulties, you might win over Chamberlain. He is very bold and lives on the forward game. But it would be a mistake from your, I might say from our, point of view to get Chamberlain to take up anything which he could not carry with his colleagues, and which, if he coerced them into adopting it, could frequently get them into trouble.'¹¹⁵ Milner appears to have adopted, in his own fashion and style, a means of communicating with Rhodes which removed ambiguity and reiterated the point, much as Rhodes tended to do himself. However, in the case of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Rhodes was not successful as Milner had predicted.

Milner's frustration with Rhodes and his ability to play one off against the other is evident from his correspondence with Chamberlain himself:

¹¹³ Milner to Rhodes (6 August 1898), Oxford Bodleian MS Rhodes, MSS Afr. s 228 C27/(81) 5.

¹¹⁴ Milner made the following comparison: 'Today we have 1) undertaken an expedition of several millions on the Ugandan railway 2) have advanced many millions – and will probably be advancing more, to Egypt for the conquest of the Sudan. This money is irrecoverable... Over every one of these items the government will have trouble in the House of Commons over.' in *ibid*.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*.

Just now there is a lull in our eternal fight with the Transvaal. But we are now near a solution and the accession of the Bond to power also introduces new features of importance into the situation. Moreover there is the Delagoa question – the most important of all – about which I am necessarily, but somewhat to my disadvantage, in the dark. And there are fresh problems in the north in connection with Rhodes' restless expansion towards Tanganyika on the one hand and the western sea-board on the other. Rhodes himself is certain to go home this winter. He thoroughly realises the advantage of being able to work at both ends. And he pays me the compliment of saying he would like to be in England when I am there. I quite believe that, if I am back, he would like to be there too. Of course, we should not travel together either way. That would be most undesirable. But our visit to England might overlap. But I venture to doubt whether he would not prefer my never moving out of Cape Town.¹¹⁶

This shows that, where Milner was concerned, Rhodes was being managed, as well as attempting to manage. However, Milner pursued the same approach with Chamberlain himself – there was a sense that he saw himself as the sensible intermediary between the imperial state and the outward looking colonial sub-imperialists – 'I was rather surprised that my account of Rhodes – which is correct, I am sure – should have taken Mr. C. aback at all. For the present all is going well in respect of him. He is doing good work in the north... We must keep a tight hold on the police, and general powers of control, but not hamper the development of the country or break lines by doctrinaire objections'.¹¹⁷

Milner was balancing two erratic forces in order to achieve his ends that were broadly aligned with theirs.

Indeed, by the end of the century Chamberlain had become a determined proponent of expansion and of Rhodes:

It must be a great pleasure to everyone who shares your ideas in the subject of the expansion of England that in spite of so many drawbacks you are now able to look forward with confidence to the future of the great country which you have added to the possessions

¹¹⁶ Milner to Chamberlain (19 October 1898) in Headlam (ed.), *The Milner Papers, South Africa 1897-1899* p. 287.

¹¹⁷ Milner to Selborne (2 August 1897) in *ibid.*, p. 115.

of the crown... I have also to acknowledge the fulfilment of your promise to me that in dealing with the action of the government you would refrain from any distinctions as between individuals, and I think that considering your natural disappointment at our inability to come to terms you have generously avoided saying anything which could be seriously object[ed] to by any of us. I am glad that your great project is not likely to suffer any interruption owing to the lack of government assistance. Your personal responsibility may be thereby increased, but so also will be the credit due to your success.¹¹⁸

This was partly because intermediaries carried out the more difficult duties between the two, when Chamberlain had to be cajoled during the parliamentary inquiry into the Jameson Raid. On the other hand, Rhodes had taken advice and managed Chamberlain to the extent that he could, which under other circumstances where the Raid had either been a success or had not taken place, might have brought him success in persuading Chamberlain to cede Bechuanaland to the BSAC.

Influencing the inquiry

Chamberlain underwent a transformation in his approach to Rhodes and South Africa between the issue of the charter and his period of office. There are multiple possible explanations for this – for instance, that Chamberlain was looking for a panacea solution to the complex imperial problem of South Africa and he grew to see Rhodes as the only possible solution, as a figure who could bridge the central demographic and political divide in the European community – ‘In this case both Dutch and English will appreciate more highly Mr Rhodes’ policy’.¹¹⁹ Another possible explanation is that Chamberlain was well connected to Rhodes’ inner circle of lobbyists, having had a longstanding relationship with Grey before he began to work closely with Rhodes. Grey and Chamberlain were connected by unionism. Grey had been a Liberal Unionist MP before

¹¹⁸Chamberlain to Rhodes (3 May 1899) MS Rhodes MSS Afr. s 228 C7B 100.

¹¹⁹ Chamberlain to Grey (21 August 1896) MS Grey GRE/B181/2/9-13.

losing his seat in the Home Rule election of 1886. He had offered to stand in the 1892 General Election in a northern constituency after effectively having left frontline elected British politics in order to pursue other interests. Chamberlain wrote that he was grateful to Grey for his 'willingness to come forward [and would have been supportive] if [his] candidacy would have been of benefit to the cause' though 'the condition of things is certainly not very creditable to Unionism in the North'.¹²⁰ This was the basis of the cordial relationship, which is evident from the correspondence record between the two when Grey was Administrator of Southern Rhodesia following the Jameson Raid's failure and Jameson's removal:

You have seen that from the first I have been pressed and worried from two sides – one to send large bodies of imperial troops, the result of which would have been to crush the Chartered Company under an unnecessary expense... I stated my policy at the commencement, which was to be guided entirely by the military opinion on the spot...¹²¹

At this point in Chamberlain's tenure at the Colonial Office during the House of Commons inquiry into the Jameson Raid, his career seemed tied to that of Rhodes – 'I have on several occasions publicly expressed my opinion that in the present state of the country, administration by a Charter Company is likely to be much more satisfactory than direct Imperial control; and further, I have declared my own opinion in favour of Mr Rhodes' continued presence in the country'.¹²² If Chamberlain's reputation did not survive the inquiry intact, he may have been forced from office regardless of his particularly influential position as leader of the Liberal Unionists.

¹²⁰ Chamberlain to Grey (7 June 1892), Durham DUL MS Grey, GRE/B181/2/1.

¹²¹ Chamberlain to Grey (21 August 1896) MS Grey GRE/B181/2/9-13.

¹²² Ibid.

The closeness of Grey and Rhodes as political and personal allies is evident from the Rhodes Papers. Grey was as conscious of Rhodes' need for a legacy as Rhodes was himself – 'it is my great desire to [put] up a Reproduction of Watts Statue as a monument to you in Bulawayo facing what was only a few years ago then [the] unconquered North – I know nothing more symbolical of all your work and character – it will be my privilege and pleasure to put up this monument to you as it will play some record, in a manner gratifying to myself the admiration I have always felt for your aims and character'.¹²³ In common with Maguire, he was involved in Rhodes' personal affairs, for instance he coordinated arrangements for G.F. Watts' statue 'Physical Energy' which was inspired by Rhodes, and which Grey wanted 'to erect before long in Bulawayo'. Grey wrote 'in other ways so as long as you continue to appreciate the friendship I have for you, I shall continue to do you far more than both of them put together [Watts and Horace Fife] – I shall be grateful to you as long as I live for having given me the opportunity of having had a hand in the great work you accomplished and I hope also with work which still remains to be done'.¹²⁴ Grey's admiration for the mission as much as the man is made overt by these sentiments.

There were a number of calls for the rescindment of the charter in the press and the House of Commons as the true nature of the Raid became clear in London, but Chamberlain was avowedly opposed to this and wanted to work in support of the BSAC (and perhaps himself) during the committee stages:

A great deal depends of course upon the House of Commons Enquiry, but the Committee is a strong one, and is certainly not unduly prejudiced against either Mr Rhodes or the Company. If the Directors can justify their past administration, and above all show that

¹²³ Grey to Rhodes (8 November 1900) MSS Afr. s 228 C27 (121) 17.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

they have grasped the necessities of the future, I believe that there will be a greater agreement that Imperial administration is both undesirable and unnecessary at the present time. There has, however, been, as you might expect after recent events, a strong feeling in favour of the abolition of the Charter. This is chiefly due to the raid, but also to an impression that things must have been mismanaged in Rhodesia, or otherwise the insurrection would not have taken place. Personally I am not of the opinion, as, if it had been a Crown Colony, the administration would equally have been starved in the first instance, and it is almost certain that the Matabele would have tried their chance again unless they had found themselves in the presence of an overwhelming force.¹²⁵

Chamberlain had said ‘the Directors of the Charter Company will be examined, and I understand that they are prepared to declare that they were absolutely ignorant beforehand of the raid and of the preparations for it’.¹²⁶ Grey’s reply was tellingly technocratic and left Chamberlain in no doubt that if he did not make it otherwise then his knowledge of matters would become public:

If I am called before the committee & asked whether I informed you in any way of the impending Revolution at Johg, I shall be obliged, either to refuse to answer or to say that I told you privately that the long expected & inevitable rising of the Uitlanders to secure for themselves the common rights of free men [would] shortly take place, & that being so, it was desirable that an alarm force shd be stationed on the Tvaal Border, available for use if required. Altho’ you declined to receive this information which you said you wd be obliged to use officially if it were pressed upon you as subsequent acts of Govt. showed that you agreed with our view that this was desirable to give the BSACy [sic] an opportunity of placing a force upon the Frontier.¹²⁷

Grey’s note, the principal accusation of which was the ‘long expected & inevitable rising of the Uitlanders to secure for themselves the common rights of free men, [necessitated] an alarm force [to] be stationed on the Tvaal Border’, did not directly link the Colonial Secretary to knowledge of the Raid but rather implied that he was first, supportive of its intentions; second, involved in a conspiracy to do the same at some other time; and third,

¹²⁵ Chamberlain to Grey (21 August 1896) MS Grey GRE/B181/2/9-13.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Grey to Chamberlain (10 December 1896), Birmingham UBL MS Chamberlain, JC 10/6/1/9.

that if he were willing to attempt to cover up this information, by implication he was concerned that other matters would arise from testimony.

Grey was helpfully exempt from giving evidence at the Committee due to his role as Administrator of Southern Rhodesia. The Committee drew attention to Grey's absence:

It is necessary to add a few words with reference to Lord Grey. Dr. Harris stated in his evidence that he was not prepared to say that Lord Grey knew nothing about the "Jameson plan," and admitted that he had had conversations with Lord Grey in which he might have alluded to it. As Lord Grey is in South Africa acting as Administrator of the Chartered Company, and therefore unable to give evidence, the Committee are not in a position to express any opinion as to his responsibility.¹²⁸

This outcome alone, which avoided Grey having to commit contempt of parliament or, as he said he would, implicate Chamberlain in the conspiracy, was a huge political coup for the Rhodes network who were seeking to mitigate the effects of the crisis. Rhodes' relationship with Chamberlain was to get increasingly strong, but Chamberlain ensured that Grey did not become High Commissioner in succession to Robinson; he wrote to Salisbury:

Of course Grey is too much mixed up in the affairs of Rhodes and the Chartered Company to be a safe person at the Cape. I think he would hardly have the qualifications necessary even if his connection with the Company were not an objection.¹²⁹

During the inquiry into the Jameson Raid, Rhodes requested a meeting with Selborne at his house and, given the political sensitivities, Selborne kept a note in which he recorded Rhodes' view that he supported Chamberlain's suggestion that a 'secret' committee of privy councillors might replace the British South Africa Committee to deal with the

¹²⁸ *Parl. Pap.*, (1897), ix, xii.

¹²⁹ Chamberlain to Salisbury (5 July 1896), Hatfield MS Salisbury, MSS 3M/E(1).

telegrams. Rhodes apparently said, ‘you will see if I can keep a secret: I will not mention this suggestion even to Maguire’.¹³⁰ Rhodes said he thought that the ‘committee should be stopped even now, and let the world say what it liked of Mr. Chamberlain or himself’. Chamberlain’s view as recorded was ‘that he took no exception to the principle’ but it could not be done ‘because (1) it was not possible (2) if possible, it would in the end produce more evil to the country than the enquiry would’. Rhodes replied, ‘everything is impossible until you are confronted with something more impossible still and you must choose between them. It is better to lose your arm than to lose your life’.¹³¹ Rhodes concluded the meeting by suggesting that Selborne and Chamberlain see Labouchere to explain the BSAC’s ‘excellent record of development’.¹³² Rhodes philosophical mantra set out here was in keeping with his ideological approach delivered by tactics that were divorced from ideology. He was willing, as he said himself repeatedly, to ‘risk everything’ in order to meet his aims.

Even when Rhodes’ political fortunes were at a nadir during the inquiry, he told Selborne that ‘as soon as possible [he would] introduce an elected element into the Administrator’s Council in Rhodesia, and in five years time to glide into a self-governing colony... this of course was subject to the concurrence of HM’s government and he hoped Mr. Chamberlain would approve of the policy... [but that] Bechuanaland Protectorate must be with the future colony of Rhodesia, not with the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope’. He appeared to be using the introduction of democracy as an inducement to continued company rule, which was being questioned by the British South Africa Committee, and for the extension of Rhodesia into Bechuanaland. However, he added, ‘the chartered

¹³⁰ Selborne’s note of meeting with Rhodes (26 January 1897), Oxford Bodleian MS Selborne, MS Selborne 14, fos. 253-66.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

company can make its own terms with the new colony without bothering HM's govt.', giving the impression that the company's interests were subordinate to the empire's.¹³³

Jeffrey Butler argues that during the parliamentary debate on the recall of Hawksley and the censure of the British South Africa Committee, the Liberal Party was prepared to spare Chamberlain in exchange for Rhodes – 'Harcourt had hardly taken the rest of the front bench into his confidence, and no liberal could have attacked Chamberlain on the ground that he had broken a tacit bargain to shield the Colonial Office in exchange for the censure of Rhodes'.¹³⁴ Labouchere had accused Rhodes, Beit and the BSAC of having economic motives for the Raid during the committee inquiry, but was unable to adequately substantiate the claims and was forced to withdraw the accusations when cross-examining Beit on 28 May. During his evidence, Hawksley had refused to release the telegrams which had passed between the Colonial Office and Rhodes before the Raid without Rhodes' express permission – 'Those copies [of the telegrams] belong to Mr. Rhodes, and I would submit to you that I am not at liberty, without conferring with Mr. Rhodes, to explain confidential communications that I have had with him'.¹³⁵ Hawksley was Rhodes' solicitor, which gave him an element of cover, but was pressed on the matter nevertheless during a second appearance and continued with the same line.¹³⁶ The issue of the telegrams had provoked a heated and tense debate in amongst the committee when it was in closed session before the Easter recess in 1896:

I suppose you have heard of the row in the S.A Committee at the second sitting last Tuesday [6 April]. Harcourt declared that there was a great blackmailing plot in progress, and intimated that Chamberlain was one of its victims. He told C[hamberlain] that everybody was saying that he was implicated in the plot against the Transvaal and that he

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Butler, *Liberal Party and the Raid*, pp. 300-01.

¹³⁵ *Parl. Pap.*, (1897), ix, p. 457.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

ought to vindicate himself. C[hamberlain] replied that he could not meet mere gossip but would face any specific charges. Then he admitted that he had met Harris several times and owned that he had seen the telegrams sent by Harris to Rhodes. Even those who, like Labouchere, have hitherto believed most strongly in Chamberlain's innocence are now full of suspicion, and the opinion is that a crisis is imminent when the Committee meets again.¹³⁷

Members of the Committee had begun to believe that Rhodes was at the centre of a conspiracy to force the Colonial Secretary to back him and the BSAC, which correspondence between Grey and Chamberlain shows was the case.

There were diplomatic reasons to keep the Harris telegrams secret – Balfour wrote to Salisbury to suggest an increase in the South African garrison in case the revelations surrounding the telegrams led to a confrontation with the Transvaal and a sum of £200,000 additional funding was found in the budget that followed a few weeks later.¹³⁸ Harcourt attacked Hicks Beach in the House on April 1897 showing the heightened nature of debate and divisiveness that Rhodes had acquired:

Nobody can doubt that the language Mr. Rhodes [used] there and in this country tends [in] that direction [of jingoism]. Nobody can doubt that within the last month or two the impression has existed that the policy of Mr. Rhodes in this matter has had the support of the Colonial Secretary, and I should be very glad to know that that is not the case. I am bound to say that my experience upon the South African Committee has led me to believe that it was a joint policy [between Rhodes and the Colonial Office].¹³⁹

The leadership of the Liberal Party was reticent about attacking Rhodes himself and would rather attack Chamberlain's treatment of Rhodes, as Asquith did in May 1897; he accused Chamberlain of lacking 'impartiality of temper which is necessary in dealing with so

¹³⁷ Wemyss Reid to Rosebery (13 April 1896) cited in Butler, *Liberal Party and the Raid*, pp. 166-7.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹³⁹ [Hansard], *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th ser., xxxviii, cols. 1301-1302, (29 April 1897, COMMONS SITTING OF THURSDAY, 29TH APRIL 1897.).

difficult a problem'.¹⁴⁰ The principal target of the Radical element of the Liberal Party was Rhodes, as John Morley demonstrated in a letter to Harcourt:

Rhodes's friends will say that the Gov[ern]m[en]t and the H[ouse] of C[ommons] have shown their indifference to it, and foreigners will say that failure to take notice of the report shows the whole proceeding to have been a major deal between the two front benches, to screen the C[olonial] O[ffice]... my opinion is that the front bench on Monday ought to announce a motion calling for action on the report, and for myself I think the most convenient and intelligible form is an address pressing for Rhodes' removal from the P[ri]v[ate] C[ouncil]. Balfour could not refuse *us* a day. I am not an alarmist, but I think our wretched broken party will founder, if we leave your report lying in the dirt, where it is now.¹⁴¹

Butler argues that much of the Liberal Party wanted 'action against Rhodes and the Company', to which Harcourt could not commit because in all his dealings regarding the report he refused to censure Rhodes or 'touch Rhodes's Privy-Councillorship'.¹⁴² In reply to Morley he tried to make his position look strategically sound: 'I cannot myself approve any course which by negating the motion by a large majority will give Rhodes a greater triumph and make Foreign Nations believe his conduct is approved by Parl[iamen]t. At present we have a strong and uncompromising condemnation of him and I do not think that more is obtainable'.¹⁴³

In the debate that followed the publication of the report two motions were laid: the first would have recalled Hawksley to the House and the second would have Hawksley recalled and censured the committee. Analysis of the voting record shows that the Liberal parliamentary party was split with Campbell-Bannerman and Harcourt splitting: Campbell-Bannerman voted for both censure and the recall of Hawksley, whereas

¹⁴⁰ H. H. Asquith (1 May 1897) cited in Butler, *Liberal Party and the Raid*, p. 167.

¹⁴¹ Morley to Harcourt (16 July 1896) cited in *ibid.*, p. 196.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Harcourt to Morley (17 July 1897) cited in *ibid.*, p. 197.

Harcourt voted only for recall of Hawksley (as did Gladstone) because, like Labouchere, he could not censure his own committee.¹⁴⁴ 'It was the first public division in the parliamentary party on a South African issue, and it was more serious than a revolt by a few Radicals on some issue of foreign policy. On the contrary it was a precursor of the demonstrations of disunity which became so frequent during the South African war.'¹⁴⁵

Stead was generally consistent and sustained in his analysis and criticism of the South African War but he had particular antipathy for Chamberlain.¹⁴⁶ He blamed him rather than Rhodes for the Jameson Raid, a view which he expounded in the semi-fictional *History of Mystery* and in *Joseph Chamberlain: Statesman or Conspirator*.¹⁴⁷ Stead and Chamberlain had known each other since the 1870s when Stead was at the *Northern Echo* and they collaborated against Disraeli's anti-Russian policy, but when Stead succeeded Chamberlain's friend John Morley as editor of the *PMG*, Chamberlain did not offer the same access to Stead as he had given to his predecessor.¹⁴⁸ Following the Raid, Chamberlain condemned the incident but the existence of telegrams between the conspirators and the Colonial Office condemned him; moreover, he had written a letter to Reginald Brett (meant for Rhodes' eyes only) explaining that a German conspiracy with Kruger might act 'as a good excuse' to rationalise the Raid and 'to divert the issue' post-hoc.¹⁴⁹ Stead was happy to advance this line of argument in the *RoR* – 'the moment Dr. Jameson crossed the frontier he forced the hand of the Boers, who by their instant appeal

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 204.

¹⁴⁶ Potter, "W.T. Stead and Imperial Federation," p. 117.

¹⁴⁷ W.T. Stead, *A History of Mystery a sequel to Blastus: to the King's Chamberlain* (London, 1897); W. T. Stead, *Joseph Chamberlain, conspirator or statesman? : an examination of the evidence as to his complicity in the Jameson conspiracy, together with the newly published letters of the Hawkesley dossier* (London, 1900).

¹⁴⁸ Joseph O. Baylen, "W. T. Stead's History of the Mystery and the Jameson Raid", *Journal of British Studies*, 4/1 (1964), p. 106.

¹⁴⁹ Chamberlain to Reginald Brett (1 February 1896) in *ibid.*, p. 107.

to Germany for assistance unmasked a conspiracy which had been diligently promoted for years past'.¹⁵⁰ Stead argued Rhodes was morally right to intervene through the Jameson Raid – 'Cecil Rhodes is the Abraham Lincoln of South Africa. He is the foremost representative of the great struggle for the federal principle on the part of the States organised on the basis of freedom, religious liberty and progress, against a State which has slavery as its chief corner-stone, and which uses the power of a corrupt oligarchy in order to render South African Union impossible'.¹⁵¹ He could be anti-Boer, as was clear in July 1899:

The Boer simply went into the black man's country and revolutionised it in order to suit his own needs. If the black man objected, he killed him if he could, or reduced him to a position not very easily distinguished from that of slavery. Therefore [they] shouldn't be surprised if Uitlanders/British seek to revolutionise their country.¹⁵²

Political reaction to the enquiry

The state of public opinion had shifted since the date of the actual Raid and the beginning of the committee enquiry. Chamberlain himself observed that 'feeling has varied a good deal' regarding Jameson and Rhodes and at the outset 'a very large party were prepared to make a hero of the former and to excuse any errors on the part of the latter' but that this 'gallant business' had taken on a new appearance 'after it was clearly proved that some five hundred armed Englishmen surrendered without anything approaching a real fight'. Chamberlain noted that documents 'unaccountably left for the instruction [and] amusement of the Boers, disclose a state of things which has been very distasteful and has

¹⁵⁰ "CHARACTER SKETCH.", *Review of Reviews* [London], no. 72 (December 1896), p. 494, col. a, ProQuest (12 January 2020).

¹⁵¹ Stead, *A History of Mystery*, p. 4.

¹⁵² "The Topic of the Month - War or Peace with the Transvaal", *Review of Reviews* [London], no. 103 (July 1899), p. 29, col. a, ProQuest (12 January 2020).

materially altered previous impressions as to the objects and methods of all concerned'.¹⁵³

Chamberlain was directing the Committee and steering witnesses to assist the BSAC:

'evidence will be taken as to the administrative work and past history of the Charter

Company, as to which I am told they will be able to put forward a very good case showing

how much they have done to develop the country'¹⁵⁴ – the Committee itself was not

necessarily friendly to Rhodes:

I understand that Harcourt's contention is that he not only sympathised with the agitation, but practically [manipulated] the whole movement and forced the hands of the Reform leaders who did not themselves contemplate any resort to arms; and further that he intended that Jameson should go in in any case and without the special circumstances such as danger to women and children, or anarchy in Johannesburg, which would alone have afforded a moral justification for crossing the border.¹⁵⁵

On 16 February 1897 Rhodes gave evidence before the select committee. In a prepared

statement, Rhodes put forward his reasons for conspiring to invade the Transvaal:

I was greatly influenced by the belief that the policy of the present Government of the South African Republic was to introduce the influence of another foreign power into the already complicated system of South Africa, and thereby render more difficult in the future the closer union of the different states.¹⁵⁶

As was the practice at the time, the full text of the evidence session appeared in *The Times*

the following day. It stated that *inter alia* The Prince of Wales attended the hearing and

was seated 'beneath a huge map of British South Africa' near the Duke of Abercorn.¹⁵⁷

The glamour of the occasion – and thus the importance of the event – could not have been

wasted on the readership of *The Times*. Rhodes' image abroad was that of the force

¹⁵³ Chamberlain to Grey (21 August 1896) MS Grey GRE/B181/2/9-13.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Rhodes to Jackson (16 February 1897) *Parl. Pap.*, (1897), ix, p.73.

¹⁵⁷ "The South African Inquiry", *The Times* [London], no. 35129 (17 February 1897), p. 13, col. a, Times Digital Archive (19 September 2019).

behind the British Empire, at least in Germany where he was an acquaintance of the Kaiser. During the height of the inquiry *The Times* reported German newspaper coverage of the arrival of a British squadron in Delagoa Bay, which laid the blame for the incident with 'Cecil Rhodes or his following in the London Press'.¹⁵⁸ Rhodes' influence at this juncture could hardly have been weaker, having resigned from the Cape premiership, and facing hostile inquiries in the Cape Assembly and the House of Commons. But such was the success of his earlier public relations initiatives at building his myth, that his weakness in British imperial politics was not recognised by the foreign press.

Private correspondence between Chamberlain and Salisbury quite clearly suggests that the Government had considered Rhodes complicit, indeed the prime mover, in the scheme from the outset. In the days that followed the Raid, Chamberlain wrote to the Prime Minister:

I am sorry to say that the Transvaal business has entered on a more acute stage. Having failed to get up a revolution in Johannesburg Rhodes (who is shut up in his house and will not come to Capetown [sic]) has apparently set on Dr. Jameson who has crossed the border of the Transvaal with 800 armed police. This is a flagrant piece of filibustering for which there is no justification that I can see in the recent state of things in the Transvaal.¹⁵⁹

Yet, speaking in the House of Commons only two months later Chamberlain put forward a spirited defence of Rhodes the conspirator:

If it is asked of me, "Was the High Commissioner, were other people, ignorant of this projected invasion?" I say to the best of my knowledge and belief that everybody, that Mr. Rhodes, that the Chartered Company, that the Reform Committee of Johannesburg, and the High Commissioner were all equally ignorant of the intention or action of Dr. Jameson.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ "Delagoa Bay."

¹⁵⁹ Chamberlain to Salisbury (31 December 1895), Hatfield MS Salisbury, MSS 3M/E(2).

¹⁶⁰[Hansard], *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th ser., xxxviii, col. 313, (13 February 1896, Address in Answer to Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech).

The explanation lies in Chamberlain's desire to disguise his own knowledge and complicity, as has been seen from his exchange with Grey, and also in his belief that Rhodes was the only figure who could lead South Africa out of crisis:

A great deal depends on the policy of the Government of the South African Republic. If they press their present railway policy to extreme conclusions, the people of the Cape Colony will be in a most serious position, for if the traffic is diverted from their railway they cannot pay expenses, and the Cape Government will soon find themselves in very grave financial embarrassment. In this case both Dutch and English will appreciate more highly Mr Rhodes' policy and the reaction in his favour will make rapid progress. On the other hand I doubt whether President Kruger will persevere in a policy of this kind.¹⁶¹

The Committee was damning of the governance of the Company, which Abercorn had said was effectively a fiefdom of Rhodes – 'Mr. Rhodes had received a power of attorney, giving him the fullest power to do precisely what he liked without consultation with the Board, and the whole of the administration, and everything connected practically with Rhodesia, was carried on by Mr. Rhodes, he simply notifying to the Board what was done'. This was an abdication of responsibility on the part of Abercorn and the Board, apart from Grey who was at the heart of things as has been seen. The Committee concluded: 'under these circumstances, the Committee considers that the Board, as at present constituted, does not fulfil the objects for which it was created, or offer sufficient security against the misuse of the powers delegated to the Chartered Company by the Crown.'¹⁶² This was a veiled attack on Rhodes himself.

Despite, perhaps because, of the findings, of the Committee, James Maclean, the Member of Parliament for Cardiff who was a free-trader and would grow to dislike and distrust

¹⁶¹ Chamberlain to Grey (21 August 1896) MS Grey GRE/B181/2/9-13.

¹⁶² *Parl. Pap.*, (1897), ix, xii.

Chamberlain, rose to have the Committee closed in 1897 on the grounds that it was damaging to the stability of South Africa, principally because it was damaging to the reputation of Rhodes:

The House knew that he had been busily engaged in the territory which bore his name: they knew of the good work he had done there; and if they wanted to find out what the Government thought of the work of Mr. Rhodes in South Africa they had only to refer to the Queen's Speech.... Who had been the inspiring genius to the settlers in Rhodesia except Mr. Rhodes himself? And yet this was the man whom they were going to accuse of sowing dissension between the English and Dutch races in South Africa. [Cheers.] Mr. Rhodes had been the most active man in our colonies there to induce the English and Dutch races to work together. Mr. Rhodes had completely rehabilitated himself in the public opinion of this country by the work he had done since Parliament rose last year. ["No, no!" and cheers.] The enthusiastic receptions given to him by his countrymen in Cape Colony proved that they regarded him as the living impersonation of that spirit of private enterprise which had transformed this island kingdom into a world-wide Empire.¹⁶³

Rhodes had benefitted from the extent to which both Salisbury and Chamberlain had backed him in his expansionary agenda generally and, in Chamberlain's case, the Raid in particular. That he was still able to find support from figures such as Maclean, who was a liberal by Tory standards and would eventually cross the floor, indicated his enduring political appeal amongst imperialists even after the Raid.

Summary

Rhodes deployed a range of tactics to influence government policy. He used intermediaries because of his more or less permanent location in South Africa away from imperial policy makers in London. These intermediaries were able to put Rhodes' case to government in the technocratic language that it understood, and they and Rhodes himself

¹⁶³ [Hansard], *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th ser., xxxxy, 766-76, (28 January 1897, Commons sitting of Thursday, 28th January 1897).

altered their arguments depending on their audience. More cynically, the use of intermediaries enabled Rhodes to maintain a degree of deniability whilst manipulating ministers from a distance. His use of the popular press meant that he was a public figure, even a celebrity, in Britain in a way in which other settler state politicians were not. His image in popular culture strengthened his political position earlier in his career, and helped to mitigate the disaster of the Jameson Raid. His time was split unevenly between *colonial* and *imperial* interests, with his long-term scheme for imperial federation necessarily taking up much less time than near-term issues such as Bechuanaland, the charter, Delagoa Bay and Cape politics. This should not deflect attention from his commitment to the more theoretical initiative of imperial federation, which was simply harder to achieve. Indeed, there is a sense that the farther the implications of an issue were from the imperial centre, the more likely Rhodes was to be successful. He used correspondence, as he had in the press, to tie his political allies to schemes and projects, meaning he could rely on their support during times of crisis. This approach may explain the limited volume of correspondence with Salisbury and Rosebery when they were in and out of office, and perhaps justifies their caution. Rhodes' erratic behaviour and personal style in meetings with government ministers may also have been a factor. Rhodes' predilection for headlines was another possible reason for the caution. Salisbury, as has been seen, was initially impressed by Rhodes but that did not encourage him as a correspondent. Whereas, Gladstone appears to have had very limited engagement with Rhodes.

The interests of African people were subordinate to South African federation and imperial expansion for Rhodes. But Africans were a multi-dimensional, not a uniform, issue, which encompassed the politically salient actors of northern expansion at the same time as the enfranchised Africans in the Cape and the economically vital African workers of

Kimberley. In the pursuit of his objectives, Rhodes claimed rights for Africans if it were convenient for himself. When dealing with African states he could generally prevail in Whitehall but when his interests hit against the established position of European states, such as Portugal, he was far less effective. This is in keeping with Britain's avoidance of conflict with European powers during the period – expansion happened partly by avoiding Europe, an approach which Rhodes was not able to reverse, showing clear evidence of the limits of Rhodes' influence in British imperial politics.¹⁶⁴ The geopolitical implications of the BSAC have also been highlighted. Rhodes has been identified as the archetypal bridgehead, but so was the BSAC. It made decisions that affected trade policy both with Britain and the Cape Colony via tariff arrangements, through its involvement in railway activities, and through its operations that redirected trade flows in central Africa and the colonial territories of other European powers that were connected by the Lakes system. Even when Rhodes was weakest in the imperial centre, he was all powerful in the domain of the BSAC; but his recklessness, when it failed, curtailed the BSAC's expansion as it was effectively an extension of Rhodes himself.

¹⁶⁴ J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, "Imperialism of Free Trade", *The Economic History Review*, 6/1 (1953), p. 7.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Rhodes' life and career remain the subject of intensely contested debate, with disagreement often falling along ideological lines. Rhodes was an inherently ideological figure, whose network of supporters was drawn together by ideological common cause: imperial federation and the unity of the British Empire; this is the first key finding of this study. Contemporaneous views of him differed enormously. On the one hand, speaking at Glasgow in May 1891 Lord Salisbury said: '[t]here is the British South Africa Company, which you will probably know better in the concrete form of Mr. Cecil Rhodes, a very considerable man, a man of very many remarkable powers, and remarkable resolution and will'.¹ On the other hand, Mark Twain compared him to 'Satan come again' in 1897.² Historians have taken wildly divergent views of Rhodes, as has been seen, from undeserving hagiography to vilification and often significant distortion.

Hayden White observed: 'what was at issue throughout the nineteenth century, in history as in both art and the social sciences, was the form that a genuinely "realistic representation of historical reality" ought to take'.³ He was making an observation about historiography *in* the nineteenth century but it may well have been an observation about the historiography *of* the nineteenth century. As has been demonstrated, different historians have taken different views on Rhodes because 'some historians conceive their work primarily as a contribution to the illumination of current social problems and conflicts, while others are inclined to suppress such presentist concerns and to try to determine the extent to which a given period of the past differs from their own, in what

¹ Michell, *Life of Rhodes*, p. 52.

² Mark Twain, *Following the equator; a journey around the world* (Hartford, Conn., 1897), p. 708.

³ Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination In Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973), p. 432.

appears to be a predominantly “antiquarian” frame of mind’.⁴ In *Metahistory*, White sought to explain the structural components of such accounts. Yet the point is moot because as he said the past ‘exists only in consciousness and not in actuality (or at least is not felt to exist there), the problem of consciousness is to relate this new world to that of concrete things’.⁵ The historiography of Rhodes has been interpreted thus. To put it another way, the past does not exist in the way in which most people think it does: it is shaped by the present – which has defined the interpretation of Rhodes. The political reality of the present is the determinant of the shape of the past because the present-future of our own engagement frames our political, ethical and moral understanding.⁶ Take, for instance, Max Weber’s nineteenth century conclusion that the ‘moral justification of worldly activity was one of the most important results of the Reformation’, whereas a twenty first century historian might take the contrary view that the deaths of Protestants and Catholics at the hands of one another was a more important outcome of the Reformation.⁷

Rhodes’ career, like the history of South Africa, is conflated with race. This is not surprising; and yet it has taken the focus away from other aspects of his career, such as his activities in British imperial politics. The evidence produced in this study shows that the interests of African people were subordinate to South African federation and imperial expansion for Rhodes. But in the pursuit of these objectives Rhodes claimed rights on behalf of Africans or, on the one hand, advocated the limiting of the African franchise in 1886 to appeal to the Bond and, on the other, argued for the theoretical importance of a

⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵ Ibid., p. 87.

⁶ Michael Oakeshott, *Historical Events: The fortuitous, the casual, the similar, the correlative, the analogous and the contingent* (Oxford, 1983), p. 46.

⁷ Max Weber, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (New York, 1930), p. 81.

colourless franchise during the 1898 General Election because they were politically expedient measures. These actions on the franchise took place before and after the Jameson Raid and therefore before and after the conclusion of Rhodes' alliance with the Bond. Once his attempt at South African federation through Afrikaner appeasement had failed, he shifted his focus to a geopolitical solution whereby the weight of the Cape, Natal and Rhodesia would compel federation with the Boer republics. The latter scheme did not require the subjugation of Africans for its success and therefore Rhodes adjusted his strategy.

This general understanding of the nature of history and historiography explains the spectrum of historiographical opinion relating to Rhodes that encompasses the various schools of the history of the British Empire from the post-colonial to the British world school. This study has sought to place Rhodes in his proper global context, decoupling Rhodes the nineteenth century British colonial and imperial figure from the Apartheid state that was created in South Africa in the twentieth century. There are some helpful ideological insights in some of the recent literature, but elsewhere perhaps ideology is underplayed.⁸ The British world school emphasises the global context of the British settler states and the contested loyalties that developed as a result of shared identities within them, whilst at the same time the priorities of these self-governing colonies and Great Britain became divergent. Rhodes constitutes an historically useful case study because he sought to arrest these trends. In common with some other settler state leaders, he sought instead to align Great Britain more closely with its settler state colonies via the integration of imperial trade through tariff reform, by the growth of commercial opportunities for

⁸ For an example of recent work on British ideologies at play in the settler states see: Vivian Bickford-Smith 'Revisiting Anglicisation in the Nineteenth Century Cape Colony' in Vivian Bickford-Smith, "Revisiting Anglicisation in the Nineteenth Century Cape Colony", in Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (ed.), *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*, (London, 2004).

settler states and the City of London through the expansion of the British Empire, and the solidification of these benefits through the constitutional integration of the settler state colonies' democracies with that of Great Britain.

The period in which Rhodes operated was the germinator of ideological movements that characterised the era that followed – both socialism and fascism have their roots in the late nineteenth century, yet the period tends not to be seen as such by historians of Britain in the nineteenth century or historians of the British Empire. Even the British world school, which, as has been seen, takes a more contextual approach to the nature of empire, does not take an ideologically centred view of imperial politics. This is a mistake. Greater Britain was an ideology that required a 'new' transoceanic federal state for it to come into being. Unlike its ideological counterparts, it could not rely simply on a European nation state for its genesis and evolution, rather it needed both settler state support and the wilful collaboration of the British state. However, this was never achieved despite the settler states themselves lobbying in Britain for such an outcome. Irish nationalism was one reason it failed – the British state was preoccupied with Ireland and Home Rule for the entirety of Rhodes' political career. Rhodes sought to use Irish nationalism to strengthen rather than weaken the British Empire in a novel way by using it as a pretext or 'stalking horse' for imperial federation. This approach – unique amongst settler state politicians – stemmed from his experience of colonial South Africa and its combination of potent nationalism and British democratic institutions, which had, despite the obvious tensions, enabled imperial expansion. But Rhodes' well-known sponsorship of political parties, the press and pressure groups did not mean that he purchased the loyalty and the views of those he supported, rather he gave his support to groups that were sympathetic to *his* world view. Supporting this idea, Rhodes did not facilitate the donations he made to the IPP or

the Liberal Party. On both occasions he saw common cause and gave significant sums but not so significant that they undermined the independence of either party, far from it. His political donations were pragmatic and *ad hoc* rather than part of a greater scheme. He gave for a variety of purposes: to influence elections in South Africa, as with the SAL in 1898; to influence imperial policy either indirectly or directly with the IPP and the Liberal Party – and in the case of the former he may also have hoped to quell any criticism that the IPP may have had for the charter in 1889. Though this must have been secondary given their limited influence in the matter of a royal charter. There were often conditions attached in writing to his financial support but only when Rhodes considered it necessary or perhaps a form of insurance, when he was hoping to influence a policy or opinion and knew that there was an ideological gap between himself and the other party. Agreements in writing could help hold the other party to the agreement because of the ever-present possibility of press coverage instigated by Rhodes.

Rhodes developed an approach to business and politics that was compromising in contrast to his often uncompromising rhetoric, which he deployed with both the Bond in trade policy and African interests during the Second Matabele War. The second key finding of this study is that despite being an ideological actor, his tactical approach to business and politics was inherently non-ideological. In other words, Rhodes would sanction tactical action that was ideologically inconsistent if it took his strategic aims forward. This gave him political dexterity that made him a highly competent political actor. This approach was apt for his position away from London in the Cape Colony with its complex, contested loyalties to Britain, and was also the result of an ideological drive which meant that he was willing to lay down what others would have considered *sine qua non* in order to move to the next stage in his imperial mission. Take, for instance, his relatively small shareholding

in De Beers that led to so much trouble with its Board when he was chairman. The amalgamation of South African diamond interests made him politically more influential more quickly, and therefore he was willing to give up control to Rothschild, Barnato and others. His relationship with the Bond, which he used to help facilitate South African federation, was another tactical compromise. Supporting Irish nationalism in order to create a federal system in Britain, and therefore the British Empire by stealth, by ensuring continued Irish representation at the 'Imperial Parliament' in Westminster was the epitome of the emotional separation of tactical delivery from his strategic object. There was a definite advantage to this approach: early in his career it made Rhodes both intriguing and unpredictable which helped to develop the myth that built up around him during his own lifetime and made people like Salisbury admire his 'remarkable powers, and remarkable resolution and will', which engendered his early political successes in British imperial politics.⁹ But this admiration turned to mistrust in the wake of the Jameson Raid, which probably cost the BSAC the administration of Bechuanaland that had been agreed in principle by Ripon before the Raid.

The duality of Rhodes' political world, whereby his *imperial* agenda often facilitated his *colonial* activities in business and politics and *vice versa*, has been highlighted in this study, which is the first to undertake a close analysis of his activities in British imperial politics. This duality has distracted historiographical attention from his career in British imperial politics. Accordingly, the third principal outcome of this study is to show how Rhodes influenced imperial policy, which goes beyond the use of his network and his funding of political parties. He was adept at manipulating different audiences – civil servants and the British public via the press were treated to his defence of African

⁹ Michell, *Life of Rhodes*, p. 52.

interests; the Boers were offered solutions to the 'native problem'; High Commissioners were given the chance to play geopolitics on a large canvas; and Salisbury was offered an inexpensive solution to his Portuguese preoccupation. But Rhodes' irreverence for tactics meant his use of evidence had a consistent tendency towards overstatement, if not dishonesty, which could be counterproductive when used in lobbying. Indeed, it added to the notion that Rhodes could not be trusted, particularly after 1895. Rhodes deployed a range of tactics to influence government policy, but the most public in his career aside from the Raid, his support for Parnell, has been neglected by historians.

It is remarkable because, as has been seen, it gave an impression of Rhodes' wide reach as an imperial statesman and of his political importance in British politics at a crucial stage in his career. Moreover, his chief tactical objective, the retention of Irish members at Westminster in the event of a Second Home Rule Bill, was achieved, though the Bill itself failed and thus his theory about imperial federation was not tested. Rhodes' own agency in the retention of Irish representation at Westminster is unclear, however, because of the shifting positions of Parnell and Gladstone on the issue. The contribution to the Liberal Party via Schnadhorst in 1890 was less successful on the face of it, as Rhodes' intervention appears to have lacked agency in relation to Egypt and Home Rule, which were the two stipulations of his donation. However, the otherwise sceptical Gladstone government appeared to be willing to allow the BSAC to take on administration of the Bechuanaland Protectorate immediately before the Jameson Raid and so its implications may not have been inconsequential. This study has not found direct evidence to link the donation to Ripon's support for Rhodes' Bechuanaland proposals, but it is evident that before the Jameson Raid, Rhodes had, through his network and his party donations, become a credible option for low-cost imperial management on the periphery of empire in the eyes

of some in the Liberal government (as was shown in chapter 3). In their early iterations, Rhodes' public political acts in Britain gave the impression of his wielding power and domestic influence that was not wholly the case in reality, helping to drive forward the charter campaign and his early political career in the Cape (as was shown in chapters 4 and 5). There is however clear evidence of the limits to Rhodes' lobbying: when dealing with African states he could generally prevail in Whitehall before 1895, but when he pitted himself against European powers such as Portugal, he was far less effective despite helping to push Britain towards a diplomatic confrontation with its old ally that led to the collapse of the government in Lisbon.

Rhodes therefore personified Darwin's 'bridgehead' and was skilled at using the Cape Colony as an instrument for imperial expansion. He used the bureaucracy of the imperial state, particularly the office of the High Commissioner, which under Robinson was a vital support of Rhodes' aims, and the political apparatus of the colonial settler state to manipulate imperial policy at the empire's centre in Britain. The case study of Bechuanaland, which compares his actions at the beginning and end of his career, shows that Rhodes was not motivated by personal business and financial factors, but rather by a desire to safeguard Britain's imperial expansion in southern Africa, which he maintained consistently until his death. His business interests, although linked to his *colonial* and *imperial* activities as shown by the financial support that De Beers gave to the BSAC, were, as his early biographers argued, a means to a greater end. The type of economic determinism put forward by some scholars does not seem convincing given the evidence produced in chapter 3.

The emphasis that this study has placed on the importance of the Home Rule political context to activities on the imperial periphery is a differentiator from the focus of the British world school. The complex role that Irish nationalism played in Rhodes' career is absent from the most recent biography of Rhodes by Rotberg, which pays it only the most cursory attention, and earlier biographies also failed to highlight it as an influential factor in Rhodes' career. The fourth principal finding of this study – and perhaps its most important – is that Irish nationalism shaped Rhodes' political context and the people within it. Indeed, as shown particularly in chapters 2, 4 and 5, the network that Rhodes used to influence imperial policy was predominantly defined by the debates about nationalism concerning the union and Ireland, which characterised nineteenth century British politics. In the main, Rhodes' network were unionists like Grey and (probably) Maguire, who acted for Rhodes directly, but there were also Irish nationalists like Parnell and emphatic opponents of Irish nationalism like Chamberlain, who supported Rhodes to different degrees from the position of established, if not establishment, political careers. The Parnell relationship is tantalising because of its potential significance and because there is a lot that is unknown. Although it is unproven, Rhodes' intervention could have influenced the Irish representation at Westminster clauses of the Second Home Rule Bill by converting Parnell to support for a federal model, the truth about which may never be clear. Rhodes probably arranged for Maguire to join the Parnellite ranks, but again the nature of this arrangement is not clear. There is no 'smoking gun' that sets out Rhodes' plans for the IPP, as there is for Chamberlain and the Jameson Raid. Rhodes may have seen Parnell as the emerging Hofmeyr of British politics and thus as an opportunity for personal influence. But, as was shown in chapter 4, Rhodes certainly saw the changes to IPP policy that he helped secure through his relationship with Parnell as a crucial two-fold step towards making imperial federation more likely. It was a stalking horse to assess the

political will for imperial federation in Britain and beyond in the settler states and also a test case for the problems that a wider imperial parliamentary union might have encountered. Rhodes saw himself as the catalyst for imperial rebirth, but as a tactician he knew that the publicity generated by the Parnell letters alone enhanced his influence in British imperial politics by giving the impression of power and reach. It engendered the notion that he had sway over Parnell, the man who held the balance of power at Westminster, in common with his perceived influence over Hofmeyr in the Cape. To put it another way, one man controlling two parliaments.

The network that Rhodes used allowed him to lobby successfully for the charter, which led to the creation of Rhodesia, and less successfully, for different reasons as discussed in chapter 5, for BSAC control of Bechuanaland and Delagoa Bay. Ironically, the forces that prevented his success in Delagoa Bay, the geopolitics of the ‘Scramble for Africa’, probably ensured the initial success of the charter lobbying campaign because of Salisbury’s determination to deal with Portuguese ambitions. The reasons behind the failure of the latter schemes, which Rhodes would have blamed on the lack of strategic understanding in the British body politic of the needs of the empire which in his view would have been corrected by representation for the settler states in the ‘Imperial Parliament’, undoubtedly imbued Rhodes with the sense that the relationship between Britain and the settler states – and thus the imperial periphery – needed reform and formalisation for the empire to survive. Collaboration with other settler state politicians in Canada, Australia and New Zealand was limited but there was a degree of ideological concord on the need for greater imperial unity in the settler states and their political establishments, which was absent from the leadership of Britain, where both Gladstone and Salisbury showed little interest in imperial federation despite having people around

them who were strongly supportive of imperial federation, particularly in Salisbury's case. This may have been a significant factor in Rhodes' early success and deserves more scrutiny, particularly the role of Selborne which came to light in chapters 2 and 5. Rhodes sought to influence the views of the Liberal and Conservative parties' leaderships by influencing political opinion in Britain more widely through collaboration with Parnell, the financial support of the Liberal Party, his erratic but sometimes polished use of the British press – and his placemen in the Houses of Parliament and the City of London. His direct attempts at influencing the prime ministers of the day always also included the use of proxies and was successful in the case of Salisbury at least at the beginning of Rhodes' political career in Britain.

When it came to imperial federation, he was objectively unsuccessful, as *The Times* reported after Gladstone had received a delegation from the IFL in 1893 – 'It is true that it did not obtain what it sought, or even the smallest encouragement to think that the attainment of what it seeks is within what Mr. Gladstone calls "measurable distance." But it obtained "a sympathetic reply" conveyed in such a prodigious quantity of mellifluous phrases that its members apparently did not at once grasp the fact that their request had been entirely ignored'.¹⁰ There could be a case made for a causal relationship between Ireland, unionism and imperial federation. The proponents of imperial federation tended to have a personal background in unionism. It may have been the integrity, or rather the weakness, of the Union of Great Britain and Ireland, as opposed to the British Empire, which conceived the idea of imperial federation and encouraged its adherents. This is an area for further study.

¹⁰ H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries: With Cabinet Minutes and Prime-ministerial Correspondence, Volume 13: 1892–1896*, (Oxford, 2016), p. 225; "A deputation from the Imperial Federation".

Rhodes did not orchestrate other settler state leaders to join in his campaign; indeed, he did not put in a great deal of effort to do so, as far as the record shows. The reasons for this are complex, ranging from the limited interest in settler states, which were going through processes of internal federation themselves, to Rhodes' preoccupation with near-term professional and political undertakings. Moreover, after 1895 he did not have the political capital any longer to make real progress and, therefore, he focused his efforts on the imperial government rather than his colonial counterparts in the settler states. An analysis of other settler state leaders' views of imperial federation and their engagement with British imperial politics is an area for further study – particularly how the nature of their own domestic politics and putative constitutional change affected their positions.

The ideologically coherent supporters, who acted as lobbyists with the imperial government in London, each had their different purpose and status in Rhodes' network. Maguire was an old friend and his lobbying role was important to Rhodes' overall operation in terms of context and contact on the ground with government and politicians, but he was not in the first rank in his own right. He was polished, intelligent and upwardly mobile. Grey on the other hand held the position of adviser and statesman; moreover, he was untarnished by the Jameson Raid and was able to enjoy a viceregal career in Canada. Both had been useful during the nadir of Rhodes' public career, the inquiry into the Raid, but it was Grey who helped keep Chamberlain supportive of Rhodes by thinly veiled threats made to him in writing. Despite Rhodes' near-obvious blame, the government was persuaded not to sanction him. Harcourt's attack on Rhodes and Chamberlain in the House of Commons underscores Rhodes' success in containing the report's findings and maintaining cordiality with Salisbury's government and crucially Chamberlain, but,

typically of Rhodes, he had antagonised the Liberal members of the committee and so remained under attack.

Despite the limited attention paid to Jameson in this study because of his absence from British imperial politics during Rhodes' lifetime, it was Jameson who attempted to carry out Rhodes' imperial ambitions after his death. Jameson attended the Colonial Conference in London in 1907 as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. *The Times* reported his remarks during a speech at the Baltic Exchange:

The word "Imperial" being substituted for "Colonial" meant that the Conferences of the future, which were to take place at every four years, would be conferences of Governments with Governments. It meant that they had established the status of the dominions over the seas – of those nationalities, because that was what they were growing into – to be the same, [on] a smaller scale, as that of the United Kingdom. That was what they had got. What they wanted... even more than the tariff question, was the machinery to make that Imperial Conference and effective consolidation of the Empire.¹¹

The language of 'nationalities' showed that even when the settler state leaders attempted to come closer to Britain they were heading in different directions, adopting the language of ethno-linguistic difference, giving the impression of a kind of Balkanisation, which shows the complexity of Anglo-settler state relations before the First World War. Yet on tariff and trade policy it was the colonies who built 'their half of the bridge' to an empire-wide arrangement, which Britain refused to meet. As if channelling Rhodes, Jameson said they should:

...not adopt protection... as a shibboleth or a fetish... the object was not to look for an immutable law, but to see what paid... why put aside in the Empire which was the greatest commercial power of the world still, and they hoped always would retain that position, the weapon which no other nation would shrink from using, with the smaller powers and small

¹¹ "Colonial Premiers in the City", *The Times* [London], no. 38334 (16 May 1907), p. 11, col. a, Times Digital Archive (12 September 2019).

authority?... At the Conference the Colonies made an offer. The offer was respectfully declined. The Colonies asked that this country should name its terms. Again it was respectfully declined.¹²

Chamberlain would come to define this debate in the following decades, arguing that ‘non-progressive [countries] seem to be destined to fall into a secondary and subordinate place’.¹³ Rhodes had been the most prominent proponent of this position in the settler states during his career, both as an economic end in itself and as a means of encouraging closer union. The brief period of imperial preference of the 1930s was at once the apotheosis of imperial unity and, because it had been prompted by competition, the harbinger of imperial disintegration. Rhodes’ long-term influence on imperial policy was terminated by external events leading to the end of the British Empire itself, but his influence during his own lifetime was also curtailed because of his reckless orchestration of the Jameson Raid and because his life was truncated by early death. The events and Rhodes’ network of influence that led to the expansion of British dominion in South Africa were shaped by the political context of Home Rule and the partly consequential ideology of imperial federalism. Indeed, the network around Rhodes that was instrumental in achieving the charter may never have existed were it not for the divisive state of Britain’s body politic that spilled over into its hinterland, Greater Britain.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Speech at the Royal Colonial Institute Dinner (31 March 1897) in C. W. Boyd (ed.), *Mr. Chamberlain's Speeches*, II, (London, 1914), p. 5.

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