

## Cooperation and Competition

### South Africa and Southern Rhodesia During and After the Second World War

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#### Abstract

This paper discusses relations between South Africa and Southern Rhodesia from 1939 to 1948. The article begins in 1939 when the outbreak of the Second World War brought mixed fortunes for the two neighbours. For Southern Rhodesia, which relied mainly on imported manufactured goods from the United Kingdom, the war induced shortages resulting in huge domestic demand. Shortages stimulated calls for local industry to fill the vacuum. Consequently, an import substitution industrialisation (ISI) drive developed. In addition to the ISI, South Africa, which had a comparatively established secondary industry by the time the war broke out, increasingly became an essential source for Southern Rhodesian imports. This, however, was not without its challenges. Southern Rhodesia's economic interest groups often raised complaints against South Africa's economic competition and its threat to the Rhodesian economy. Nonetheless, Pretoria and Salisbury worked closely and found ways to ease the challenges. By 1948, the end date of the paper, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa's relationship had resulted in the signing of a Customs Union Agreement. Thus, the article demonstrates, thematically and chronologically, that relations between the two countries evolved through cooperation and competition during the Second World War until the onset of Apartheid in South Africa and the Customs Agreement. The paper relies on primary material from the Zimbabwean and South African archives comprised of correspondences of Customs Agreements negotiations, economic policies and relations, and Parliamentary debates.

**Keywords:** Second World War – South Africa – Southern Rhodesia – cooperation – competition

#### 1. Introduction

Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) and South Africa have been described as having a 'special relationship', born of geographical proximity, economic interconnectedness, racial solidarity, and shared political interests.<sup>1</sup> The close relationship was also bound by history and personality, through Cecil John Rhodes, the late nineteenth-century British imperialist who

served as the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony and founder of the British South Africa Company (bsac) that colonised present-day Zimbabwe in 1890. Several other factors show how the two countries always had closer ties. In 1922, Southern Rhodesia spurned an opportunity to become South Africa's fifth province in a referendum where settlers opted for a Responsible Government status that characterised Southern Rhodesia between 1923 and 1953. That aside, the historical development of Southern Rhodesia, in shape and form, mirrored South Africa. As Robert Blake contended,

[Southern Rhodesia's] legal system, Roman-Dutch, unlike that of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, was derived from South Africa. People went to the Union for holidays, married South African spouses, thought in South African terms, and drank South African wine. Nearly everyone (English-speaking whites only) who came to the colony came via South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

The preceding characterisation demonstrates that, from its foundation as a modern state, Southern Rhodesia has been directly linked to South Africa and that close connection has persisted throughout the colonial period to date. This relationship was not static, however. It went through an evolution punctured with intermittent tensions and easiness.

Various dimensions and aspects of Southern Rhodesia–South Africa relations have received scholarly attention. The relationship dynamics range from the shared general history as settler colonies, sub-imperial ties, high politics, trade, economic interconnectedness, liberation struggles, tied industrialisation strategies, and social connections.<sup>3</sup> All these factors validate the existence of a 'special relationship' between the two countries. However, characterising their close ties as special is vague and masks many dynamics. We simplify and specify the two countries' relationship as one that reflected and entailed 'competition and cooperation'. We further argue that while these elements existed intermittently throughout the relationship, their pinnacle reached during the Second World War and immediately after, where competition and cooperation existed simultaneously. For this paper, competition speaks largely to the trade and economic interaction between the two countries during the course of the Second World War. With the disruption to international trade as a consequence of the War, Rhodesia was largely reliant on its larger southern neighbour for a number of goods it received abroad. However, it also sought to develop its secondary industrial base to increase self-reliance but such efforts were significantly curtailed by goods and products from established South African industries to which greater protection was sought by Rhodesian industrialists to develop local industries. Equally, during this period cooperation took place particularly on the joint war-effort in North Africa between the two countries and thus this paper identifies these dynamics of cooperation and competition in the relationship between the two countries during the Second World War.

With two exceptions, very little of the existing scholarship has teased out these aspects of competition and cooperation in the relationship between South Africa and Southern Rhodesia during the war years.<sup>4</sup> This explanation, too, in part, justifies the particular focus of this paper on that period. The onset of Apartheid and the signing of the Customs Union (Interim) Agreement between the two countries in 1948 had huge implications on their relations that require in-depth examination, HENCE the end date of 1948. We should also acknowledge that literature abounds on the impact of the Second World War on these two

countries and Africa, particularly how the war inspired African nationalism and decolonization, 'late colonialism' and economic development.<sup>5</sup> Our article thus contributes to these two strands of scholarship: the impact of the Second World War on Africa and Southern Rhodesia–South Africa relations. We emphasise how the Second World War shaped relations between Pretoria and Salisbury, an aspect which, in the existing literature, has at worst been understudied or at best, has not been properly defined. We define and characterize the relations as reflecting all at once, cooperation and competition.

To make out the case, the paper uses primary material from Zimbabwean and South African archives comprising correspondences of Customs Agreements negotiations, economic policies, and relations, as well as Parliamentary debates within and between the two countries. The narrative is structured into three parts. The first discussion focuses on the two countries' war effort and their cooperation in the military campaigns. It THEN moves to their deepening economic ties during the war, especially in industrial development, which simultaneously saw the nascent growth of fears of competition in both countries' economic sectors. The final part analyses the restructuring and reconfiguration of both economies as they emerged from the war. In particular, it scrutinises the negotiations in trade relations in the post-war years and their implications for their future ties. Overall, the paper shows how the Second World War and the immediate years up to 1948 were watershed moments in the relations between South Africa and Southern Rhodesia.

## **2. Southern Rhodesia–South Africa War Campaign**

South Africa–Southern Rhodesia's war efforts were virtually tied together right from the start. Once the Second World War broke out in 1939, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia demonstrated their loyalty and duty to the crown as part of the British Empire. Norman Mlambo remarked that 'it appears as if Southern Rhodesia was acting as a branch of the South African arms industry, and most of her products were made to fulfill orders given to the Union of South Africa by the Allies.'<sup>6</sup> Even at an institutional level, Southern Rhodesia looked to South Africa for precedence and guidance. It is therefore not surprising that WHEN the War Supplies Committee established in 1940 to 'examine the resources of the manufacture of munitions and civil supplies' did so 'in coordination with the Union of South Africa.'<sup>7</sup> South Africa itself had also established the department of Director General of War supplies in September 1939, as will be detailed later. All the cases above illustrate how close the two countries have always been, HENCE their close cooperation during the Second World War.

Both territories contributed material and human resources. Approximately 2000 white Rhodesians served in the Royal Air force.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps, Southern Rhodesia's most significant contribution to the war effort was through the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS), which hosted and trained the Royal Air force.<sup>9</sup> According to Mlambo,

[b]y the end of 1944, a total of 6,493 pilots had been trained in support of the Allied war effort. The construction of aerodromes and other facilities required by the scheme; the demand for munitions and spare parts, foodstuffs, and other commodities were all welcomed by a business community that had only recently begun to recover from the Depression.<sup>10</sup>

The EATS was not only aiding the war effort but also the general economic mood of the country. In fact, EATS provided Salisbury the only area in its wartime efforts it had complete control, its Air Force. While South Africa was embroiled in its internal local politics pitting pro-War versus anti-War white population groups, the country still played its role in the war effort. Because of the internal tensions in the government, it took voting to decide whether South Africa should join the war on Britain's side or go for neutrality. A vote was taken on the prime minister's (JBM Hertzog) neutrality motion, which was defeated by 80 votes to 67.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, South Africa entered the war, joining the Allied powers in support of Britain. General Jan Smuts, after Hertzog tendered in his resignation following the vote, was invited to form a government. Led by an avid British supporter in Smuts,<sup>12</sup> South Africa pitched itself as a great power on the sub-continent of Southern Africa with the mandate to expand the sub-imperial empire. Besides, South Africa saw the continent as its market that needed protection.<sup>13</sup> South Africa entered the war partly because of these strategic and economic reasons.

As the two countries pledged their loyalty and support to the British Empire, they faced stark realities in their abilities to participate in the war. Both territories had to consider their ability to provide sufficient numbers of soldiers. For example, WHEN South Africa joined the war, the number of volunteers who presented themselves for enlistment far outstripped the ability of the Defence Forces to supply guns, uniforms, and other necessary equipment.<sup>14</sup> That reality entailed relooking into the form and methods of war participation. Between late 1939 and May 1940, enlistment into the army in Southern Rhodesia was voluntary, and training methods were rudimentary because of a shortage of equipment. From May 1940 onwards, following the enactment of the countrys' Defence Act, all British subjects of European descent, aged between 18 and 55, became obligated to enlist for training. While each territory made its own contingents measures, they also saw the wisdom in collaborating.<sup>15</sup> The following paragraphs address this cooperation.

Military cooperation between South Africa and Southern Rhodesia was consummated at the instance of the latter's Minister of Defence, Robert C. Tredgold. At the same time, the entry of Italy into the war on Germany's side also exposed the vulnerability of the British forces in northeast Africa, thus needing bolstering. In this respect, real possibilities of cooperation between the Union and Southern Rhodesia became inevitable. The British government also cleared the way for collaboration WHEN it suggested that Rhodesian forces operating under the East African command could unite with South Africa, which in any case, was already supplying the Rhodesian troops with artillery and equipment.<sup>16</sup> While plans for cooperation were being conceived, the role of South African nationals resident in Southern Rhodesia almost caused tensions. Southern Rhodesia demanded that all South African nationals who had resided in Rhodesia for more than six months to enlist for the war, at least at the home front, while those who had been residents for two years or more were deployed outside the country. Southern Rhodesia amended its Defence Act to provide for their enlistment. This raised tensions, especially regarding how South Africans of Afrikaner heritage were treated in the country. They were denied public service opportunities and often labelled as 'undesirable immigrants'.<sup>17</sup> South Africa insisted that its nationals in Southern Rhodesia could enlist if they had resided in Rhodesia for more than two years.

But equally, South African Defence forces were themselves unprepared for the war WHEN it broke out. This was due to several factors. For a long period, geography and her borders protected South Africa from the possibility of war in its region. In the inter-war years

the protection of South Africa's coastline were the responsibility of the Royal Navy, with the British Naval bases stationed at Simon's Town. Germany had been driven out of South West Africa and in Pretoria's hands, Tanganyika had gone to Britain and Portugal had been a traditional and trusted ally. There was now no apparent danger of an attack overland.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Pretoria enjoyed protection from the north through these buffer states including Southern Rhodesia, Bechuanaland, and Portuguese East Africa, which also meant no immediate threat existed for South Africa; HENCE she did not have a ready army on standby. By September 1939, the regular army component of the Union Defence Force (UDF), the Permanent Force, which had numbered only 1791 men in 1934, could still muster only 5385 officers and men.<sup>19</sup> The sorry plight of South Africa's preparation was reflected with the Active Citizen Force (ACF) totalling only 13,490 and was neither trained nor equipped for war and coastal defences remained virtually as they had been since 1 December 1921; 'ill-equipped, with no training, and obsolete armaments.'<sup>20</sup> In his biographical account of Jan Smuts, W.K. Hancock notes that 'South Africa was militarily naked WHEN the war broke out in 1939.'<sup>21</sup> The inherent weaknesses in both armies thus made closer collaboration imperative.

With each country making its manoeuvre to strengthen its militaries, talks about collaboration commenced in 1942 in Pretoria. At the meeting between Godfrey Huggins, Southern Rhodesia's Prime Minister, and Lord Harlech, British High Commissioner to South Africa, it became apparent how South Africa and Southern Rhodesia were interconnected. Asked by Harlech which command Rhodesia wanted to join in prosecuting the war, Huggins confidently bellowed South Africa because 'all our supplies and communications come from there.'<sup>22</sup> WHEN two Commands, East Africa and Southern Africa, were eventually established, Southern Rhodesia joined with South Africa. The united command became crucial in light of Japan's entry into the war and the threat this posed to the British Empire's routes to India and the Middle East. This needed much more protection; HENCE, the Southern African command became essential. It is no wonder, with the support of the Rhodesian Parliament; the Southern Rhodesia Armored Car Regiment, which operated for two years under the East Africa Command, was drafted into the South African command on its return.<sup>23</sup> As part of the collaboration, South Africa facilitated 388 Southern Rhodesian soldiers destined for service in West Africa to pass through the Union and embark at Cape Town on 5 October 1939.<sup>24</sup> To this extent, the Union of South Africa played a pivotal role in the participation of Southern Rhodesian forces in the war. This close collaboration fed into the continued desire by Smuts to have Southern Rhodesia join the Union of South Africa as the fifth province.

Further talks about modalities on practical military cooperation between the Union and Rhodesia continued. Following an agreement between Colonel Day of Southern Rhodesia, Brigadier de Waal, and Colonel Campbell-Ross of South Africa, Rhodesian battalions were placed under the operational control of Union Defence Forces (UDF). The Union would bear the cost of wages, equipment, and finances. These arrangements excluded the Air force, of which Southern Rhodesia had a relatively well-maintained air force. Besides, it was hosting

the EATS; thus, the British imperial government had much interest in the force. The Southern Rhodesia Armored Car Regiment officially joined the 6th (South African) Armoured Division forces in November 1942 at Gwelo, a central town in Rhodesia.<sup>25</sup> The regiment formed what became known as the Motorised Brigade Group. 1400 Rhodesians served in the division. This division trained in North Africa, at the Khatatba camp in Cairo, from where they proceeded to their first engagement against the Germans in the Italian campaign in 1944.<sup>26</sup> Scholars have commented that the experience was a testing one, but the division showed grit and initiative, with comparatively fewer losses of men.<sup>27</sup> Equally, Africans also participated in the war, and scholarly examination on this subject is plenty.<sup>28</sup> While collaboration was sustained on the war front, ties also deepened economically, as the next section shows.

### **3. Economic Ties during the War, 1940–1945**

Both countries directed their economies toward the war effort. This was particularly noticeable in the expansion of secondary industries producing material for the war effort. Again, here Southern Rhodesia displayed how dependent it was on South Africa. Southern Rhodesia faced several challenges, such as a shortage of skilled labor, machine tools, foundry resources, and finance capital to establish a proper arms industry.<sup>29</sup> Because of these shortcomings, it became dependent on South Africa, making it a periphery to a sub-imperial power, itself dependent on a higher imperial power, Britain. South African capital entered Southern Rhodesia to shore up the production of arms there but faced resistance from local capital, which feared displacement.<sup>30</sup> Because of this conflict, arms production was stunted and immediately stopped once the war was over. South Africa, during these years as a consequence of its infrastructural base, would provide the bulk of military supplies for both countries. Despite these temporary conflicts, cooperation continued in civilian industries.

In its industrial strategy, Southern Rhodesia looked to South Africa. For instance, when the Industrial Development Advisory Committee was established in 1940 in Southern Rhodesia, its advocates referred to South Africa, among other countries, as an example of a country that had set up an industrial board to advise and assist in the development of secondary industries.<sup>31</sup> The thinking of many Southern Rhodesian industrialists in this regard was influenced by developments in neighbouring South Africa, where a Board of Trade and Industries existed to advance local industries. This Board was reconstituted in 1940 to become the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa. It was against this background that industrialists in Southern Rhodesia advocated the establishment of a similar industrial board. Southern Rhodesia set up the Rhodesia Iron and Steel Commission in 1942, again drawing parallels to South Africa's establishment of the Iron and Steel Corporation of South Africa (iscor) as a statutory company in 1928. The same was the case regarding the protection of secondary industries. 'Protective tariffs similar to those in the Union of South Africa seem necessary to give effect to the Government's intention to foster the development of secondary industries', argued Rhodesian Plough and Machinery Co. Ltd.<sup>32</sup> Many other industrialists held the same view and consistently made reference to South Africa as an example of a country offering protection, and they wanted something similar.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, a substantial inflow of foreign capital into the Southern Rhodesian economy in general and secondary industries, in particular, came from south of the Limpopo.

The expansion of economic activity in both countries was reflected in the trade volume between them. The war disrupted trade between countries far from each other and fostered trade between neighbours. Trade with South Africa, therefore, increased considerably during the war. Before the Second World War, Rhodesia's chief trading partner was Great Britain. War brought about a disruption to trade flows between the two countries. From 1939 to 1943, imports from the UK dropped in value from £4,000,000 to £2,615,000. Over the same period, imports from South Africa rose, doubling in value by 1941 to over £3 million, and was the only year in which imports from South Africa exceeded those from Great Britain. However, despite the increase in volume and value, Rhodesian exports to the Union remained less than half the value of imports. This resulted from the high tariff wall erected by the Union against manufactured goods (radios, textiles and cigarettes) from Rhodesia and her highly favourable position as a supplier to the Rhodesian market. As TC Lloyd, the Technical Director of the Industrial Development Commission of Rhodesia, noted, 'while the war created an artificial scarcity and promoted local production, the presence of a more advanced neighbor ready to compete with most of our new industries is causing embarrassment.'<sup>34</sup> The fears of competition from South Africa were already showing and later triggered the push to renegotiate trade agreements between the two countries.

South African competition notwithstanding, the secondary industry took off in Rhodesia. In 1938, 299 factories produced a total output of £4.5 million, with 79% of these factories producing a gross output of £15,000.<sup>35</sup> The metal manufacturing industry saw a tremendous increase in production and the number of factories. Most metal factories were subsidiary industries relying on iron and steel works that had been established by the Rhodesian Iron and Steel Corporation (RHISCO) and were serving the needs of the Empire Air Training Scheme. One such company was Rhodesia Wire Industries Ltd, which produced nails. One report fully appraised the company that, 'while no nails could be imported from abroad resulting in an acute shortage of this commodity, the Rhodesian Wire Industries Ltd supplied all vital industries with their nail requirements ... the company delivered to the various military establishments and Air Force camps in Southern and Northern Rhodesia large quantities of nails of all descriptions, thus assisting in the country's war effort.'<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, the leather industry grew and contributed to the war effort. The establishment of Bata Shoe Company in Gwelo in 1939 epitomised that growth. Bata Shoe Company was established by Tomas Bata in 1894 for the mechanical production of shoes in the town of Zlin in Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic).<sup>37</sup> Before its eventual establishment in Southern Rhodesia, the company was represented by agencies based in Bulawayo and Gwelo. In the meantime, most shoes were imported to Rhodesia from the Indian town of Batanagar. With the outbreak of war, as German forces occupied Czechoslovakia, many young Czechs fled Europe and found their way to Southern Rhodesia. With the agencies' advice, they were encouraged to start a shoe manufacturing company. Gwelo was chosen as the best location because of its proximity to the cattle rearing ranches and the existence of Cold Storage Commission abattoirs which provided Bata Shoe Company with cattle hides for tanning. Gwelo was also close to Salisbury from where the main artery for exports could be despatched. Many Czechs continued to flee Hitler's brutality in their homeland, and some who were skilled received invitations to take up opportunities at the newly established Bata factory in Gwelo. Bata was wholly foreign-owned by Tomas Bata, who had sought investment capital from Canadian businesses. The establishment of the Imperial

Air Training scheme improved the company's fortunes, which resulted in high demand for military boots. The company reported that 'military orders for boots were massive and the production in 1944 reached almost one million pairs.'<sup>38</sup> Ironically, Bata Shoe company also manufactured boots for the German soldiers back in Europe. Clearly, the company profited from both sides during the war.

David Johnson and Norman Mlambo have shown how the Second World War spurred industrial growth in both countries, particularly in engineering and munition production. According to Johnson, 'despite the shortage of skilled labour and raw materials, the RATG [Rhodesia Air Training Group] was able to fulfill its original contract of 190,000 11.51b practice bombs for the EATS. On the expiration of this contract in 1943, they were awarded a further contract to supply 40,000 10-pounder bombs by the end of February 1944.'<sup>39</sup> Even as Southern Rhodesia fulfilled its orders, the utilization capacity of the engineering industry was so huge that it could not be exhausted.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, by early 1942 Bulawayo and Salisbury boasted some 40 and 35 engineering firms, respectively, several of which emerged with the outbreak of the war.<sup>41</sup> To fully utilize the engineering capacity of the colony, Southern Rhodesia approached South Africa to allocate part of its munitions production, to which only a small order for 20,000 bomb exploder containers was granted. They further sought an allocation from the Eastern Group Supply Council headquartered in New Delhi, India, where the Rhodesians began receiving orders for various types of engineering supplies they produced in collaboration with the civilian engineering workshops.<sup>42</sup> What is clear is that the EATS expanded not only the engineering industry but other subsectors in Southern Rhodesia. The growth was both qualitative and quantitative.

In South Africa, the establishment of the IDC in 1940 boosted industrial development. Meanwhile, like other manufactured goods previously imported, South Africa had also relied on imports for some of its military equipment. However, war circumstances disrupted this trade flow, hastening the alternative to manufacture locally. This resulted in the formation of the Department of Director-General of War Supplies (DGWS) in September 1939.<sup>43</sup> Its inception arguably significantly changed South Africa's industrial war effort. Under the DGWS was also the Munitions Production Committee which had the responsibility, among others, to acquire and manufacture the munitions. This committee was the cog in the production for the industrial war effort. It produced a range of products which included:

nearly 6000 armoured cars, 11,000 3-inch mortars, some 5 million grenades, 12 million rounds of small arms ammunition, over 500,000 anti-tank land mines, 500,000 25-pounder shells, as well as 3.7-inch howitzers, steel helmets, aircraft hangars, bridges, floating barges, cement and firebricks, steel-wire rope, electric motors and generators, power pumps, heavy steel tubes and fittings, aircraft and vehicle tyres, rubber and canvas hose, boots and shoes, electric cable and electrodes, and chemicals.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, 13,000 allied ships were repaired at South African ports, and so were signaling and wireless equipment products.<sup>45</sup> While there was this industrial growth in both territories, that also became a cause of concern for Southern Rhodesia. As alluded to earlier, South Africa's comparatively established manufacturing sector outcompeted its neighbour in trade. Consequently, Southern Rhodesian industrialists began clamouring for protection and a



renegotiation of the trade agreement with South Africa. The following section turns to this subject.

#### **4. Post-War Economic Relations, 1945–1948**

The most significant development of the post-war years between the two countries was the renegotiation of their trade agreement which resulted in the signing of the new Customs Union Agreement in 1948. The origins of the 1948 Customs Union (Interim) Agreement reflected two crucial points: the spirit of cooperation and the fears of competition between the two countries. An examination of the history of trade relations between the Union and Southern Rhodesia indicates the close ties that long existed between the two countries in trade matters. It also reflected the extent to which the Union's export trade benefited from the preference Southern Rhodesia granted to Union products in the past.<sup>46</sup> Rhodesia began reviewing this trend in trade flow with South Africa at the end of the war. This came up as a recommendation of the Committee of Enquiry into the Protection of Secondary Industries set up in 1945 to look into ways of assisting secondary industries.<sup>47</sup> To be sure, Southern Rhodesia's industrialisation impacted trade relations with its powerful neighbour. Its industrialists, represented by the Associated Chambers of Industry of Rhodesia, had given evidence at the Commission of Inquiry into the Protection of Secondary Industries, pleading for a relook into the existing trade agreements, particularly with the Union of South Africa.

In their long-standing relations, between 1910 and 1935, the two neighbours maintained a Customs Union in which, for the most part, trade relations hinged on a common tariff and some free interchange of products.<sup>48</sup> In 1945, the Southern Rhodesian Department of Commerce and Industries sent out a questionnaire to industrialists regarding the desirability of revising the Trade Agreement with South Africa. A summary of industrialists' responses to the questionnaire compiled by the country's Industrial Development Commission showed that 'most of the replies emphasise[d] some disadvantage under which the industry suffers WHEN competing with the Union manufacturers ... the present tariff agreement with the Union is inequitable as far as Rhodesian manufactures are concerned.'<sup>49</sup> In 1946, Rhodesia delivered a notice of termination of the existing 1935 trade agreement to Pretoria, paving the way for negotiations of a new one. Consequently, talks with the Union commenced. It was against this background that the Customs Union Agreement came into being, taking even closer and a step further, the trade links between the two countries.

While the two countries already had plans to realign their trading relations, global developments also hastened their negotiations. The formulation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1947 at the United Nations Conference in Geneva was particularly instructive. GATT nudged its signatories, of which the Union and Southern Rhodesia were part, to remove existing preferential tariffs and even refrain from creating new ones in their trading relations. However, GATT;

specifically exempted customs unions and interim agreements from the general principle of non-discrimination, provided that such agreements did not involve a general increase in duties against other contracting parties and that interim agreements included "a definite plan and schedule for the attainment of such customs union within a reasonable length of time".<sup>50</sup>

Negotiations between the two Governments began in 1947, which led to the signing of the Customs Union Agreement in 1948, intending to eliminate all barriers to free trade within a decade, as informed by these considerations from GATT.

In March 1947, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa began exploring the industrial future of their respective countries. P.B. Fletcher, Rhodesian Minister of Agriculture, pushed for a joint investigation, to which S.F. Waterson, the Minister of Economic Development in South Africa, agreed. Of course, this followed the commitment by both countries to re-establish a complete customs union. Southern Rhodesia feared competition from South Africa, HENCE the need to agree with the latter that the 'Union would be prepared to cooperate and assist in the development of sound economic industries in Southern Rhodesia.'<sup>51</sup> Southern Rhodesia sent its Chairperson of the Industrial Development Commission, Geoffrey Musgrave, and D.H. Tobilcock, the Acting Secretary of Commerce and Industries, to Pretoria to discuss the modalities of the investigations. South Africa appointed D. de Waal Meyer, the Under Secretary for Commerce and Industries, and I.G. Fleming, Director of King Tanning Company (Pty), Ltd, as its representatives.<sup>52</sup> During the protracted negotiations, Rhodesians' skepticism over its powerful neighbor was laid bare.<sup>53</sup> Southern Rhodesia pointed out that its industrialists regarded the Union as a serious threat; thus, the re-establishment of a Customs Union and the resultant free entry of Union manufactures would hamper her [Southern Rhodesia] own industrial development.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the Rhodesian delegation highlighted that Rhodesia was developing along a similar path to the Union and sought to achieve a balanced economy which would, in effect, lessen her dependence on the Union. She was also still committed to imperial preference, wherein she wished to retain her trade relations with the United Kingdom and other Dominions. The prospects of securing these alternative markets reduced the attractiveness of the market offered by the Union.

Presented with these scenarios, the Union needed to adduce strong arguments why it was beneficial for Southern Rhodesia to consider a Customs Union. The Union government thus argued that 'with a comparatively small European population, the Rhodesian market was too small to allow either the external or internal economies of large scale production to be utilized. A Customs Union would offer a large market which in turn would reduce this disadvantage.'<sup>55</sup> Closely related to this was the possibility of expanded industrial production, which would encourage European immigration into Southern Rhodesia. Interestingly, where Southern Rhodesia had presented a couple of reasons it was skeptical of another Customs Union, South Africa gave nine reasons Southern Rhodesia needed to join the Customs Union.<sup>56</sup> Seen as desperation by South Africa to have a market north of Limpopo, Southern Rhodesia took advantage and gained a bargaining position. For example, Southern Rhodesia demanded that South Africa 'undertakes to give all possible assistance ... in accelerating industrialisation.'<sup>57</sup> It further demanded that classification be made on industries that will be normally distributed throughout both territories, industries that could advantageously be established in one territory only to supply the whole of Southern Africa market, and ascertain the degree of protection that would be required by Southern Rhodesia industry during the transitional period against the older established Union industries.<sup>58</sup> The Union stood its ground, though.

Against these Rhodesian demands, the Union proposed that the Customs Union should allow for the 'produce or manufacture of either territory to be admitted free of customs duties and free of restrictions as to quality and quantity, subject to modifications as may be agreed by both parties.'<sup>59</sup> Both parties, however, compromised and agreed that 'in order to promote conditions which will enable a full Customs Union to be attained, the Union government will cooperate with the government of Southern Rhodesia in a policy of fostering industrial expansion in Southern Rhodesia on sound economic lines.'<sup>60</sup> This clause became Article 4 of the eventual agreement. Further consultations ultimately led to the signing of the Customs Union (Interim) Agreement in 1948. The preamble of the Agreement reflected the provisions of the GATT. The two governments agreed to have a 'complete removal of the customs and other trade barriers between them, re-establishment of a complete Customs Union, and its subsequent extension to other African territories. Such a Customs Union is viewed "as a means of contributing to the establishment and maintenance of a high level of production, employment and real income throughout the world, and in particular in the territories party to this Agreement".'<sup>61</sup> Noteworthy is the spirit of cooperation exuded in the agreement's wording. For example, both governments agreed 'to cooperate in so ordering trade between their respective [countries] as to bring about conditions in which, ultimately, each country will develop to the fullest extent those industries most suited to it.'<sup>62</sup>

Because South Africa and Southern Rhodesia were signatories to the GATT, they were obliged to assure the other contracting parties that the Customs Union was not a disguised perpetuation of preferential arrangements between them. Adopting the GATT preamble into the Agreement was, therefore, a way to gain international acceptability and permission to operate the Customs Union. The Agreement was submitted to the GATT Assembly for approval and recognition in 1949.<sup>63</sup> The Agreement was an interim intended to last five years. Among the provisions of the Agreement were that the Union would grant products of Southern Rhodesian origin liberal access to the South African market while allowing Southern Rhodesia to retain protective duties in respect of 70 specified Union-made products.<sup>64</sup> Articles 9 to 12 provided for negotiations on free and restricted entry of goods not specified under Article 6 and 7 into each other's borders.<sup>65</sup> Noteworthy is the sustained South African influence in the Rhodesian economy. The eventual agreement showed how much Southern Rhodesia depended on South Africa despite its professed desire for Imperial Preference and skepticism of the Union. Indeed, South Africa acknowledged Southern Rhodesia's desire to protect and grow her industries.

The eventual signing of the Agreement set the two countries' economies and relations on a new path, as Ian Phimister and Victor Gwande showed.<sup>66</sup> Trade grew in value and numbers on the strength of the market and some protection afforded by the Customs Union Agreement. For example, in 1949, 508 industries had a gross output of £31,300,000, which increased to 648 with a gross output of £42,414,000 and a net output of £19,102,000 in 1950.<sup>67</sup> According to the Rhodesian Recorder, a trade and industrial journal in Rhodesia, in 1939, the combined output of mining and agriculture was three and a half times the gross output of factory industries. By 1949, the products of all secondary industries exceeded the combined gross output of all mining and agriculture by 38%.<sup>68</sup> Tables 1 and 2 show trade figures between the two countries before and after the Customs Union Agreement.

**Table 1.** Southern Rhodesia–South Africa imports and exports, 1938–1947 (£)

| Year | Southern Rhodesian exports to South Africa | South African exports to Southern Rhodesia |
|------|--|--|
| 1938 | 488,000                                    | 1,351,000                                  |
| 1945 | 1,157,000                                  | 3,721,000                                  |
| 1946 | 1,777,984                                  | 5,578,919                                  |
| 1947 | 1,900,842                                  | 7,951,611                                  |

The African Market, December 1948-January 1949, 43

**Table 2.** Southern Rhodesia exports (in order of importance) to the Union, 1951–1952

| Commodity                     | Export value in £ |           |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|
|                               | 1951              | 1952      |
| Clothing                      | 2,827,000         | 2,365,000 |
| Cigarettes                    | 652,000           | 723,000   |
| Meats preserved               | 413,000           | 461,000   |
| Sugar reserved                | 403,000           | 592,000   |
| Jute and hessian (excl. bags) | 365,000           | 172,000   |
| Footwear                      | 340,000           | 344,000   |
| Cotton piece goods            | 301,000           | 239,000   |
| Cotton yarns                  | 226,000           | 170,000   |
| Asbestos cement manufactures  | 189,000           | 264,000   |
| Ground nut oil                | 180,000           | 153,000   |
| Furniture Wooden              | 153,000           | 196,000   |
| Blankets and rugs             | 142,000           | 161,000   |

NAZ F292/1/16/3, secondary industry in southern Rhodesia, may 1953

We argue this expansion in Rhodesian exports to South Africa resulted from the 1948 Customs Agreement, an indication of the benefits of the cooperation between the two countries. While the Agreement had these economic dividends, politically, the victory of the National Party in 1948 and its introduction of Apartheid had other ramifications which we cannot cover; suffice to say it partly pushed Southern Rhodesia towards a federation with northern territories of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, further drifting from South Africa.

## 5. Conclusion

While much of the scholarship on Southern Rhodesia–South Africa relations devotes its attention to certain aspects and making passing reference to the nature of ties as ‘special’,

this paper specifies it as one of competition and cooperation. The outbreak of the Second World War crystallised the practical nature of the relationship, shaped by internal developments as well as those beyond their control. Few historians have devoted their attention to an exclusive study of this relationship and understanding of its nature. This study contributes to the literature by examining relations during and the immediate years after the Second World War where competition and cooperation reached its pinnacle.

As discussed in the paper, the foundation of Southern Rhodesia as a modern state was linked to its larger neighbour South Africa. This underpinned relations between the two in many aspects fostering both close links and areas of divergence. It is during the Second World War which this paper notes how the nature of relations was complex. Whilst Salisbury's and Pretoria's commitment to the war effort on behalf of the British Empire arrived through different routes, once their involvement was secured, the practicalities of the time encouraged greater cooperation. Nonetheless, cooperation exemplified a dynamic in which Southern Rhodesia was largely a junior partner with South Africa taking a leadership role in the Southern Africa Command.

In noting cooperation between the two on military grounds, simultaneously competition was evident, particularly in the economic sphere. South Africa's industrial base provided the immediate relief to Salisbury with the disruption to international trade during the war years. Though it proved vital in providing the requisite resources for the war effort, more broadly, Southern Rhodesia's efforts to replenish its economic needs were stifled by South Africa's more advanced secondary industry. Salisbury's ability to develop its own industrial base exposed the strength of the industrialists in the south as well as its reliance on them which it sought to change. Even though Southern Rhodesia may have occupied a junior position in many aspects of its relation with South Africa, Salisbury continued to advocate in the economic sphere, for a change and inviting greater competition between the two.

The article has also examined the post-war years which culminated in a Customs (Interim) Agreement in 1948 between the two countries. Long-standing issues over the nature of the economic relationship intensified post-war. The urgency to restructure and reconfigure both economies was a product of unresolved historical differences in this sphere but largely intensified by need to be self-reliant given economic conditions during the war. While negotiations over a new trade agreement exposed areas in which competition was intense, crucially both parties needed each others markets as source for both imports and exports. Nonetheless, out of the post-war years, areas of divergence intensified and political developments in South Africa in 1948 pushed Salisbury politically further away from Pretoria towards federation with its immediate neighbours. The war years and the period shortly after, as this article notes, crystallised the practical nature of relations between the two. The successful wartime cooperation between Salisbury and Pretoria operated simultaneously with intense economic cooperation. Whilst by 1948 it became clear both parties were economically vital to each other, the political direction South Africa took in the same year solidified the boundaries of cooperation and competition between the two countries.

## Footnotes

1 See for example Geldenhuys 2004, 102–144.

2 Blake 1978, 279.

3 For these aspects see the following works: Mlambo 2016, 18–40; Mlombo 2019, 92–115; Mlombo 2020; Nkomo 2022, 563–580; Phimister 1991, 430–442; Phimister 1988; Warhurst 1971, 93–108; Channock 1977.

4 Mlambo 2000N. Mlombo 2020, 123–154.

5 Killingray and Rathbone 1986; Crowder 1984; Johnson 2000; Shackleton 2000, 237–252; Jansen and Osterhammel 2017, 51–56; Darwin 1999, 73–82.

6 Mlambo 2000N, 7.

7 Mlambo 2000N, 7.

8 Mlombo 2020, 125.

9 Bishi 2018, 17–25; Johnson 1989, 33–61; and Mlambo 2000N, 222–229.

10 Johnson 1989, 54–55.

11 Van Der Waag 2015, 172., See also Shackleton 2000, 238.

12 The extent of Smuts' commitment and loyalty to the Empire and Allied Powers is best captured in Shackleton 2000, 238–252.

13 Mlombo 2020, 126.

14 Mlambo 2000, 85.

15 Mlombo 2020, 127.

16 Mlombo 2020, 129–130.

17 Bishi 2020, 59–77.

18 Van Der Waag 2015, 140.

19 Nasson 2012, 43.

20 Matin and Orpen 1979, 27.

21 Hancock 1968, 331.

22 Mlombo 2020, 135.

23 Mlombo 2020, 135.

24 NASA BTS 304, 1/156/5/1 Vol i, Southern Rhodesia: Arrangements for Rhodesian Troops to pass through the Union: Letter by Rhodesian Secretary of External Affairs to Secretary for Defense, Pretoria, October 1939.

- 25 Mlombo 2020, 138.
- 26 Mlombo 2020, 138.
- 27 MacDonald 1976, 485–486.
- 28 See variously, Johnson 2000, 68–96.
- 29 Mlambo 2000N, 8.
- 30 For more on South African companies that invested in Southern Rhodesia, see Gwande 2015.
- 31 See *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Debates*, 1 May, 1940, Cols. 171–191.
- 32 NAZ S482–458/39, Memorandum by Rhodesian Plough and Machinery Co. Ltd on Protection of Native Ploughs, 17 May 1940.
- 33 See NAZ S916/20, Protection of Rhodesian Industry: 1945.
- 34 NAZ S10/43/1, A survey of the Trade Agreement with the Union, 4 April 1945.
- 35 *Rhodesian Recorder*, December 1949.
- 36 *Industrial Rhodesia: A Record of Industrial Development in Southern Rhodesia*.
- 37 <http://www.cesky-dialog.net/clanek/361-czechs-in-zimbabwe/>. Accessed 2015/02/23.
- 38 <http://www.cesky-dialog.net/clanek/361-czechs-in-zimbabwe/>. Accessed 2015/02/23.
- 39 Johnson 1989, 54.
- 40 NAZ S482/8/42, Max Danzinger, Minister Finance and Supply to Prime Minister, 29/12/43.
- 41 NAZ S482/8142, Controller of Industrial Man Power to Minister without Portfolio, Department of International Affairs, 30/1/42.
- 42 Phillips n. d.
- 43 Mlambo 2000N, 85.
- 44 Mlambo 2000N, 95.
- 45 Mlambo 2000N, 95.
- 46 NASA DEA 102, A2/2/12/2, Vol. 15–17, Union-Southern Rhodesia Trade Agreement: Memorandum on the Union/Southern Rhodesian Customs Union (Interim) Agreement, no date.
- 47 *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Protection of Secondary Industry in Southern Rhodesia, 1946*.

48 NASA HEN Vol. No. 3896 Ref 710, Trade Relations between the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, 1950; See also Cole 1968, 28–47.

49 NASA HEN Vol. no. 3895 Ref S710 vol. 6, IDC's T.C. Lloyd comments on Questionnaire to Industries submitted to the Department of Commerce and Industries, 20 August 1945; and also NASA HEN Vol. no. 3895 Ref S710 vol. 6, A Survey of the Trade Agreement with the Union by T.C. Lloyd, 4 April 1945.

50 NASA DEA 102, A2/2/12/2, Vol. 15–17, Union-Southern Rhodesia Trade Agreement: Memorandum on the Union/Southern Rhodesian Customs Union (Interim) Agreement, no date.

51 NASA HEN 4059, 710/1/1 Vol. 1, Trade with Rhodesia (Union Rhodesian Industries Investigation), Letter by S.F. Waterson to I.G. Fleming, 13th March, 1947.

52 NASA HEN 4059, 710/1/1 Vol. 1, Memorandum on Customs Union Agreement between the Union and Southern Rhodesia, 6 May 1947.

53 Most of this discussion draws from Gwande 2022, 72–76.

54 NASA HEN Vol. no. 3895 Ref S710 vol. 6, Agreed Summary of the discussions between officials of the governments of Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa, 2–4 October 1946.

55 NASA HEN Vol. no. 3895 Ref S710 vol. 6, Agreed Summary of the discussions between officials of the governments of Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa, 2–4 October 1946.

56 NASA HEN Vol. no. 3895 Ref S710 vol. 6, Agreed Summary of the discussions between officials of the governments of Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa, 2–4 October 1946.

57 NASA HEN Vol. No. 3902 Ref 710/1, Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Policy held 21 January, 1947.

58 NASA HEN Vol. No. 3902 Ref 710/1, Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Policy held 21 January, 1947.

59 NASA HEN Vol. No. 3902 Ref 710/1, Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Policy held 21 January, 1947.

60 NASA HEN Vol. No. 3910 Ref 710/1/1, Minutes of the First meeting of the Union-Southern Rhodesian Committee to carry out the terms of the clause 3 of the Draft Customs Agreement with Southern Rhodesia held at Pretoria on 12 to 13 May 1947.

55 NASA HEN Vol. no. 3895 Ref S710 vol. 6, Agreed Summary of the discussions between officials of the governments of Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa, 2–4 October 1946.

56 NASA HEN Vol. no. 3895 Ref S710 vol. 6, Agreed Summary of the discussions between officials of the governments of Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa, 2–4 October 1946.

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59 NASA HEN Vol. No. 3902 Ref 710/1, Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Policy held 21 January, 1947.



60 NASA HEN Vol. No. 3910 Ref 710/1/1, Minutes of the First meeting of the Union-Southern Rhodesian Committee to carry out the terms of the clause 3 of the Draft Customs Agreement with Southern Rhodesia held at Pretoria on 12 to 13 May 1947.

61 NASA DEA 102, A2/2/12/2, Vol. 15–17, Union-Southern Rhodesia Trade Agreement: Memorandum on the Union/Southern Rhodesian Customs Union (Interim) Agreement, no date.

62 NASA DEA 102, A2/2/12/2, Vol. 15–17, Union-Southern Rhodesia Trade Agreement: Memorandum on the Union/Southern Rhodesian Customs Union (Interim) Agreement, no date.

63 Cole 1968, 35.

64 *Government Gazette, Notice No. 4059*, Customs Union (Interim) Agreement, Articles 6 and 7.

65 For more on the Agreement, see Phimister 1991.

66 Phimister, 1991; Gwande 2022, 81–84.

67 NAZ F292/1/16/3, Secondary Industry in Southern Rhodesia, May 1953; and Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, *Economic Report*, 1955.

68 NAZ F292/1/16/3, Secondary Industry in Southern Rhodesia, May 1953.

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