

# Disentangling Empire and Decolonisation

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State and Business Relations in Southern Africa,  
1923-1975

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AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

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University of York, Great Britain.

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## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation comprises of an introduction and four research articles that study state and business relations in Southern Africa. The core interest is to present and analyse the identification and management of political risks and opportunities by states and firms during colonisation and decolonisation.

The first paper, co-authored with Klas Rönnbäck, studies the acquisition and redefinition of property rights of land and minerals in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland by the British South Africa Company (BSAC). The results show that the BSAC was able to take advantage of political processes to acquire the property rights during colonial rule. It is shown that the British government privileged the interests of the BSAC over those of the public interest because it fell prey to regulatory capture. The results contrast those of previous research that claim that the British government did not appreciate the value of the mineral rights or that the BSAC saw no prospect for development.

The second paper follows on the findings from paper I and focusses on the decolonisation period. It examines the ostensibly voluntary transfer of the mineral rights by the BSAC to the incoming African government in Northern Rhodesia. The central paradox that the paper seeks to explain is why the BSAC agreed to a settlement that represented about a tenth of the value they placed on the mineral rights. The results show that the BSAC had a clear understanding that its mineral rights were likely to be obsolete after independence.

The third paper presents the historical case of a British firm moving its corporate headquarters from the United Kingdom to Southern Rhodesia. It analyses the micropolitical processes of decision making and shows how formal and informal actors assessed and negotiated the switch during the colonial era. It particularly shows how a loose network of informal external actors, so called the “American Group”, had a preponderant effect on the decision-making process because of the allure of their capital. The results show that a focus on outcomes at the expense of the processes is likely to conceal the reasons a firm relocates.

The final paper focuses on the responses of a third country - Zambia - to economic sanctions. It shows the country's responses to economic sanctions imposed on the white minority regime of Southern Rhodesia for declaring independence without Britain's authorization. Zambia's interests and responses are geopolitically examined through transport linkages that reveal the tensions and competition of using or co-owning strategic assets. Unlike previous research, this paper shows that Zambia did not favour economic sanctions on Southern Rhodesia and preferred the use of military tools from the sender country because it feared and understood the economic damage that it would suffer in the long run.

**Keywords:** British Empire, Corporate Political Activity, Corporate Headquarters, Economic Sanctions, Geopolitics, Legitimacy, Regulation, Political Risk, Malawi, Zambia, & Zimbabwe.

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