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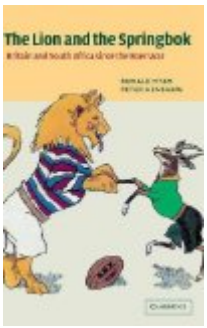
Ronald Hyam, Peter Henshaw. *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. xv + 379 pp. $65.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-82453-8.



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This is a densely packed volume that brings together, for the first time and in a revised and updated form, a series of journal articles and book chapters written by Ronald Hyam and Peter Henshaw spanning the period from the 1970s to the present. The authors engage trenchantly with the historiography to create a work which sometimes synthesizes, and at other times departs from, conventional wisdom on the relationship between Britain and South Africa. I have a couple of slight qualifications regarding the title: first, although the title refers to the South African War as the book's point of departure, in fact it begins in 1895 and traces the descent into war. Furthermore, the years between 1899 and 1905 are not covered at all. Second, although the title refers to Britain and *South* Africa, in fact the scope of the book is broader than this, taking in, when appropriate, the High Commission Territories (Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland), and the countries of the Central African Federation (Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi).

The first chapter of the book introduces what Hyam and Henshaw term "the uneasy special relationship" between Britain and South Africa and sets out their position relative to some of the key works in the historiography of Britain's relationship with South Africa (p. 1). In particular, they critique economic determinism and take exception to the view that "British policy towards South Africa was mainly directed to the formation and preservation of a modern industrial infrastructure, in order to maintain vital British economic interests" (p. 4). Instead, Hyam and Henshaw seek to offer an alternative explanation of British policy which both provides "a place for the economic dimension, whilst widening the perspective to restore political, strategic, geopolitical, diplomatic, ethical and socio-cultural considerations" (p. 4). The authors also use this introductory chapter to set out their approach and stance on some important methodological questions, stating a preference for empirical research over theoretical work: "It is vital to study what policy-makers themselves thought they were trying to achieve. Anything else is but idle speculation, however clever or intellectually elegant in itself. No doubt it is tiresome (and sometimes boring) month after month, year after year, to make the trek to ar-

chives remote from home base or inconveniently situated" (p. 7).

One of the key features of Hyam and Henshaw's argument is a critique of what they term the "Marks-ist school" of South African history (comprised of Shula Marks and her collaborators) (p. 8). Hyam and Henshaw play down the significance of gold in South African history, to the extent that the South African War is viewed as "a regional geopolitical conflict with international ramifications" (p. 9), and elaborate their arguments about the importance, or lack thereof, of gold in chapter 6. The contention that the British Government's greatest priorities were geopolitical and strategic more than economic is one that Hyam and Henshaw return to again and again throughout the volume. The second chapter focuses on the origins of the South African War, arguing that it "cannot be explained except in terms of the *interaction* between the colonial periphery and the imperial centre" and that, furthermore "a man such as Milner operating at the point of 'proconsular interlock' could have disproportionate significance" (p. 38). The mining magnates should be viewed, they state, as "a cosmopolitan and heterogeneous collection" whose political stance was "wholly unco-ordinated" (p. 9). Chapter 3 deals with what is termed "the myth of magnanimity," relating to the granting of self-government to the Transvaal. Building on work by Donald Denoon and Rodney Davenport, the authors argue that both the Liberal Government's magnanimity was a tactical pretence, as was the conciliation policy of Smuts and Botha. Nonetheless, write Hyam and Henshaw, "out of this unpropitious situation of double deception a workable relationship was in fact hammered out" (p. 57). Smuts is portrayed as having contributed significantly to the mythical account of this episode, overemphasising his role in proceedings in later recollections, and the authors take several pages to question his version of events and reveal inconsistencies in his statements (pp. 58-64). Similarly, the idea of British magnanimity is debunked.

Chapters 4 and 5 turn to look at African interests and the South Africa Act (1910) and to the notion of a "Greater South Africa" incorporating the High Commission Territories (HCTs) of Basutoland (Lesotho), Bechuanaland (Botswana), and Swaziland. In chapter 4, Hyam and Henshaw argue that although the British did not do enough to safeguard African interests in the South Africa Act, in fact the period between 1905 and 1910 was characterised by British Government attempts to find a way to protect Africans and that "what they actually did achieve should not be underestimated" (p. 78). In particular, they take exception to Alan Booth's contention that local African and missionary pressures were responsible for the British Government's withholding of the HCTs from the Union, arguing that in fact Whitehall was the driving force behind the decision (p. 78). Chapter 5 places the decision to withhold the High Commission Territories in its broader context, carrying the story through from Union to the 1961 Republican referendum in South Africa, the outcome of which finally closed the door to the possibility of the transfer of the HCTs.

Chapter 6 of the book returns to the economic aspects of the relationship between Britain and South Africa, focusing on the seeming contradiction contained in South Africa's membership of the sterling area for more than thirty years. Why, Hyam and Henshaw ask, did subsequent Afrikaner Nationalist Governments retain this connection with Britain, when all other aspects of the British connection were under sustained attack? Their conclusion is that Nationalist pressure for South Africa to pull out of Britain's economic orbit was "held in check by an inescapable reliance on Britain as a customer and financier," which was in turn actively fostered by the British, thus constituting an economic bargain between the two (p. 124). Furthermore, the authors argue persuasively that the two countries were sufficiently depen-

dent on each other for this economic bargain to survive intense political disputes surrounding the racial policies of the apartheid era (pp. 139-143). The following chapter moves on to examine some of these disputes, particularly within the context of the United Nations, from 1946 to 1961. The reasons for Britain's alignment with South Africa at the United Nations are unpacked, and shown to be dominated not by strategic or economic concerns, but by concerns of prestige and geopolitics. British policy was, Hyam and Henshaw contend, "conditioned above all by the desire to defend British authority and influence in the Empire-Commonwealth by resisting UN interference wherever that interference was directed ... at South Africa or British dependencies" (pp. 166-167). Chapter 8 abandons the broad chronological sweep of the preceding three chapters to focus tightly on the issues surrounding the marriage of Ruth Williams to Seretse Khama in 1948. Four years of British Government discussions on the vexed question of whether or not to recognise Seretse Khama as the Chief of the Bangwato (of Bechuanaland) following his marriage to a white woman are discussed in detail, revealing British concerns about how the South Africans would react.

Chapter 9 discusses the historical roots of, and the immediate background to, the formation of the Central African Federation (bringing together Northern Rhodesia/Zambia, Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and Nyasaland/Malawi), and again returns to the point that economic motivations were not at the forefront of British policymaking. Neither, Hyam and Henshaw argue, were defence considerations at the center of British thinking. Rather, "the explanation for setting up the Central African Federation is as nearly monocausal as any historical explanation ever can be.... The Central African Federation was a geopolitical construct designed to place the first line of defence against South African expansion on the Limpopo not the Zambesi, and to prevent an anticipated settlers' revolt linking itself up with the Union" (pp. 224-225). They conclude by stating that there was, in the Rhodesias, "no danger so immediate or so definite as to justify imposing federation on six million Africans in Central Africa against their own expressed wishes." Thus, this episode is indicative of the strength of the fears faced by Whitehall diplomats in this period--fear of apartheid, fear of African nationalisms and fear of settler revolt in the region (p. 229).

Chapter 10 relates to the transfer of the Simon's Town naval base from the British to South Africa in 1955, departing from existing explanations which hinge on a range of factors including a British desire to make a financial saving, changing strategic considerations in a nuclear era making the base unnecessary, or British appeasement of South Africa. Hyam and Henshaw take a revisionist stance, and see the transfer as "the best and perhaps the last chance to strike a bargain ensuring both access to the base and effective naval collaboration" (p. 230). Chapter 11, entitled "Parting of the Ways," brings strands from the preceding four chapters into a wide-ranging analysis of the reasons for South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth in 1961, which resulted in the British policy of attempting to treat South Africa as "half ally and half untouchable at the same time" for geopolitical, strategic, economic and moral reasons--the latter being described by Sir John Maud in a telegram to the Commonwealth Relations Office as the necessity of "keeping faith" with the black majority who would in the future form South Africa's government (p. 272).

In their preface and introduction, Hyam and Henshaw recognize many of the limitations of their approach to writing ***The Lion and the Springbok***. They point, for instance, to their bias towards issues of high policy and belief in "the primacy of geopolitics" (p. 4), and to their predominant dependence on material in British archives (p. xi). Recognizing the limitations of focusing on government records they have also sought

to reflect public attitudes through (the prism of) the media, particularly in chapters 12 and 13 (p. 8), which take a very different approach to the rest of the book. These two chapters are probably the most accessible to a non-specialist audience, providing an overview of British-South African relations in the second part of the twentieth century and linking the high politics of the period to the views of the general population, and addressing the sphere of popular culture in both countries. In identifying the limitations of this volume, Hyam and Henshaw also state that they "present a series of studies rather than a connected narrative, but [the] chapters are not chosen at random. Their selection is dictated by the weight of evidence surviving in the archival record: in other words, they reflect the issues which excited most attention at the time" (pp. xi-xii). Despite this rationalization, however, the structure of the book sometimes feels slightly uneven, with a mixed chronological and thematic chapter structure that often allows for the same period to be covered in several chapters. Although in these cases chapters cover different aspects of a period, this structure can be somewhat frustrating. Another result of the way the book has been compiled is a certain degree of unevenness in the depth of coverage. At times a whole chapter is devoted to a two or three year period, whereas at other times fifty years are covered in a single chapter, and while Hyam and Henshaw have also addressed this issue of coverage in their preface, it is hard to imagine that less happened in terms of the British-South African relationship in the years 1948-1994 than in the years 1905-1908!

Although they refer to the "fissiparous tendencies of Afrikanerdom" (p. 23) the authors have underestimated the degree to which Afrikaners were divided, both within and outside of the National Party. By focusing on British archives to the exclusion of South African ones, they fall into the trap of believing too strongly in the notion of the Afrikaner "monolith." Their having neglected South African archival sources seems rather to fly in the face of their stated belief in empiricism versus theory. Although Hyam and Henshaw are correct to identify some of the restrictions placed on researchers using South African archives during the 1980s and early 1990s (p. xi), there has always been a rationale for visiting South African archives, and although official papers may have been subject to closed periods it is often possible to obtain a great deal of evidence about decisions relating to official policy from the private papers of highly placed individuals. The most glaring gap in the book's bibliography is that the authors did not visit the Archive for Contemporary Affairs housed at the Institute for Contemporary History at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. This archive holds the personal papers of a large number of significant Afrikaner nationalist politicians, and which would undoubtedly have enriched Hyam and Henshaw's research. Furthermore, although the book reveals an impressive level of detail, some minor factual errors relating to Afrikaner nationalist political groupings in the 1940s have crept in. For instance, on page 32, Oswald Pirow is described as having been the "Fuhrer" of the paramilitary radical right wing organization, the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB), when in fact he was the leader of the fascist inspired *Nuwe Orde* (New Order), numbering a small group of National Party MPs, who broke with D. F. Malan in 1941. In fact, Dr. J. F. J. van Rensburg was Kommandant-General of the OB from 1941, having succeeded J. C. Laas.

Despite these criticisms, this is an extremely stimulating book which would be a valuable addition to the bookshelves of any scholar of South Africa in the twentieth century, as well as many historians of imperialism. The book is particularly useful to those of us who teach South Africa as *part* of the British Empire, rather than in isolation. Although it is aimed at a specialist audience it could have been made more accessible to a more general audience by the inclusion of a detailed chronology, list of abbreviations relating to parties and political organizations (of which

South Africa has many), and glossary of foreign words and expressions. The diagram showing the evolution of Afrikaner political parties on page 20 would be indispensable to a non-specialist reader, as, I am sure, it would be to many specialists. Despite being packed with detail, ***The Lion and the Springbok*** is written in an engaging style and is comprehensively indexed and footnoted, working on several levels. It serves as a guidebook to the complex, changing and historically significant relations between Britain and South Africa throughout the twentieth century, as a historiographical commentary, and as a useful introduction to the vast body of historical work on South Africa.