

Research Report

Historical Security Council The situation in Southern Rhodesia

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Forum	Historical Security Council
Issue:	The situation in Southern Rhodesia
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Preface

This research report has been written with the intent of giving a broader context of the build up of the crisis in Southern Rhodesia. Taking a snapshot of the situation in 1978 alone does not give enough context to the evolution of the issues seen there. Therefore it is very strongly recommended that delegates do their own research into the specific events of 1977 and 1978, many of which can be found in the list of SC resolutions located in this research report. Knowledge of these specific events will be vital for debate on this issue. This research report is meant to put those events into a clearer context.

Introduction

Southern Rhodesia is a country located in southwest Africa and has been a self-governed colony of the United Kingdom since 1923. In 1965 it declared unilateral independence from the United Kingdom as the new state of Rhodesia, a move that has not been recognised by The United Kingdom, The commonwealth Nations, nor the United Nations (UN). As such, the UN implemented its first ever economic sanctions against Southern Rhodesia in response to what it considered to be an illegal action.

Rhodesia has been struggling as an unrecognised state with a government still ruled by the minority white population of the country, as it has been since the start of its self-governance. Other African states have progressed faster from colony status to independent nation due to the British policy of “no independence before majority rule” which requires that a nation’s government be controlled by the majority group of the country. In South Rhodesia’s case this would require the white, former settler, minority to relinquish their 4-decade control over the state’s government.

Since 1965 when this unrecognised declaration of independence was made, the minority government has been struggling to maintain control of the country through the current civil war with Black Nationalist groups whose aim it is to gain control over the country.

Definition of Key Terms

Political violence

Political violence is violence outside of state control that is politically motivated, which includes such things as revolutions, civil war, riots and strikes, but also more peaceful protest movements.

Colony

A country that is under full or partial political control from another country and usually occupies settlers from that country.

General Overview

From 1960 onwards, political violence was increasing in Southern Rhodesia caused by the rising movement of the African Nationalists and the hardening of the right wing stance of the white minority government lead by Ian Smith, the leader of the white government. He was unable to negotiate independence and as such implemented the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. The consequences of the UDI were immense and rapid. The international community implemented far ranging sanctions and no states recognised the legitimacy of Rhodesia's independence. Rhodesia had also now sufficiently harmed relations with the United Kingdom (UK) that they were not going to receive any military aid in order for the government to maintain control despite the rising anti-government sentiment from the African Nationalist groups who viewed the UDI as a direct statement against a willingness in Rhodesia to implement the changes they desired. The leaders of these groups such as Joshua Nkomo (the leader of ZAPU) were pushing for Rhodesia's government to better represent the black majority of the country.

Initial military actions by the two African nationalist groups proved largely unsuccessful due to their lack of training and equipment and the high quality of the Rhodesian army in comparison. In the early 1970s, prominent members of the two militant rebel groups were returning from time overseas where they had received political and military training by the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China. At this point the war changed as the militant groups adopted more successful guerrilla tactics.

Throughout this period, the white government lead by Ian Smith continued to discuss possible routes to independence with the UK although solutions remained elusive as Ian Smith's goal of achieving recognised independence without ceding any real power to blacks remained a sticking point of the UK.

From 1976, the Rhodesian military started to attack areas in Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana where the militant rebels often based their training camps. These attacks caused significant damage to infrastructure and created tension between Rhodesia and its neighbours.

Towards the present time, the policy of the Rhodesian government has shifted from trying to maintain its borders to trying to maintain certain economically important areas, as the government loses more control of the country.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU)

Zimbabwe African People's Union is a military and political organisation formed on 17th of December 1961 as an African nationalist group. The organisation was banned by the Rhodesian white government in 1962 and has since then been fighting a guerrilla war against the ZAPU. The armed wing of the ZAPU, named The Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and the group of a whole is aligned with the Soviet Union.

Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)

Zimbabwe African National Union is a military and political organisation also belligerent in the current war. It originally was part of the ZAPU but split from them on 8th August 1963. Although having very similar aims to the ZAPU, ethnic and ideological differences cause them to work separately yet in partnership. They are also aligned with The People's Republic of China, and not the Soviet Union. Zimbabwe African Liberation Army (ZANLA) is the military wing of the ZANU.

Rhodesian Government

The Rhodesian government lead by Ian Smith and deemed an illegal regime by the international community is the white lead organisation currently engaged in hostilities against the African Nationalists.

Mozambique Government

In 1975 Mozambique became independent from Portuguese rule and the new government was sympathetic to the situation of the rebels. The Rhodesian Nationalist groups created secured bases across the border as they had done in Zambia and Botswana leading to the Rhodesian army to launch cross boarder raids similar to in the other two neighbouring countries.

Zambian Government

Zambian sentiment was very much against the Rhodesian regime as Rhodesian military launched numerous raids across the border against nationalists groups whose training camps were located there.

South African Government

The South African government, although sympathetic to the situation of the white government, has never officially recognised the UDI. They have however supplied weapons and fuel to the Rhodesian government. As the war has progressed, South African position has become less favourable and their support has dwindled.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
03/02/1960	British Prime Minister announced “Wind of Change” policy paving the way for African colonies with a black majority rule to become independent countries.
11/11/1965	Britain’s unwillingness to compromise on this issue of no independence before Majority rule, causes Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration in Independence
1970	Rhodesia creates a new Constitution declaring itself a republic but remains unrecognised and international community continues to refer to the country by its colonial name of Southern Rhodesia.
1974	Under pressure from the guerrilla groups Ian Smith calls for peace talks that eventually fail
1976	Mozambique closes its border with Rhodesia but military raids continue to be conducted across the border by the Rhodesian military.

1976	Guerrilla leaders Joshua Nkomo (ZAPU), exiled in Zambia, and Roger Mugabe (ZANU), in Mozambique, formed a pact to combine their armies.
1976	Under pressure from South Africa and the USA, Ian Smith agreed to a shift towards black majority rule within 2 years.
1977	Rhodesian military forces continue to raid in Angola, Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique causing international concern over these territorial violations.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Below is a list of the most relevant of resolutions passed by the Security Council in the previous 8 years however this issue has been heavily discussed and resolutions have been made since the early 1960s, further resolutions are of course available online if wanted.

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 277, March 18 1970, **(S/RES/277)**
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 288, November 17 1970, **(S/RES/288)**
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 314, February 28 1972, **(S/RES/314)**
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 318, July 28 1972, **(S/RES/318)**
- Provocation by Southern Rhodesia, February 2 1973, **(S/RES/326)**
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 328, March 10 1973, **(S/RES/328)**
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 333, May 22 1973, **(S/RES/333)**
- Complaint by Mozambique, March 17 1976, **(S/RES/386)**
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 388, April 6 1976, **(S/RES/388)**
- Items relating to Southern Africa, January 14 1977, **(S/RES/403)** and **(S/RES/406)**
- Complaint by Mozambique, June 30 1977, **(S/RES/411)**
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 415, September 29 1977, **(S/RES/415)**
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 423, March 14 1978, **(S/RES/423)**



Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The United Nation's previous attempts to resolve this issue have generally been limited to condemnation of the situation and the actions of the Rhodesian government. It has been continuously regarded as an illegitimate and illegal regime and has been called on to moderate its actions, but no concrete solution or actions have been attempted to resolve the crisis. The UN has encouraged the United Kingdom to be more involved with finding a solution and has in some ways left the action taking to them. The UN has heard numerous complaints from Rhodesia's neighbours and has backed their claims and agreed with them that the actions of Rhodesia are illegal but still little has been done in practice. The UN has in general just displayed its dissatisfaction with the situation rather than provide steps towards resolving it.

Possible Solutions

At the present time it has become apparent that the current white minority government has not taken acceptable steps towards creating a situation in Rhodesia that is acceptable for its neighbours, its inhabitants and the international community. Any solution that would be acceptable for these stakeholders would need to involve a permanent end to the continuous and illegal cross border actions of the Rhodesian military. There would also need to be reform in the way that the government is elected and allow for significantly better involvement of the black majority of Rhodesia. The United Kingdom would need to approve any new government and give permission for the transition to a legally recognised independent state.

Neither Britain nor the international community will give Rhodesia their blessing, until the government has a fair proportion of elected officials representing the ethnic situation in Rhodesia. This would need to be achieved through removing the barriers for the black community to gain the right to vote i.e. land ownership as a condition to vote. Even if peace can return to Rhodesia, and the sovereign borders of its neighbours are once again respected, without a representative government, the state will never be given legitimacy in the eyes of the world.

The role of the Black Nationalist groups in a post-conflict Rhodesia is also an important issue, since despite their obviously lack of legal legitimacy both in the regards to Rhodesian and international law, their role in a post-conflict society would need to be guaranteed if the goal is to create a stable and prosperous country. They have been for the

longest time the only representatives of the Black majority population, so moves to prosecute them would naturally cause divisions and prevent a stable future. However, allowing them to bear no responsibility for their actions, some of which have been truly criminal, would mean that the significant White Settler minority would resent them and also harm the future prospects of Rhodesia. It is worth noting, that the majority of the educated professionals in Rhodesia are members of the White minority, thus if they were marginalised and ended up leaving Rhodesia, this could severely harm growth and future prosperity of the country.

As such the goal needs to be to find a solution that is diplomatically acceptable, while also fair to the diverse ethnic groups in Rhodesia allowing for equal opportunities without any group being persecuted nor marginalised.

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