

brass of the Zimbabwean National Army as well, most of whom would have been ex-ZANLA, and some ex-ZIPRA? Did any former RAR serve in Mozambique in the 1980s, or in the DRC in the 2000s?

Response to Timothy L. Scarnecchia's Review of *Black Soldiers in the Rhodesian Army: Colonialism, Professionalism and Race*.

doi:10.1017/S1537592724002457

— MT Howard 

I would like to thank Timothy Scarnecchia for his generous review—it means a lot to read such kind remarks from someone whose work I admire. On to the questions: my interviewees relayed that, after the war, a spirit of “forgive and forget” prevailed. It would likely be a stretch to say that there was full-scale reconciliation, but people in the rural areas—where most of the Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR) hailed from—were tired of the long conflict.

Postwar stigma was not so much of an issue for RAR veterans. Firstly, even though it had been a particularly combat-effective unit, its use of violence was seen as military and “professional.” This was in stark contrast to other units, like the Security Force Auxiliaries, which had used violence wantonly and for politicised purposes. Mugabe himself drew a clear, publicly announced distinction between “acceptable” ex-Rhodesian units, which were retained and then integrated into the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), and others such as the auxiliaries, which he summarily disbanded.

Secondly, within the nascent ZNA, my interviewees said, a form of militarised reconciliation between, on the one hand, so-called “formers”—(ex-Rhodesian Army personnel in the ZNA) – and, on the other, ex-members of the military wings of the liberation movements, forged through recollections of shared military experience and suffering, was particularly strong. Perhaps most importantly of all, the “formers” were seen by Mugabe, and ministers including current President Emmerson Mnangagwa, as effective, professional, and nonpartisan. They were keen to retain them as a counterbalance to the Soviet-equipped conventional army garrisoned across the Zambezi, loyal to Joshua Nkomo, which Mugabe feared could be used to seize power. There is no evidence that Nkomo sought this option. But it seems that Mugabe viewed the threat as real, and his faith in the “formers” was buttressed by their key role in suppressing antigovernment mutinies and infighting at Entumbane in 1980 and 1981.

While it was likely for these instrumental reasons, Mugabe's government treated its erstwhile enemies—the “formers”—rather well, especially compared to other post-decolonial war countries, e.g. Algeria and Guinea-Bissau, where thousands of ex-colonial troops were massacred and tortured. Very few “formers” left Zimbabwe—certainly very few ex-RAR. This was because they were welcome to continue their careers in the

ZNA, which they were keen to do as professional soldiers. This also created opportunities for promotion, although there was a “glass ceiling” rank of Colonel.

My interviewees recalled that the “professional” ZNA units—of which they were part—were conspicuously kept separate from 5 Brigade and other units involved in the Gukurahundi massacres in Matabeleland and Midlands from 1983 to 1987. They had a good relationship with BMATT and thought it an effective and beneficial operation. Many “formers” did serve in Mozambique, partly because they served in the ZNA's best units, which were deployed there. All my interviewees had retired by the First Congo War of the late 1990s.

Owing to the word limit I cannot add further detail here but—at the risk of self-promotion—I subsequently wrote a journal article on this topic that discusses the very interesting history of the “formers” in the ZNA (M.T. Howard, “Allies of Expedience: The Retention of Black Rhodesian Soldiers in the Zimbabwe National Army”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 48(1), 2022).

Race and Diplomacy in Zimbabwe: The Cold War and Decolonization, 1960–1984.

By Timothy Lewis Scarnecchia.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 368p. £22.99 paper.
doi:10.1017/S1537592724002445

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Decolonisation in Africa and the Cold War were inextricably linked. Over the last two decades, scholars have detailed the significant roles of key international actors in southern Africa during this period (e.g. Piero Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976–1991*, 2013). Zimbabwe's history has been long overdue for similar treatment, and Timothy Lewis Scarnecchia's *Race and Diplomacy in Zimbabwe: The Cold War and Decolonization* excels in this regard. Scarnecchia has undertaken yeoman's work in the archive, writing a refreshingly heterodox assessment of not only how geopolitics played a substantial role in the long and difficult road to independence, but why Western and other powers adopted their policies and positions.

The Rhodesian Front (RF) settler-colonial government, in power from 1962 to 1979, made its Unilateral Declaration of Independence from London in 1965. This, and the counter-insurgency (COIN) war against Zimbabwean nationalists, was couched by the RF in explicitly Cold War terms. Its propaganda cast the two principal liberation movements, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), as communist-inspired and supported (Donal Lowry, “The Impact of Anti-communism on White Rhodesian Political Culture, ca. 1920s–1980,” *Cold War History*, 7[2]: 175–95, 2007).

In reality, both ZANU and ZAPU were fundamentally nationalist parties, albeit with socialist leanings. Although backed by the Eastern Bloc, neither was beholden to Moscow or Beijing. Founded in 1961, ZAPU—led by Joshua Nkomo—was supported with weapons, training, and funds by the Soviet Union. ZANU split from ZAPU in 1963; its founders, dissatisfied with Nkomo, favoured a more militant, rapid strategy. Robert Mugabe led ZANU from 1977; its main military patron was China.

The Front-Line States (FLS)—southern African nations supporting the end of apartheid in South Africa and minority rule in Rhodesia foremost among which were Zambia and Tanzania—supported both ZAPU and ZANU. They acted as safe havens, diplomatic allies, and conduits for weapons and material donations from the USSR, China, and Eastern Europe.

Scarnecchia uses largely, but not solely, Western archives to show how, in addition to the widely recognised Eastern Bloc influence, other powers were also highly influential, including the FLS, Western powers, and apartheid South Africa; not least upon the progress of the bitter war between the Rhodesians and the liberation movements' military wings (1964–1979). *Race and Diplomacy in Zimbabwe* add much-needed clarity and nuance to longstanding debates over how, when, and why these international players intervened. It extends analysis “beyond the usual diplomatic history that ends or begins the story in 1980,” rightly foregrounded how Cold War factors retained their importance after independence (p. 3).

In reaffirming the “when” and “how” of Western (and other) influence being brought to bear, Scarnecchia adds an argument of “why” this materialised as it did, utilising a “Cold War race states” analytical lens to contend that “projections of racialized notions of a ‘white state’ or ‘black state’” were used instrumentally to determine diplomatic and strategic approaches towards Rhodesia and then Zimbabwe (p. 5). He argues that, within the institutional “group think” of foreign diplomats and politicians, “institutional racism and prejudice” played a substantial role in determining policy and negotiation positions (p. 7).

It is an interesting and compelling argument. Scarnecchia cites a multitude of statements by politicians and officials in which racist stereotypes or reductive “tribalism” conceptions were used to formulate policy. This was not ubiquitous—thoughtful and considered missives not built upon “race states” thinking are also cited, largely from career or professional diplomats. But it is clear that many senior politicians were beholden to “race states” prejudice.

For scholars of Zimbabwe's war, chapters 3–6 are especially interesting, presenting a refreshed international history of the key 1975–1978 period, which determined the contours of the liberation movements' final forms. Sources include the papers of American activist George Houser, a confidant of key players including liberation

movement leaders and FLS Presidents—who, on account of their audience, were unusually unguarded.

These include candid 1975 parleys with a grimly prescient Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda, and dyed-in-the-wool international relations realist Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. Scarnecchia adds substantially to existing understandings of how this pair, along with Mozambique's Samora Machel after 1975, sought to place their favourites at the head of Zimbabwe's liberation movement—and how they were content to use coercion and detention to act as the final arbiter in internecine disputes.

Race and Diplomacy also details Henry Kissinger's manoeuvring, affirming how he saw Rhodesia as a pawn to be used to forestall further Cuban or Soviet intervention in southern Africa, following the victory of their MPLA ally in Angola. Ever mimicking Metternich, while his scheme failed to achieve its objectives, for Kissinger the end was in fact the means. Washington defanged the (possibly exaggerated) Soviet threat by signalling its support for Zimbabwean nationalists taking power. Indeed, so long as a future Zimbabwean government was amenable to Western interests, Kissinger was nonplussed as to who was Zimbabwe's first leader. There are many juicy morsels that students of international relations, international history, and the Cold War will savour, not least Kissinger's quip to Nyerere that “the question of ideology is not an obstacle for state relations” (p. 67).

After a long diminuendo, Kissinger's flawed initiative finally collapsed at Geneva in December 1976. Aside from the proprietor of the Royal Hotel, much-enamoured with his ZANU patrons after they amassed a bar tab of over \$200,000 in 2024 dollars, Mugabe was the key beneficiary. Scarnecchia argues, convincingly, that Geneva served to legitimise his leadership claim, particularly among the West, in turn enhancing Mugabe's prestige with Machel and enabling him to consolidate control over guerrillas in Mozambique.

Furthermore, no matter how hard the governments of Zambia, Nigeria, and the UK tried to reach a mediated settlement in 1978, Mugabe refused to play second fiddle to Nkomo, scuppering its prospects. In turn, Nyerere's backing for Mugabe intensified, partly premised upon ZANLA's considerable guerrilla presence with Rhodesia. Aided by international recognition, Mugabe accrued sufficient momentum to place himself at the head of ZANU, whose Maoist war strategy and support among the Shona-speaking majority won it power in 1980.

The latter chapters of *Race and Diplomacy* add to a growing literature on the horrific scale of the ZANU government's 1983–1987 campaign of violence in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces (e.g., Timothy Scarnecchia, “Rationalizing Gukuruhundi: Cold War and South African foreign relations with Zimbabwe, 1981–1983,” *Kronos*, 37[1]: 87–103, 2011; Hazel Cameron, “The Matabeleland Massacres: Britain's wilful blindness,” *The International History Review*, 40[1]: 1–19, 2017).

Harare's pretext was trumped-up claims that ZAPU was attempting to overthrow the government. On Mugabe's orders, the North Korean-trained 5 Bridge militia, staffed exclusively by chiShona-speaking ex-ZANLA, embarked upon *Gukurahundi*, during which thousands were systematically killed and tortured, most of whom were isiNdebele-speakers or accused of being aligned to ZAPU (Norma Kriger, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-war Zimbabwe: Symbolic and Violent Politics, 1980–1987*, 2003; Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor & Terence Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland, Zimbabwe* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000)).

It is here that Scarnecchia's "race states" approach is once more very strong, arguing how Cold War Realpolitik on the part of the US and UK saw Mugabe's serious abuses tacitly condoned, lest he pivot towards the Soviets. Western diplomats thought *Gukurahundi* "could be explained away by precolonial rivalries rather than connecting it to ongoing support for Mugabe and his military... the rationalization of Zimbabwean state crimes owed much to a shift toward an African 'race state' narrative and trope used by diplomats and foreign affairs bureaucracies reporting on events in Zimbabwe" (p. 282). This "race state" groupthink, grounded in prejudice, saw a Western "concept of Zimbabwe as an 'African state,' where political violence, lack of rights for citizens, and autocracy was viewed as the norm." (p. 314).

As is evident, I thought this an excellent book, well-argued and grounded in very solid research. As such, my questions solely pertain to future research: Are there any realistic prospects of other archives, particularly from the ex-Soviet Union or China, pertaining to Rhodesia and Zimbabwe becoming available? Recent research, notably by Gary Baines, has started to uncover just how influential South Africa's materiel assistance to Rhodesia was during the war. As above, can we expect further archival discoveries? And finally, it has been frequently rumoured that Rhodesia's sophisticated sanctions-busting and smuggling operation was in fact of a far greater scale than has generally been understood. Furthermore, it has been claimed that Eastern Bloc and European powers in fact comprised UDI-era Rhodesia's most significant trading partners. Did you uncover any archival material discussing these aspects?

Response to MT Howard's Review of *Race and Diplomacy in Zimbabwe: The Cold War and Decolonization, 1960–1984*.

doi:10.1017/S1537592724002469

— Timothy L. Scarnecchia 

I would like to thank MT Howard for his very thoughtful review of my book. It isn't very often that a reviewer takes the time to read a book carefully. Howard's questions to me at the end of his review are valuable for moving our research forward, something I hope he and many other

historians will do. The first question is a good one, whether it is realistic to think the files on Rhodesia and Zimbabwe in non-Western Cold War archives will become available. There have been some positive developments; some Chinese scholars have gained access to the Chinese archives on the Cold War in Southern Africa, and we should hopefully see new works as they relate to China's support for the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). I recall hearing a paper presented at the US African Studies Association in 2022 by Jodie Yuzhou Sun that used Chinese archival sources to discuss Chinese-Mozambican relations (see Jodie Yuzhou Sun, *Kenya's and Zambia's Relations with China 1949–2019*, 2023). I asked Dr. Sun if she had accessed files on Chinese support for ZANU and ZANLA, and she indicated that she had. This is a promising development. There are others who have had access to the Soviet-era archives, and hopefully they will be providing new materials for Soviet relations with ZANLA and the Zimbabwe African People's Union. Another question was about archival sources on South African support for the Rhodesians during the war. Gary Baines' article is a certainly a good start in this direction (Gary Baines, "The Arsenal of Securocracy: Pretoria's provision of arms and aid to Salisbury, c.1974–1980," *South African Historical Journal*, 2019). The South African Defence Force files on support for the Rhodesian military are not so easy to work through, as it takes Afrikaans language skills as well as perhaps a former career as a military accountant. This is a tricky puzzle, in part because military supplies listed on South African ledgers were often put forward as 'loans' while others as direct support, but as Baines argues, and from what I have seen from the South African Defence Force archives myself, the amount of support from the Republic of South Africa for the Rhodesian Defense Forces, both in terms of materials and personnel, has yet to be fully demonstrated. On the question of sanctions-busting, I haven't really dug into the sanctions-busting materials in the archives yet. The British kept good files on it, mostly having to do with how to make sure British oil interests were not brought to the UN Sanctions committee for violations after the Southern Rhodesia (Petroleum) Order of 1965. Eddie Michel has covered this issue well (Eddie Michel, *The White House and White Africa: Presidential Policy Toward Rhodesia During the UDI Era, 1965–1979*, 2018). Anecdotally, I remember an interview with a former communications advisor who had the honor (perhaps more the sense of survival) to serve both former Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith and Robert Mugabe, who told me that he was often in Italy in the 1970s working to secretly secure parts for Rhodesia's airlines. I haven't yet got access to Eastern European files related to what were sanctions-busting actions, so I look forward to seeing what will be uncovered in the future and encourage Howard and others to keep digging up new sources in likely and unlikely places.