

With the support of Prof. Hope Harrison, I plan to examine relations between West Germany and the unrecognized state of Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) between 1965 and 1979.

Before 1965, Rhodesia was a British colony. Unlike many other British colonies in Africa, however, Rhodesia was also settled by many Europeans who dominated the colony's economy and politics, though they comprised only a minority of the overall population. Once decolonization began in the 1950s, London adopted a policy of not granting independence prior to the establishment of majority rule. In response to this, Rhodesia's white-minority government passed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 in order to continue its domination of Rhodesia and refuse negotiations with the UK. That declaration also spurred the formation of armed Black nationalist movements that sought to take control of the country. This conflict, known as the Rhodesian Bush War, was fought with the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwean African People's Union (ZAPU) on one side and the Rhodesian government on the other. Following Rhodesia's declaration of independence, no country recognized it, but South Africa and Portugal gave it logistical support. ZANU and ZAPU, on the other hand, received support from the communist world, including extensive support from East Germany.

The existence of Rhodesia proved to be a point of contention for both international relations and domestic politics in the West. The UK and the United Nations imposed sanctions on Rhodesia, and many condemned the white-minority government as a racist holdover of the colonial era. There is very little written on how West Germany, in particular, viewed Rhodesia, but the country followed the UK's lead and imposed sanctions on it following the UDI. In the run-up to the 1972 Olympics, there was a debate within the government whether to allow a Rhodesian team to take part, but Bonn decided to prevent them from entering the country. The conflict also became a proxy for greater Cold War concerns about engagement with communism. Many organizations broadly sympathized with the Black nationalist movements which sought to overthrow the white-minority government. However, the Rhodesian government also received support from segments of the European and American right as a battleground state in the fight against communism. These Cold War tensions resulted in Rhodesia and its associated Bush War becoming a focal point of international interest. In the latter years of the 1970s, the Rhodesian government's situation weakened as its ally Portugal relinquished its colonies in Africa and the Black nationalist rebels strengthened their position. Rhodesia's position further deteriorated as sanctions continued to take their toll on the country's economy. These developments led to the signing of the Rhodesian Internal Settlement in June of 1979, which created a new government of Zimbabwe Rhodesia, which consisted of moderate Black leaders and officials from the white-minority government. This agreement then paved the way for the more comprehensive Lancaster House agreement between the government of Zimbabwe Rhodesia and ZANU and ZAPU in December of 1979, which led to the creation of the state of Zimbabwe.

This project will build upon recent scholarship examining Southern Africa as a key region in understanding the Cold War. This includes Thorsten Kern's book *West Germany and Namibia's Path to Independence, 1969-1990*, as well as Rui Lope's work *West Germany and the Portuguese Dictatorship, 1968-1974*. Both texts explore West Germany's complicated position in Southern Africa during the Cold War and Bonn's altering emphasis on promoting human rights in contrast to maintaining economic and defense ties with anti-communist governments. Examining Namibia and Portuguese Africa is significant as these provide me with background

for understanding how Bonn viewed “colonial holdouts” in Southern Africa, especially since there has been little written on how Bonn viewed Rhodesia. I am also inspired by Eddie Michel’s recent book *The White House and White Africa*, which showed how important Rhodesia was in US foreign policy and how domestic concerns over civil rights impacted Washington’s policies towards the white-minority state. While this book focuses on the US, it goes into extensive detail on how Rhodesia engaged broad sections of the public who either supported the white-minority government or those who fought against it. In this project, I will want to answer questions about how West Germans viewed the white-minority state of Rhodesia. How did the West German government view the process of decolonization in Africa? Did the German Social Democratic government in power for much of the existence of Rhodesia deviate from its fellow Western Allies in its views of Black nationalist rebels?

I will begin my research in the spring by examining archival material available online. In particular, I will examine the online archives of the Bundestag as well as the electronically published papers of the German Foreign Ministry. Furthermore, I plan to conduct a review of literature on the subject of West German foreign policy in the Cold War, with a particular focus on West German involvement in South Africa. Through this research, I seek to understand how Germany viewed itself in relation to the affairs of the continent and with the South African Apartheid regime in particular. I will then compare how West Germany interacted with South Africa in comparison to Rhodesia. After conducting this initial overview of secondary sources and documents and identifying faculty researchers in Germany with the help of Prof. Harrison, I will then travel to Berlin in June (COVID permitting) in order to access the archives of the German Foreign Ministry. There, I will analyze how German diplomats’ views of the situation in Rhodesia changed over time, as well as what factors they considered when engaged in decision-making about the region. I will also supplement this research at the foreign ministry archives by incorporating a variety of archival media sources that expressed opinions across the political spectrum, including those of *Bild*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*.

As someone who has studied international affairs and history, I have completed coursework in European and African studies. I also have extensive experience with the German language, having studied in Germany in high school as a recipient of the Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange scholarship. I went on to receive the Illinois State Seal of Biliteracy for recognition of my advanced knowledge of German.

Through this project, I will engage with several important questions in the field of diplomatic history. These include understanding how West Germany saw itself in the struggles of decolonization in the Cold War, as it had lost its colonies on the continent before its neighbors. I will also seek to examine how West Germany balanced economic concerns with a desire to promote human rights in regards to its policies towards Rhodesia. In completing this project, I will deal with themes of inequality, racism, and conflict that continue to have a major impact on international relations to this very day.

With the support of the GW Undergraduate Research Award, I hope this research will contribute to my honors senior thesis, which I would later seek to transform into an academic article examining how West Germany understood the situation in Rhodesia. This project will also prepare me for my future Ph.D. research on the transnational history of conservatism and foreign policy.