

# THE RHETORIC OF REBELLIOUS REPUBLICANISM: A HISTORY OF THE ILLEGAL COLONIAL OVERTHROW OF THE BRITISH CROWN

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## Abstract

This paper focuses upon the Conference themes of nationalist identity and globalisation by scrutinising the oratory employed in three chronologically successive “declarations of independence” which seek to persuade an adversarial international audience of the justice of their country’s rebellion from the English monarchy. The English Civil War in the seventeenth-century resulted in the execution of King Charles I in 1649 and the establishment of the Commonwealth of England, a hugely controversial regicidal act that was defended in print two weeks later by the famous poet and polemicist John Milton in *The tenure of kings and magistrates*. Secondly, towards the end of the eighteenth-century the burgeoning American colony declared the first ever unilateral *Declaration of independence* (UDI) from the English Crown in 1776 in a famously eloquent document. Central to its justificatory argument is the promulgation of Natural Law that persuades the reader of the justice of the American cause. Finally, I shall consider the only other successful UDI from English colonial rule, that of Rhodesia in 1965. The Rhodesian *Proclamation* was immediately recognised as modelled on its American predecessor, but the failure of this country’s illegal bid for independence is mirrored in the rhetorical frigidity and barrenness of the document.

**Keywords:** Rhetoric, rebellion, declaration of independence, British Empire, Rhodesia, John Milton

## 1. Context and Argument

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was a widely held aphorism that “the sun never set on the British Empire”. Statistically, this was undoubtedly true. At its height the British Empire was the largest empire in history and, for over a century, was the foremost global power (Ferguson, 2004). By 1913 the British Empire held sway over 412 million people or 23% of the world population at that time (Maddison, 2001), and by 1920 it covered 35,500,000 km<sup>2</sup> (Taagepera, 1997) or 24% of the Earth’s total land area (*The world factbook*, n.d.). The twentieth century has seen the gradual dismantlement of this Empire and a transition to the establishment of a British Commonwealth of Nations, and this process of decolonisation has been largely peaceful and cooperative. However, historically there have been a number of violent attempts to cast off control by the British Crown and to establish independent Republics. These unilateral acts of secession from British

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sovereignty have been infrequent, yet nevertheless have, without exception, been accompanied by aggressive reprisals from the British Crown in the form of armed conflict or a suffocating series of economic and political sanctions. Surprisingly there have been only three successful historical attempts to rebel against the British Crown and to establish independent Republics, each originating from a different century, and of these three attempts only one was not relatively quickly reassimilated into British monarchical control. This paper is a scrutiny of the rhetoric employed by these three adversarial and unilateral “declarations of independence” from the British Crown dating from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. In accordance with the Conference’s themes of nationalist identity and globalisation, I will undertake a comparative study of the structures, ideologies, arguments and linguistic strategies of these illegal bids for political independence in their attempt to convince an international audience of the moral probity of their cause.

I have been specific in defining the adversarial object of these rebellions as against the British Crown, but this needs some explanation and clarification. The first successful adversarial rebellion against the British Crown is more commonly called the English Civil War of the mid seventeenth-century, and this was conducted by English Parliamentary forces against the English (and not British) monarch King Charles I, for the Acts of Union that legally formed the Kingdom of Great Britain did not occur till 1707. This rebellion lasted for eleven years till the Restoration of the English monarchy in the form of King Charles II in 1660. Accordingly, the first “declaration of independence” from the English Crown is in effect an attempt by Englishmen to replace their own monarch with an early form of Republicanism. The Civil War of 1642-51 resulted in the execution of King Charles on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1649 and, thereafter, the establishment of the Commonwealth of England and this hugely controversial regicidal act was defended in print two weeks later by the famous poet and polemicist John Milton in his publication *The tenure of kings and magistrates*. It has been claimed that in this *apologia* Milton becomes the first European to posit that a republic is the only acceptable form of government, and the first to argue that monarchy is an unacceptable form of government (Nelson, 2007) – in part by refuting the well-nigh ubiquitously accepted political doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings. Secondly, towards the end of the eighteenth-century the burgeoning American colony declared the first ever unilateral *Declaration of independence* from the British Crown in 1776 in a famously eloquent and influential document. Central to its justificatory argument is the promulgation of Natural Law, a philosophical belief that certain rights are inherent and understood universally through human reason, but it is the powerful rhetorical presentation of this idea and the condemnation of the actions of the British monarchy that persuade the reader of the justice of the American cause. Winning the ensuing Wars of Independence against British military forces, this is the only rebellion against the British Crown that established a successful and long-lived Republic. Lastly, I shall consider the only other successful (albeit temporary) rebellion from English

colonial rule, that of Rhodesia in 1965<sup>2</sup>. On 11<sup>th</sup> November 1965, a statement entitled *The unilateral declaration of independence* was publicly adopted by the Cabinet of Rhodesia, announcing that Rhodesia, a British territory in southern Africa that had in effect governed itself since 1923, now regarded itself as a sovereign state. A Rhodesian Republic was declared in 1970 with the final rejection of British monarchical control, and under severe international United Nations-led sanctions and a civil war, Rhodesian independence was ultimately revoked by the Lancaster House Agreement in December 1979 and the country briefly reverted to direct British control before being granted internationally recognised independence as Zimbabwe in 1980 (Watts, 2012). The Rhodesian *Proclamation* document was immediately recognised as in part modelled on its American predecessor (*Modern history sourcebook: Rhodesia: Unilateral declaration of independence documents, 1965*), but in stark contrast to the American thriving democracy and the eloquent text that announced its inception, I argue that the failure of this country's illegal bid for independence is mirrored in the rhetorical fridity and barrenness of the Rhodesian UDI document itself.

## 2. Historical Relationship of the Three Illegal Declarations of Independence from the British Crown

John Milton wrote *The tenure of kings and magistrates* during the trial of King Charles I and published it on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1649 (Allison, 1911), a fortnight after the monarch's execution on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1649 and merely a week after the official establishment of a Republican form of government, intending to justify the recent regicidal act to an international audience. As such it is the first published apology of The Commonwealth of England and according to the historian Jonathan Scott one of the key Republican texts of the Seventeenth-century (Scott, 1992). The next month Milton took office with Oliver Cromwell's Republican government as the Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Commonwealth Council of State, a role whose primary function was to be the apologist and propagandist for the new regime. Whilst in the official employ of the Republican government Milton published many of his most famous and celebrated political works: *Eikonoklastes* in October 1649, *The defence* and *The second defence of the English people* (1651; 1654) written in Latin, and *The ready and easy way to establish a free commonwealth* in 1660. But it is in *The tenure of kings and magistrates* that Milton first presents his case against the English monarch Charles, against monarchy in general, and promotes the Republican form of government. The long title of this treatise lays down Milton's thesis "that it is lawful ...to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked King, and after due conviction, to depose, and put him to death." (Milton, 1958) In the course of his theoretical argument Milton combats the relatively-recent theory of the Divine Right of Kings, and maintains that the origin of power is in the people. Presenting evidence, he

<sup>2</sup> The 1919-21 Irish War of Independence did not succeed in establishing even a temporary Republic.

puts the case of the people against a wicked king, with special reference to Charles I, and gives illustrations from past ages, both biblical and secular, of the overthrow and deposition of tyrants. His contention in *The tenure of kings and magistrates* that “all men naturally are born free,” his theory of the contractual origin of society and government, his enunciation of the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, of the derivative character of all kingly rule, of the equality of all persons before the law, and his declaration of the right of “any who have the power” to depose or put to death a wicked king, give the general reader the impression that Milton was a republican of the most thorough-going kind (Allison, 1911, p. xiii). Certainly, John Aubrey, one of Milton’s earliest biographers, so understood him: “Whatever he wrote against monarchie was out of no animositie to the king’s person, or out of any faction or interest, but out of a pure zeale to the Liberty of Mankind, which he thought would be greater under a free state than under a monarchical government” (Godwin, 1815, p. 344).

While commenting on Milton’s political philosophy, the nineteenth-century French critic Geffroy suggests the connection between the (temporary) overthrow of monarchy and the installation of Republicanism in Milton’s England and the birth of the great American Republic in the next century:

Milton was not a practical statesman, and his plans for a future social fabric were too often pure Utopias, but he loved liberty passionately, he consecrated to her defence his entire life, with an elevation of spirit, a generosity of soul, which distinguished him from all his compatriots and all his contemporaries. He is worthy of being numbered with the precursors of our eighteenth century, and his writings offer to the historian and the philosopher the curious and sublime spectacle of a new society commencing to be born (Geffroy, 1848; 2016, pp. 224-225).

The American *Declaration of independence* on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1776 was the first ever unilateral declaration of independence by a British colony and the context of the Revolution is sufficiently well-known not to necessitate a detailed account herein. With regard to the *Declaration* document itself, on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1776 the American Congress appointed a “Committee of Five” to draft a declaration, consisting of John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, Robert R. Livingston of New York, and Roger Sherman of Connecticut. However, it was ultimately agreed that Jefferson alone should compose the first draft, and after a process of editing by Congress which included reducing the length of the document by one fourth, Thomas Jefferson’s illustrious words were presented to a stunned world in what was to become considered one of the seminal assertions of human liberty (*America’s founding documents - The declaration of independence: A history*, n.d.). Jefferson’s most immediate sources were two documents written in June 1776: his own draft of the preamble of the *Constitution of Virginia*, and George Mason’s draft of

the *Virginia declaration of rights*. Ideas and phrases from both of these documents appear in the *Declaration of independence* (Maier, 1997). They were, in turn, directly influenced by the 1689 *English declaration of rights*, which formally ended the reign of King James II and was considered by the American revolutionaries as a model of how to end the reign of an unjust king (Maier, 1997, pp. 53-57; 126-128). The political philosophy espoused in the *Declaration* is in large part indebted to the English political theorist John Locke, a man whom Jefferson called one of “the three greatest men that have ever lived” (Thomas Jefferson to John Trumbull), and the *Declaration*, “in its form, in its phraseology, follows closely certain sentences in Locke’s *Second treatise on government*” (Becker, 1922, 1970, p. 27).

Akin to the American *Declaration of independence*, the Rhodesian *Declaration* shocked the world. On the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1965 Ian Smith, the prime minister of the erstwhile British colony of Rhodesia, broadcasted a proclamation to the Rhodesian public over national radio, announcing that it was an “indisputable and accepted historic fact” that Rhodesia had been self-governing since 1923, and lamented that the British government persisted in “maintaining an unwarrantable jurisdiction . . . to the detriment of the future peace, prosperity, and good government of Rhodesia” (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965). Claiming the unequivocal support of the populace, the proclamation asserted that it was “essential that Rhodesia should obtain, without delay, sovereign independence, the justice of which is beyond question” (Ibid). Promoting the moral and political rectitude of the Rhodesian cause, Smith argued in his address to the Rhodesian public that “We have struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilization, and Christianity— and in the spirit of this belief we have thus assumed our sovereign independence.” (Smith, 1965) Resonating with the language and echoing the rhythms of the American *Declaration* of liberty, Smith and his government claimed an “undoubted right . . . to promote the common good so that the dignity and freedom of all men may be assured.” (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965) This moment was the culmination of several years of fruitless negotiations regarding the independence of Rhodesia between both Conservative and Labour Governments of Great Britain, and the United Federal and Rhodesian Front Governments of Rhodesia. This deadlock centred on two issues. Of primary importance to the Rhodesian Government was the recognition that since 1923 the country was unique amongst British colonies, being the only one that was internally self-governing, and constitutionally not unlike a dominion such as Australia, Canada, or New Zealand (Lord St Brides, 1980). It was empowered to control its own affairs in almost all respects with what amounted to no interference from London (Rowland, 1978). With Britain granting independence in the 1960s to surrounding African nations which the Rhodesian Government considered to be far less socially and economically developed, politically experienced, and stable, the perceived reticence of the British Government towards Rhodesia was generally considered a gross act of betrayal. On the other hand, for the British Government, the central issue was that the terms

for independence had to be acceptable to the people of the country as a whole, particularly in colonies with a substantial population of Western settlers. Initially, Smith's illegal government claimed loyalty to the British Crown - the Proclamation itself closes with the phrase "God Save the Queen" - yet by 1969 this position was untenable and after a referendum Rhodesia declared itself to be a Republic on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1970, with Smith claiming defensively that "We did not want to do it, but when we asked our Queen if she would continue to be our Queen and the British politicians made her decision for her and said she wouldn't, what have we been since but a de facto republic? We have now turned ourselves into a de jure republic" (*Rhodesia's first day as a republic passes quietly*, 1970).

### **3. Development of Political Theory, Ideology, and Experiential Argumentation, in the Three Declarations**

These are the only three successful unilateral declarations of independence in history that argue for the permanent removal of the English or British monarch from political control, and in due course, the establishment of Republics in its stead. Milton's political treatise *The tenure of kings and magistrates* is a lengthy document which in its original publication in 1649 contained forty-two quarto pages (Shawcross, 1966), whereas both the American and Rhodesian *Declarations* were published on merely a single page with ratifying signatures appended below the printed text. Despite being separated by over three hundred years, the three documents share a number of similarities in their argumentation - both theoretical and experiential - and in their strategies of rhetorical composition, including that of structure, lexis and syntax. Concerning firstly the political theory evident in the documents, it is clear that the ideological argumentation with which the texts grapple and espouse severely diminishes as time progresses. This is unsurprising and reflects the greater reliance placed upon rational ability and shared faith in a comprehensible *Weltanschauung* that was current in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth-centuries but was far more questionable after the World Wars, the Holocaust, and the deconstructionism of the Twentieth-century. Milton's *Tenure* and the American *Declaration* are overtly presented as arguments based in part upon a priori philosophical concepts, a theoretical basis that is conspicuously absent in the Rhodesian *Proclamation*. Specifically Milton's *Tenure* must confront and dispose of the relatively new theory of monarchical absolutism in the form of the theory of the Divine Right of Kings in order, by contrast, to present an argument founded upon Natural Law that political power derives from the people and is contractual in form. By the eighteenth-century belief that a monarch derives royal and political legitimacy directly from the will of God was for many people anachronistic, having virtually disappeared from British politics after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 (*Divine right of kings*, n.d.), but the American *Declaration* makes central to its thesis the same principles derived from Natural Law evident in Milton's polemical text. The fact that the Rhodesian *Proclamation* is in part modelled on the American *Declaration* makes this absence of any duplication of

political philosophising particularly evident.

The Theory of the Divine Right of Kings was prevalent in Milton's England of the mid seventeenth-century, having been presented for the first time in the British islands by King Charles I's father King James I in his "Scots Textbooks" *The true law of free monarchies* (1598) and *Basilikon Doron* (1599) (Sommerville, 1994). It was to become the main issue of the English Civil War - the theoretical defence against the removal and execution of King Charles I - and therefore the final cause of Milton writing *The tenure of kings and magistrates*. The classic English statement of the Theory was found in Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha, or the natural power of kings*, published posthumously in 1680 but almost certainly completed before the Civil War began in 1642 (Wallace, 1980), as well as in Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651). To counter this theory Milton's *Tenure* emphasises the freedom of the individual, citing classical and biblical references to argue that no man is better than another, having all been created in God's image, free and equal, and that all have a right to self-determination. Further, he argues that their freedom and equality entitles them to inflict the same treatment upon the king that they would receive at the hands of the law, for all magistrates are empowered by the people (Frison, 2005):

It being thus manifest that the power of Kings and Magistrates is nothing else, but what is only derivative, transferr'd and committed to them in trust from the People, to the Common good of them all, in whom the power yet remains fundamentally, and cannot be tak'n from them, without a violation of thir natural birthright (Milton, 1958).

Whilst undermining the Divine Right of Kings theory by means of biblical exegesis and political pragmatism, Milton founds his theoretical argument upon the fundamental tenet of Natural Law that it is a self-evident idea that men are created free:

No man who knows aught can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free, being the image and resemblance of God himself, and were, by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey (Milton, 1958).

The emphasis here is upon the nature of the created order, and upon man's position as part of the divine hierarchy. Milton argues that a tyrannical ruler contradicts this divine order, and that the role of the king is primarily to maintain this order, rather than to destabilize it. Arguing conceptually, historically and legally, Milton claims that the king must be understood as a servant of the people, bound to their service by the vows made in his coronation. He contends that for the king to make himself answerable only to God is to make himself a god, heretically contradicting the divine ordering of creation (Roberts, 2008):

It follows that to say kings are accountable to none but God, is the overturning of all law and government [...] for if the king fear

not God, [...] we hold then our lives and estates by the tenure of his mere grace and mercy, as from a god, not a mortal magistrate (Milton, 1958).

As in Milton's *Tenure*, the core of the American *Declaration's* argument lies in its assertion of Natural Law. The preamble argues progressively, almost syllogistically, from one contemporary commonplace belief to another<sup>3</sup>, starting by explaining the reference to "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" (Jefferson, 1776) proposed in the introduction. Defining Natural Law as "truths [that are] self-evident" and need no explanation or defence, the two given examples of this are "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable Rights", concluding that three of these Natural Rights are "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (Jefferson, 1776). From this a priori assertion of Natural Law the argument moves to the propositions of political philosophy, arguing that the rationale for creating governments is "to secure these [three Natural] rights," and concluding that "whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it" (Jefferson, 1776). This theoretical argument appears as the soul of the *Declaration*, expressed in clear and beautiful Enlightenment prose that is extremely effective rhetorically, and seems undeniable to any "candid" judge. It is this argument that provides the persuasive power of the American *Declaration*, and it is this argument that is entirely effaced in the Rhodesian Proclamation despite its deliberate lip-service to the American original. The Proclamation presents no justification for revolutionary action, no philosophical theory or political ideology whatsoever.

Yet all three declaration texts provide a posteriori accounts of British monarchical misrule to provide evidence to the reader that there was indeed "a long train of abuses and usurpations" (Jefferson, 1776) by the current British Crown which threatened the attainment of these Natural Rights. Being first and foremost a defence of the recent regicide, Milton's *Tenure* moves to establish a definition of tyranny, provide historical and biblical precedent for the forcible removal of such tyrants, and present evidence that the English monarch Charles was a tyrant in such manner justifiably deposed:

And if one wicked action persisted in against Religion, Laws, and liberties may warrant us to thus much in part, why may not forty times as many tyrannies, by him committed, warrant us to proceed

<sup>3</sup> Such, at least, was the contemporary opinion of the author Thomas Jefferson, stated in a letter to Henry Lee on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1825: "an appeal to the tribunal of the world was deemed proper for our justification. this was the object of the Declaration of Independance.[. [sic] not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before; but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject; [...] terms so plain and firm, as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independant stand we [...] compelled to take, neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the american mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. all it's [sic] authority rests then on the harmonising sentiments of the day..." (Jefferson, 1825).



on restraining him, till the restraint become total (Milton, 1958).

Similar in intention, the preamble to the American *Declaration* concludes that

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world (Jefferson, 1776).

What follows is a damning catalogue of offences which constitute approximately half of the document, and closes with the outright condemnation of the British monarch George III as an inveterate tyrant:

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people (Jefferson, 1776).

By contrast the Rhodesian *Proclamation* provides only brief and passing evidence of “unwarrantable” (Rhodesian Proclamation of Independence, 1965) British control. It develops straight from the Jeffersonian generalised introduction stripped of its ideological content to various statements of “indisputable and accepted historical facts[s]” (Rhodesian Proclamation of Independence, 1965) of the good behaviour of the Rhodesian people and government; the criticism of the British government is almost entirely effaced, being reduced from the 824 words of evidence of execrable behaviour that comprises the main body of the *Declaration* to two generalised examples in one sub-clause in the *Proclamation*. On the two essential counts of rational theoretic argumentation and historical evidence of colonial mismanagement, the Rhodesian document fails to make any justification for the dissolution of British sovereignty. A brief summary of the Rhodesian Proclamation illustrates the barren nature of its presentation of “the causes which impel them to assume full responsibility for their own affairs” (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence, 1965*):

That the People of Rhodesia have:

- a) self-governed since 1923;
- b) fought wars in support of the British;
- c) witnessed colonial independence fail in neighbouring countries;
- d) full support for their government’s request for independence.

That the British government has:

- a) refused to grant independence according to Rhodesian terms;
- b) failed to ratify foreign and domestic Rhodesian legislation.

That the Rhodesian government has:

- a) patiently negotiated for independence, which is necessary now.

Herein there is no argument, no rational philosophical justification, no presentation of political theory, no specific examples of colonial mismanagement, and no genuine causes for radical action. What is curious is that this erasure has clearly been effected deliberately by the Rhodesian government, for as I will consider their Proclamation quotes and paraphrases from the American source document, duplicating its introduction and conclusion, copying its structure, reproducing its syntax, drawing attention to its context, and yet omitting what can be called its soul and guts. It is difficult to understand why this is so other than to conclude that the Rhodesian government does not believe in the premises of Natural Law and “liberal” political philosophy - and has no other theoretical argument to replace it with - and furthermore, that there is virtually no evidence to present of British misrule.

#### **4. The Illegitimate Debt of Plagiarism in the Lexis, Structure and Syntax of the Rhodesian Declaration**

These rehearsals of the theories of Natural Law and “liberal” political philosophy between Milton’s *Tenure* and the Jefferson’s *Declaration* can be simply understood in the context of two texts that treat the same subject and from similar perspectives, and separated in time by a little over a century. Probably Jefferson and the American Revolutionary Congress were indirectly influenced by Milton’s political *apologia*, as they were by other earlier and contemporary political writers, but this is not to argue that *The tenure of kings and magistrates* was a direct source for the American *Declaration of independence* text. However, for Prime Minister Ian Smith and the Rhodesian cabinet to model quite literally their own *Unilateral Declaration of independence* upon that of their American predecessors was immediately recognised and condemned by Prime Minister Harold Wilson to the British Parliament in his initial response the Rhodesian UDI on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1965:

The illegal regime which now claims power and authority in Rhodesia marked its usurpation of authority with a proclamation which borrowed for the purposes of small and frightened men the words of one of the historic documents of human freedom, even to the point of appropriating the historic reference to “a respect for the opinions of mankind.” I would repeat to them and to the Rhodesian people as a whole the words I used in my farewell statement on leaving Salisbury, which also quoted these words: ‘When, nearly two centuries ago, the American States declared their independence from a British Government, which, to say the least, was remote, oppressive and unimaginative, they insisted that their actions be inspired by “a proper respect for the opinions of mankind.” Nor were they alone in the world. Could anyone say that either of these things would be true of a Rhodesia which chose illegally to claim its independence?’ (*Modern history sourcebook: Rhodesia: Unilateral declaration of independence*)

*documents, 1965).*

In fact, the replication of the American *Declaration* in the Rhodesian *Proclamation* is far more substantial than merely the occasional lexis. The whole introduction is quoted virtually verbatim, two other phrases in the body of the document are quoted precisely, and the beginning of the conclusion paraphrased. In addition to these direct lexical references, the Rhodesian *Proclamation* is rhetorically modelled on the American *Declaration* in its structure and syntax. The structures of the two texts are similar; both have sections that develop from an introduction to an indictment and a denunciation or vindication through to a conclusion. Syntactically the two documents demonstrate similarities which are manifested in terms of rhythm and rhetorical effect.

Lexically the Rhodesian text exhibits direct indebtedness to the American text through both quotation and paraphrase. The introduction to the *Proclamation* is lifted wholesale from the *Declaration* with only minor change:

*Decl:* When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people

*Procl:* Whereas in the course of human affairs history has shown that it may become necessary for a people

*Decl:* to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another

*Procl:* to resolve the political affiliations which have connected them with another people

*Decl:* and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them,

*Procl:* and to assume amongst other nations the separate and equal status to which they are entitled:

*Decl:* a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

*Procl:* And Whereas in such event a respect for the opinions of mankind requires them to declare to other nations the causes which impel them to assume full responsibility for their own affairs:

There is only one significant difference between the two introductions and that is the omission from the Rhodesian *Proclamation* of the brief initial statement of the American argument that their nation is "entitle[d]" to be "separate and equal" (a phrase in both texts) according to "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" (Jefferson, 1776). This latter phrase is conspicuously erased in the Rhodesian document, but comprises part of the crucial American rationale in its claim for independence, as I considered in

the analysis of the texts' ideologies. Beyond the introduction, one paragraph from the middle of the Rhodesian *Proclamation* quotes two separate phrases from the American *Declaration*, presented in both documents as evidence that the British are to blame for the current crisis. The *Proclamation* quotes the first American indictment of King George III who, it is claimed, "refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good", and then part of the American denunciation of the British Parliament which "extend[s] an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us" (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965). The final duplication of lexis appears in the opening sentence of the *Proclamation's* conclusion that paraphrases the corresponding passage in the *Declaration*, with both documents "appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions" (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965).

A comparison of the structures of the two texts reveals further evidence of deliberate appropriation but also points to compelling evidence of the disparity between the documents' ideologies. It is customary to distinguish between five sections in the American *Declaration*: the introduction, the preamble, the indictment, the denunciation, and the conclusion (Lucas, 1989). The introduction states that it is a precept of Natural Law for people to assume independence, and that the causes for such must be reasonable and explicable to a wider audience. The preamble contains some of the most memorable phrases in the English language (Ibid.), and one sentence which it is claimed may be "the most potent and consequential words in American history" (Ellis, 2007, pp. 55-56): "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (Jefferson, 1776). The preamble expands on the concept of Natural Law stated in the introduction and argues that revolution is justified when a government harms the natural rights of its citizens. The third and fourth sections of the *Declaration* comprise the main body of the document, in which the complaints of the American people are presented as evidence for their revolutionary action. There is a lengthy list of grievances towards firstly the British King George III – an indictment, and then towards the British people – a denunciation, which seriously infringe on the American people's rights and liberties. Finally, the conclusion argues that in the light of the conditions outlined above, the Representatives of the American people declare their nation to be independent.

The structure of the Rhodesian *Proclamation* is superficially similar, and indeed, by quoting verbatim the American introduction and paraphrasing the opening of the conclusion, it seems likely that the authors intended its readers to comprehend the relationship. However, these similarities mask important differences. The *Proclamation* only exhibits four sections, developing similarly from an introduction to a body composed of complaints against the British Government and a conclusion, but replacing the American denunciation of the British people with a vindication of the government and

people of Rhodesia. However, the main structural difference is the complete erasure of the lengthy American Preamble, which develops from the near identical Introduction quoted from the American original straight into the “lists” of “indisputable and historical fact[s]” (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965) in the main body of the text. This erasure, in a document which is deliberately and directly imitating its precursor, speaks volumes, and underscores the difference in ideologies between the two claims for independent self-government.

The second structural difference is in the subject matter and proportional quantity of the “lists” in the body of the documents. The *Rhodesian Proclamation* includes an indictment of British rule - although it blames the government rather than the Crown - but substitutes the denunciation of the British people with a defence of the actions and behaviour of its own people and government. Furthermore, whereas the formal complaints against British rule is the single largest part in the American document, comprising a whole catalogue of misgovernment, there are only two fundamental complaints against British control in the Rhodesian document that span merely half a sentence. The first complaint, concerning Rhodesia’s foreign policy, is the claim that the British government was “obstructing laws and treaties with other states and the conduct of affairs with other nations” while the second complaint, a quotation from the American Declaration, is that the British were “refusing assent to laws necessary for the public good” (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965). By contrast the *Declaration* starts twenty-seven sentences (approximately half of the document) with the phraseology of either “He has...” or “For...”, both of which catalogue “a history of repeated injuries and usurpations” (Jefferson, 1776) by King George III. A similar lexical pattern is apparent in all of the seven paragraphs that comprise the body of the *Proclamation*, repeating the initial phrase “That...” with reference to either the people of Rhodesia, the governments of Rhodesia or UK, or to “indisputable and accepted historic fact” or “beliefs” (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965).

What these reiterated opening phrases in the bodies of both documents do is to create a rhetorical effect akin to the poetic figure of anaphora. Syntactically the Rhodesian text clearly imitates and borrows from the American and attempts to establish the same rhythms. The introductions of both texts present an impersonal and universal subject – the “people” – after which the *Declaration* starts virtually every sentence with the personalised subjects of either “we” or “he” - framing the body of the text controlled by the subject “he” with a beginning and conclusion presented by “we” - creating a syntactic pattern that encourages an “us against them” rhetorical effect. The *Proclamation* does likewise, with the various subjects of the text’s body framed at the beginning and at the conclusion by the precise repetition of the phrase “Now Therefore, We, The Government of Rhodesia...” (*Rhodesian Proclamation of Independence*, 1965). Indeed, this phrase itself is duplicated syntactically from the American *Declaration*, which opens the conclusion

with “We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America...” (Jefferson, 1776). A similar syntactic pattern is apparent throughout the two conclusions, with the *Proclamation* repeating the sentence structure of the subject “we”, a subordinate clause which appeals to God as witness, followed by the main verb of “do...”, which is found in the *Declaration*:

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, ... (Jefferson, 1776).

Now Therefore, We The Government of Rhodesia, in humble submission to Almighty God who controls the destinies of nations, ... Do, By This Proclamation ... (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965)

Also apparent in the syntactic relationship between these texts is the *Proclamation's* duplication of triple noun phrases from the *Declaration*. One reason why some of the phrases from the American *Declaration* are so memorable is because of the rhetorical effect created by the triple concatenation of nouns. The most famous is “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (Jefferson, 1776), and the *Declaration* closes with another in its final sentence: “we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor” (Jefferson, 1776). The *Proclamation* is at pains to duplicate this rhetorical effect, and does so repeatedly, which at times resonates so strongly with the iconic phraseology of the *Declaration* that subconscious identification between two texts presenting the same argument is virtually unavoidable. The *Proclamation* asserts that the British authorities have acted “to the detriment of the future peace, prosperity and good government of Rhodesia”, whilst by contrast their own Rhodesian government “have been responsible for the progress, development and welfare of their people” (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965). These triple noun phrases are scattered throughout the *Proclamation* and serve to buttress the Rhodesian argument by a rhetoric of repetitious bombast. For instance the document observes that “they have seen the principles of Western democracy, responsible government and moral standards crumble” in other “primitive” countries adjacent to Rhodesia, who by contrast have “demonstrated their loyalty to the Crown and to their kith and kin in the United Kingdom” (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965). Akin to the final sentence in the *Declaration* quoted above, the *Proclamation* closes by making a syntactic echo with its own triple noun phrase: “... Do, By This Proclamation, adopt, enact and give to the people of Rhodesia the Constitution annexed hereto” (*Rhodesian proclamation of independence*, 1965).

## 5. Conclusion

Comparison of the lexis, structure and syntax of the two UDIs reveals a large degree of indebtedness on the part of the Rhodesian *Proclamation* to the American *Declaration*, confirming beyond any reasonable doubt that the final draft of the document prepared by a sub-committee of civil servants headed by Gerald Clarke, the Cabinet Secretary, for PM Ian Smith and his cabinet to sign (Smith, 1997) was directly modelled on the famous American original. By aligning their revolution with the American cause célèbre, the Rhodesian government no doubt hoped to attract international sympathy and support - as was the case with their predecessors in 1776 - but the international reaction recorded in the immediate responses by both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council was one of universal condemnation. In effect the American flavour infused into the Rhodesian break for independence failed from the outset to generate any international moral camaraderie. In terms of the *Proclamation* document itself, despite the formal indebtedness and duplications from the American original, the Rhodesian text is bankrupt in its most crucial function, that of argumentation. Not only is the American *Declaration* a landmark in history, it is also a powerfully persuasive and skilfully constructed text, and perhaps the greatest feature of the American *Declaration* is the vigorously presented argument that is altogether erased by the Rhodesian authors. This argument succeeds in part due to the two elements that are found in Milton's *The tenure of kings and magistrates* and comprises both the soul and the guts of the American document: the ideology of Natural Law and the pervasive catalogue of the "history of repeated injuries and usurpations" against British governance.

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