

**Eleanor Janet Bron**  
History Tutor, Department  
of Historical and Heritage  
Studies, University of  
Pretoria.  
eleanorjbron@gmail.com

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# POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE IN AFRICA AS PORTRAYED BY THE WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS DURING 1960

## **Abstract**

*This article examines the white South African press industry's reflection on events in Africa during the pivotal year of 1960, also known as "Africa Year". Through an examination of articles found in a selection of both Afrikaans and English newspapers, deductions can be made regarding the portrayal of the independence of African nations on the eve of their liberation. General attitudes shown towards Africa, as well as other key ideological issues, are evident during a time when South Africa was at odds with events on the continent. Through this analysis, several insights into the nature of the white minority media in South Africa can be gained, relating to how they responded to a changing political situation.*

**Keywords:** African independence; South African newspapers; English press; Afrikaans press; white minority; newspaper portrayal; wind of change.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Afrika-onafhanklikheid; Suid-Afrikaanse koerante; Engelse pers; Afrikaanse pers; blanke minderheid; koerantvoorstelling; wind van verandering.

## **1. THE CHANGING POLITICAL CLIMATE OF 1960**

"This is Africa's year!" was the title of a political column by Stanley Uys published in the *Sunday Times* on 10 January 1960 (Uys 1960). The significance of the year 1960 for the African continent, as highlighted by the columnist, was that 17 former colonial territories would gain political independence during that year.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising that the author also alluded to the impact this would have on South Africa, where the government was clinging to race-based apartheid politics during a year of great change on

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1 The colonies in question were Cameroon; Togo; Mali; Senegal; Madagascar; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Somalia; Dahomey (later Benin); Niger; Burkina Faso; Côte d'Ivoire; Chad; Central African Republic; Republic of the Congo; Gabon; Nigeria; and Mauritania.

the continent. Considering the eventful period that awaited the African continent, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Harold Macmillan, addressed the South African Parliament on 3 February 1960 and announced that the inevitable “winds of change” was sweeping across Africa. He said that this “wind of change” was a political fact with which South Africa would have to come to terms and that political transformation on the continent was unavoidable (Dubow 2011:1087).

The upsurge of African nationalism, captured by the phrase “wind of change”, was not only external to South Africa. In March 1960 the Sharpeville protest, and subsequent massacre, posed a threat to the segregated and protected lifestyle of the white-minority community in South Africa (Giliomee 2004:472). By the end of 1960 South Africa would have endured an attempt on Prime Minister Verwoerd’s life, as well as the subsequent emergency measures instilled to protect the country against the perceived threat of terrorism in the Cold War climate (Ross 1999:129-131). South Africa’s oppressive responses to these domestic events made it increasingly secluded in the changing African context. The South African press interpreted the political changes occurring in Africa, and the impact it had on South Africa, as important developments. This article will look at the immediate reaction of white South African newspapers to the events on the continent, providing insights into how the South African press portrayed and made sense of the developments in Africa. Therefore, this article is concerned with the portrayal of African independence during 1960 in the white South Africa press, and how a selection of newspapers responded to the events in the immediate political aftermath of independence. It seeks to show how a selection of newspapers reported on and reacted to what was happening in Africa during 1960, and how these events prompted these publications to confront the reality of a changing and insecure future.

## 2. METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

The way in which media publications reacted to, or portrayed important events is important to an understanding of a specific society at a particular time, and can aid an understanding of the past. However, for the observations to be as impartial as possible, the methodology used for this type of content analysis must follow certain principles.

The choice of sources is of paramount importance. For this article, publications were chosen based on their circulation figures, determining which newspapers were the most prominent at the time. Since the white-owned press industry in South Africa consisted of two major language groups, three newspapers from each language group were selected for this study. The two daily Afrikaans newspapers chosen for this study were *Die Transvaler* and *Die Vaderland*, and, for the English newspapers, *The Star* and the *Rand Daily*

*Mail* were selected. In terms of weekly newspapers, the *Sunday Times* and the weekend edition of *Die Burger* were used.

In media studies methodology, a sample is often used as being representative of a larger, and often unmanageable, volume of articles. One method of narrowing down a sample is by choosing a specific theme or date range (Priest 2010:86). For this article, the independence of African countries in the year 1960 will be examined by looking at articles on the day of independence, as well as the day preceding and following the event. This means that six newspapers were examined for each of the 17 countries that gained independence in Africa in 1960. Three days were examined for each country, but, since some of the dates overlapped, a total of 38 days were examined for each newspaper. For example, in the case of Cameroon, the newspapers of 31 December 1959 and 1 January 1960 were examined for reports on Cameroon's independence. In this case, there was no daily newspaper on the day after independence as 2 January 1960 fell on a weekend. Thus, the next available publication, being Monday 4 January 1960, was analysed as the third day. A total of 228 newspapers have been utilised in this sample.

The focus of a content study such as this is to organise the media materials by grouping them into specific categories, so that trends can be observed and conclusions can be made (Priest 2010:84). This can only be achieved by examining multiple publications and comparing them to one another. Therefore, the themes and categories used to group and present the findings in this article were formulated by, firstly, examining and comparing the sample articles with each other.

## **2.1 The use of terminology**

The first comparable aspect found in the newspaper articles was the terminology used by reporters and columnists. Terminology can be indicative of bias or a particular view held by the author and publisher. In the sample of newspaper articles different terminologies were used to refer to a specific ethnic or racial group. In some instances, these terms implied that certain behaviours were acceptable or unacceptable. One of the concepts for which there existed multiple words and terms, was regarding people of African descent. The newspapers used several terms for this purpose. The term "blacks", or the Afrikaans translation "swartes", was used to refer to the local people of Africa in all the mentioned publications. Another term frequently used by these newspapers was the term "native" in the English newspapers, or "naturel" in the Afrikaans newspapers. The *Rand Daily Mail*, however, only used the term "native" once. The terms "white", or "witman", or "blanke", were used in all the newspapers to describe anyone of Caucasian descent. These terms were used most frequently and drew attention to articles that chose to use different terms to describe groups of people. The terms used to describe the various people and groups on

the African continent give us insight into the reasons why these specific terms were used.

Besides the use of the term “naturel”, *Die Vaderland*, as well as *Die Burger*, made use of the word “inbooring” (*Die Burger* 1960e; *Die Vaderland* 1959a). Since this term’s direct translation is “indigenous”, both these terms can also be grouped with the term “native”. *The Star* (1960g) used the phrase, “dark skinned people”, as well as “Bantu” (Spicer 1960). The significance is that these terms were meant to imply certain things about the groups that they described. On more than one occasion, *The Star* connected these terms to specific actions. The person stealing something was a “native” and he was apprehended by “black” policemen or soldiers (*The Star* 1960e). This trend implies that some Africans were portrayed as more civilised or Westernised, as opposed to those who were depicted as primitive. In one article “natives” were singing and dancing in the streets, whereas “Congolese” listened in silence. The article juxtaposed “black” states as good examples of civilization against “native” bars, which were seen as obstructing the process of civilization in Africa. This use of terminology enforced the notion that people in Africa who acted “civilised” or “acceptably”, according to European perceptions, were “blacks”, whereas “uncivilized” or “disorderly” actions were associated with “natives”. The other newspapers that were consulted did not make a distinction regarding these terms, although the *Rand Daily Mail* (1960j; 1960g) contrasted “primitive bush people” or “gangs of hooligans” with the “cultured elite”.

The use of these terms must be understood in the context of 1960. The *Sunday Times* and the *Rand Daily Mail* both used the term “African” and *The Star* and the *Rand Daily Mail* also used “non-African”. The use of the term “African” was an exception and only used a limited number of times by some of the English newspapers. It is important to note that Macmillan himself used the term “African” in his speech, and the term was copied as such when he was quoted in these newspapers (*Keesing’s Contemporary Archives* 1969:17270). When quoting from Macmillan’s speech, the Afrikaans newspapers translated the term “Africans” with “naturelle”, which actually means “natives”. John Sharp specifically commented that, at the time, numerous Africans saw themselves as “African”. This can be deduced from the use of the term by nationalist movements such as Pan-Africanist groups and the African National Congress (ANC) (Boonzaaier and Sharp 1988:96). When referring to the ANC in these earlier news reports, the Afrikaans newspapers did not give a translation for this organization’s name. However, the Afrikaans dictionary, *Verklarende Afrikaanse Woordeboek*, published in 1955, already listed the term “Afrikaan” as a translation for “African” (Kritzinger 1955:23). Even though it was a recent addition to the 1955 dictionary, it was already a recognised term some years before Macmillan’s tour in 1960; yet, the Afrikaans newspapers did not use it in any of these articles.

Affirmation of independence by using terms, such as “Nigerians” or “Congolese”, was part of the English newspapers, as well as *Die Vaderland* (1960m). Contention with the rest of the continent was made clear with the use of the term “nie-blank” (non-white) by the Afrikaans newspapers. The term was especially favoured by *Die Transvaler*, which used it as a general term to refer to people in Africa. For example, “Six million non-whites become independent today” and “[...] non-white independent states can already be found here today” (*Die Transvaler* 1960a; 1960b). This thus creates the idea of “the other” and implies that they were different from the “white people”. It further creates a division by clustering all whites into one homogeneous group and non-whites as another. This also aligned with several calls from the Afrikaans newspapers that white South Africans should become united, despite their differences, in order to form a united bastion of Western civilization in Africa.

Furthermore, these newspapers portrayed self-rule as something that was “given” or “granted”, and only *The Star* and *Rand Daily Mail* referred to it being “won” or “achieved”. The *Sunday Times* also made reference to the “struggle for independence” (Uys 1960), but, generally, most of the articles portrayed independence as something that was “granted”. This signified the general notion regarding independence which appeared to permeate most of South African society, namely that freedom was a gift to be given and taken away by those who ruled over a country and its people. Along with these reports on independence, aspects of violence were also emphasised by the press. The violence that surrounded the independence celebrations of various countries was a main concern for these publications. *The Star* (1960a) referred to people being, “hacked to death by machete-swinging tribesmen”, and an article in *Die Vaderland* (1960c) also translates into, “hacked to death with axes”. *Die Burger* (1960d) described a riot that left one person dead and 30 injured as an incident where, “blood flowed in the streets”. *Die Transvaler* (1960k), on the other hand, had a more indirect approach to the violence and separated the violent actions from the people who inflicted them by saying that, “all the people who were killed, died from wounds caused by spears and arrows”. This gave the impression that these were victims of violence or circumstance, as opposed to victims of other people. In another event related to the Congo celebrations, the Belgian King Baudouin’s sword was seized from his car as he was driving through a procession. *Die Vaderland* (1960h) portrays this as an attempt made on his life, whereas *The Star* (1960e) and *Die Transvaler* (1960e) simply mention that someone snatched his sword. Similarly, *Die Transvaler* (1960e) stated that the Congo’s independence meant that the country was, “free today, but that it remained a boiling pot”, as opposed to *Die Vaderland*’s approach that, “fear exists that the area will still be in anarchy for an extended period of time” (*Die Vaderland* 1960i). On the eve of Somalia’s independence, *The Star* (1960i) reported that the event might, “explode the horn of Africa into a modern holy

war” because of political and religious rivalries and that there would be, “plenty of worries for everyone concerned”. These publications used the sensationalism of violence, with *Die Vaderland* exaggerating the brutality associated with these events.

In the portrayal of African cities, the terminology was also often loaded. *The Star* (1960l; 1960m) mentioned that the capital of Gabon’s streets were being, “choked with flags” during the Independence Day celebrations, and it was disparaging about the fact that, “nothing can be heard [...] because everybody talks at the top of their voices and the radio is on as well”. This article described Nigeria’s capital, Lagos, by mentioning “deformed beggars” sitting around, drinking at any time of night and the, “terrible slum and sanitation problems in Lagos”. *Die Vaderland* (1960l) said that the West must remember that, “Nigeria is and would always remain a native state”, but that various developments were taking place in the country. In this regard, the reporter claimed that Nigerians believed they would build Lagos up to be the “New York of Africa”. *The Rand Daily Mail* also partook in the sensationalist nature of these newspaper articles and reported that, “drug crazed rioters branded by witch-doctors to make them invincible, turned this [...] city into a bloodbath”. Another report also mentioned that Africa faced a future of “terrorism and anarchy” (*Rand Daily Mail* 1960a; 1960d). This general negativity in the portrayal of cities and spaces was indicative of a general scepticism towards the newly independent nations. In commenting on Africa in general, *Die Vaderland* (1959b) was doubtful about what 1960 held in store for the African continent and stated that, “the black man’s old enemies of poverty, illness, corruption, inefficiency and lack of discipline and effectiveness have not disappeared along with the colonialism”. It added that Africa was now responsible for finding solutions for these problems. *The Rand Daily Mail* (1960f), however, commented that if countries, such as the Congo, could manage to successfully overcome its challenges, many people would conclude that, “African nationalism is capable of almost any achievement”. The terminology used by these newspapers thus portrayed a general image of the people on the continent as “natives” that were “granted” independence. A general negative view of these independent African nations and their future was found in the majority of these articles.

## 2.2 A paternalistic view of Africa

A general portrayal of the events in Africa during 1960 which demonstrated a “paternalistic” point of view was also apparent in these articles. South Africa was portrayed as the “older”, and thus more experienced, state, whereas the newly independent states were “children” who still had to grow towards the point of adult statehood. This idea was also present in *The Star* and *Rand Daily Mail* articles where some Africans were represented as “more cultured” than others,

and thus insinuated that there were perceived levels of “civilization” which some states and citizens still had to obtain.

The English newspapers were much more vocal in their portrayal of the paternalistic mentality taken towards newly independent states and, generally, advocated that there should be gradual independence. The imagery most often used was that of a child. Referring to the new states as “baby” or “infant” was a prominent feature of these articles, as was illustrated by the *Rand Daily Mail* (1960j) stating that South Africa would be, “hearing from this infant [newly independent Nigeria] before long”. An article in the *Sunday Times* (1960a) also mentioned that Belgium withdrew from the Congo when the “baby started to cry” and referred to the “infant republic” in the same article. The article also mentioned how leaving the “baby outside and shutting the door” did not appear to be the right course of action and that, “in cases like this, cradle, baby and bawl usually end up on someone else’s doorstep”. *The Star* was the English newspaper that mostly referred to this paternalistic view regarding Africa. For example, an article in *The Star* (1960m) regarding Nigeria’s independence commented that, “there are going to be birth pangs here”. This trend was continued. In another article on Nigerian independence, Ghana was referred to as a, “brash headstrong teenager” that was granted independence “too early” (Spicer 1960). In one instance, the former French colony of Dahomey (later Benin) was described as an “infant”, but was later referred to as “adult Dahomey” when it had become independent (*The Star* 1960k). These paternalistic ideas were also present in some Afrikaans newspapers. A cartoon published in *Die Vaderland* (1960j) portrayed the newly independent Congo as an “infant” taking its first steps, and it portrayed the child as taking these first steps in the direction of a “river of troubles”. In another context, an article published in *Die Transvaler* (1960g) reported that the newly independent Congo was being “childish” for not having invited South Africa to the Independence Day celebrations.

This subject of gradual independence was also candidly discussed in some of the newspapers. In an article in the *Rand Daily Mail* (1960b) the writer of an opinion piece asked, “How then shall we defend our insistence that Africans have generations of paternalism still to undergo before they are ready to participate in the running of a country – or parts of a country?” The question is a reflection on South Africa and rhetorically poses the question of whether South Africa would “survive” the implications of Africa Year. This paternalistic mentality and the concept of whether countries were equipped for independence were present in numerous news reports. Most of the English newspapers portrayed African independence in a rather negative way and showed support, or preference for a more gradual process of independence. The newspapers referred to the reliance that some states would have on others after independence, for example, by mentioning that Dahomey could, “hardly exist economically unless federated with neighbours” (*The Star* 1960j). An opinion article in *The Star* (1960o) negatively

stated that, “with the proclamation of Mauretania as a sovereign state the word independence loses all meaning”, thus insinuating that the manner in which African states were gaining independence was objectionable.

Besides this negative view of independence, *The Star* also portrayed several aspects of African independence as being “disorderly”. One article mentioned that, “we in South Africa have no interest in disorder on our continent” (*The Star* 1960n), which revealed distrust in newly independent states in Africa and the events on the continent. Other articles also reiterated this scepticism by saying that there would be, “some alarming rocks and currents ahead for Africa’s newest ship of state”. *The Star* also insinuated that the new states would make “uninformed decisions” and that it would be, “unrealistic to suppose that they will snub Russia or prove sympathetic to the South African government” (Spicer 1960).

In line with this apprehensive stance, the *Rand Daily Mail* (1960f) argued that independence was “too forced” and should be more “gradual”, since countries were being, “pitch forked into independence with the minimum of preparation”. It again drew attention to the “much needed preparation” for independence that Africans did not receive by saying that, upon the independence of the Congo, “its people and politicians had so obviously not been prepared for it” (Worral 1960). There was also negativity in the terminology used in this publication to describe these states on the eve of their independence. For example, this publication was of the opinion that new nations were, “threatened by terrorism and plain anarchy” and their governments compared to, “a rogue comet” (*Rand Daily Mail* 1960a; Worral 1960). In both cases this was commentary regarding violent events associated with independence. The *Sunday Times* drew attention to the fact that African leaders emerged from “jail” and became “Prime Ministers” and indicated that issues of corruption were not taken seriously by the African governments (Uys 1960).

The Afrikaans newspapers appeared to be more factual with their reports, yet also exhibited these negative views on independence. Reference has already been made to the cartoon in *Die Vaderland* where the newly independent Congo was portrayed as a young child heading towards trouble. *Die Burger* (1960b) also published an article promoting gradual independence when a series of pictures entitled, “Then and Now”, was published. These pictures showed Congolese people and the “primitive” ways in which they travelled or dealt with healthcare. A second set of pictures depicted the “advancements” that had been made in terms of performing these tasks by using modern and Westernised travel and healthcare techniques. The picture series illustrated how the Belgians had “Westernised” the Congolese people and had thus been preparing them for independence. The article accompanying the pictures states that this “civilisation process” was, however, interrupted by the “wind of change” that was sweeping across the continent. This idea is very important, since some



of these Afrikaans newspapers propagated that apartheid was a developmental phase for the granting of independence. This argument was specifically used to react to the “wind of change” speech. More publications would refer to the “wind of change” interrupting the “development” of the continent. The paternalistic nature of the newspaper articles is evident in both the Afrikaans and English newspapers. Newly independent nations were portrayed in most of the articles as “inexperienced”, in that help was needed to transform them into “civilised” nations. In this regard, the English newspapers more prominently expressed their paternalistic attitudes towards African states, but these notions were also present in the Afrikaans newspapers.

### **2.3 A perceived threat to the survival of the white man**

The Afrikaans newspapers did not focus as much on the individual declarations of independence and the independence celebrations, but rather concentrated on the theme of the diminishing white population numbers in Africa. This focus on the “survival of the white man in Africa” even preceded Macmillan’s trip to the continent. However, the interpretation of the “wind of change” speech as the “abandonment of the white people on the continent” intensified the focus on this aspect. All three Afrikaans newspapers selected contained articles that referred to the diminishing white numbers in Africa during 1960. This was, in turn, used to reflect on the South African situation, and in some cases used as justification for white domination in South Africa.

*Die Transvaler* (1960a) specifically asked the question of the “feasibility of white citizens remaining in Africa”, particularly in South Africa. It argued that, if the white population of South Africa wished to survive, it had to be realistic about the situation in Africa and had to gain knowledge about the events taking place on the continent. In the same article reference is made to how white population groups or settlers in other African countries were “fighting for survival”. This indirectly created the impression that African nationalism was perceived as a threat to the white population groups and “civilization” in Africa, as opposed to it being a fight against colonialism.

*Die Burger* specifically focused on the place of the “white citizen” in the process of decolonisation and published a map of Africa to inform readers of the changes that were planned for Africa. Underneath the map, all the African territories were listed, along with their political status and population size. The significance, however, is that the reporter also specified the size of the white population in each of the countries or colonies by describing them as having “virtually no whites” or “no whites among them” (Pama 1960). In an article published in English in *Die Burger*, entitled, “Our place in the New Africa”, the reporter reflected that, considering the developments on the continent, “a solid black hostility is taking shape against Southern Africa, that part of the continent which will remain under white control and leadership indefinitely” (*Die Burger*

1960c). *Die Vaderland* also used a map to trace the changes in Africa over several years. On 31 December 1959 it published two maps that depicted the control of states based on racial groups. A map of Africa in 1910 thus shows the entire continent, excluding Liberia and Ethiopia, as being under white control. The other map is of what Africa would look like towards the end of 1960 and stated that, during the year, most of the African continent would come under “black control”. In this article the focus was thus only on the diminishing number of white-controlled states in Africa, but no deeper analysis of white population numbers was made (*Die Vaderland* 1959a). An article published later in *Die Vaderland* in June had a similar theme and included a map to show the newly independent African states with the following heading, “Not even 5 million whites from Cape to Cairo”. The article accompanying the map specified that only five million whites remained on the African continent, and that the majority were citizens of South Africa. This article also provided a list of all the African countries and colonies and indicated their political status and population sizes. In this version, the reporter, however, differentiated between “inhabitants” (*inwoners*; African citizens) and “non-natives” (*nie-inboorlinge*; meaning whites, Asians, Arabic, etc.) (*Die Vaderland* 1960d). *Die Vaderland* published yet another map of this type in September 1960. This also showed the African countries that were under white or black control. The title accompanying the map was, “Al Swarter” (meaning that Africa was becoming increasingly black). This accompanying commentary, however, again showed how South Africa was already aware of its growing isolation, with the analyst stating that, “this wind of change has become a black south-eastern which would wipe away anything in its path. It is good to know that at the southern tip of Africa the rock of Table Mountain is designed to withstand the strongest hurricane” (*Die Vaderland* 1960l).

One event that prompted reactions regarding white population groups in Africa was that of the crisis in the Congo. There were riots in this area preceding the Congo’s independence, but the majority of the upheavals and brutalities, labelled as the “Congo crisis”, would only occur after independence (Cooper 2002:83). The nature of the brutality against settlers in the Congo prompted media questions about the future of these types of societies in Africa. The significance in terms of the press is that the Afrikaans newspapers appear to have chosen to report and reflect on this aspect, whereas the English newspapers did not seem to be interested in the Congo’s independence until before the start of the main events of the Congo crisis. *Die Transvaler* (1960g) specifically referred to how the “mentality” of the newly independent Congo was, “a problem that affected the statehood of the white man in Africa”. This notion was further used to reflect on the South African government during 1960 by asserting that, “internal divisions over its [South Africa’s] fundamental pursuit of white survival can no longer be afforded” (*Die Transvaler* 1960g). In other references to “race” in the Afrikaans newspapers, *Die Vaderland* (1960k) and

*Die Transvaler* (1969h) focused on the opinion of a Congolese teacher who was on holiday in South Africa. He said that the white man in the Congo had nothing to fear, since the violence in the newly independent state was a fight amongst the “black tribes”. On the day preceding the Congo’s independence, *Die Vaderland* (1960g) already published an article about a refugee camp that South Africa was setting up for those whites fleeing from the Congo. *Die Transvaler* (1960j) also published a reader’s letter regarding the collection of funds for white refugees from the Congo.

The English newspapers did not reflect on the role of white people in this way. In an article *The Rand Daily Mail* mentioned what percentage of the Congo’s population was white, but added no reflection or comment on the statistic (Worral 1960). Another article mentioned that, during the French decolonisation, there had been no anti-white riots and that some of the political parties in these African countries had white members (Millinship 1960). Both the *Rand Daily Mail* and the *Sunday Times* used the term “white” to refer to the former colonial rulers of these countries, unless when they were referring to specific citizenship, such as “Belgian” (Uys 1960). *The Star* (1960g) mentioned that there appeared to be no sign of antagonism towards whites in the Congo at the time, and on several occasions used the term “white” or “European” interchangeably. It seems that the English newspapers were aware of the racial divisions, but made little attempt to comment on them.

The only article in an English newspaper in the newspaper sample which made a specific reference to this racial aspect of the situation was an opinion piece published in the *Sunday Times* (1960a) as a reflection on the situation in the Congo. The article mentioned that the result of growing African nationalism might be, “a solitary white outpost in a black Africa” in Rhodesia, and that South Africa had to show its support for Rhodesia in this difficult situation. The majority of the articles that were analysed made reference to different racial groups, but the abovementioned ones chose to comment on the racial divisions that were apparent on the African continent at that time, and portray them as an ultimate struggle between white and black. In this regard, a difference can be noted between the English and Afrikaans newspapers, with the latter being much more concerned with the survival of “white people” and “Western ideals” on the continent, whereas the English press focused more on paternalism and development for these new nations.

## **2.4 South Africa in the mirror**

The independence celebrations of the African countries mostly resulted in the press reflecting on, or internalizing the South African situation. The Afrikaans newspapers made South Africa the centre point of numerous articles published on Africa, but were also open about the fact that South Africa was opposed by the newly independent states because of its internal policies. Often an article

about African independence essentially focused more on South Africa than on the newly independent country.

During the week of independence for the Congo, Madagascar and Somaliland – 26 June to 1 July 1960 – *Die Vaderland* reported on the speech delivered by a local South African politician.<sup>2</sup> The reporter quoted him as saying that, “the ultimate goal of the self-appointed powerhouses in Africa is destroying what was established here in South Africa” (*Die Vaderland* 1960f). This idea of South Africa being outranked in importance by the new African states was also stated in an article on Nigeria’s independence. This reporter further commented on how the magazine *Commonwealth Today* was becoming increasingly “black orientated” and only reported on newly independent African countries, but gave no space to reports on South Africa (Snuffelaar 1960). This was again a reminder of the idea that South Africa was drifting further into isolation, which appeared to become a trend shortly after the “wind of change” speech.

*Die Transvaler* also noticed this and reported on the negative attitude of newly independent states towards South Africa. In an article entitled, “Somaliland does not recognize SA”, this attitude towards South Africa was attributed to South Africa’s racial policies (*Die Transvaler* 1960f). Another article on the Independence Day celebration of the Congo stated that South Africa was one of three countries that were initially invited to attend the celebrations and then later “uninvited” (*Die Transvaler* 1960c). The front page of *Die Burger* on 18 June 1960 followed a similar pattern with the headline, “New Congo attacks the Union. South Africa unwelcome on freedom day” (*Die Burger* 1960a). The article was not at all candid about the situation, stating that the decision to “un-invite” South Africa from the Independence Day celebrations was one of the first decisions that the new Senate had made. The article also stated that the Senate endured a few moments of silence for, “the victims of the unrest in South Africa” and reported that decisions had been made elsewhere in Africa to act against the apartheid system (*Die Burger* 1960a).

The *Sunday Times* was even more direct in its commentary on the National Party (NP) government. In an article published in January 1960, South Africa was described as one of the areas where there were unresolved problems. It stated that, “the Nationalist Government refuses steadfastly to bow its head before the dictates of the post war era”. The article itself was, however, sceptical about the African situation in 1960 and mentioned that many African leaders emerged from jail and would not listen to “Western observers” who warned against corruption and inefficiency. Whether the reporter was in favour of African independence or opposed to the movement is unclear, but he did not regard South Africa as a successful independent nation. The reporter concluded that the, “South African government has made a bigger hash of government than

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2 The local politician referred to in the text was Mr JW du Plessis, who was the Administrator of the Free State at the time.

almost any other state in Africa" (Uys 1960). Another article in the *Sunday Times* (1960b) also used Nigeria's independence to comment on South Africa and even titled the article, "SA loses chance of wooing Africa". The article used the absence of a South African delegation at Nigeria's independence celebrations in more than one way; firstly asking whether, "the Union was too ashamed to come?" The article, which was supposed to reflect on South Africa's absence from the independence celebration, also included the views of some international politicians that apartheid was "a foolish policy". The reporter furthermore made mention that the only image left of South Africa in the, "absence of a delegation", was that which was being portrayed in the local Nigerian press as, "South Africa: the monster" (*Sunday Times* 1960b).

*The Star* (1960b) reported on "Africa week" – the week in June 1960 when more than 21 million Africans would "gain" independence – by also mentioning the resulting "pressure on the South". The article quoted John Dickie, political correspondent for the British newspaper the *Daily Mail*, as having stated that, "the freedom march brings the challenge to apartheid to its strongest point so far". Another article on Somalia's independence referred to a woman in a crowd of protestors carrying a placard that, "was one condemning apartheid in South Africa" (*The Star* 1960h).

The *Rand Daily Mail* also used the events in Africa to reflect on South Africa. An opinion article on the year ahead for Africa, published in January 1960, asked some serious questions about the situation in South Africa. Perhaps the most poignant of these was the reporter stating that the people of South Africa could no longer, "pretend that things in South Africa can remain as they are indefinitely", and asked how ideas of prolonged paternalism would hold up much longer (*Rand Daily Mail* 1960b). The reporter concluded by asking whether South Africa could hope to escape the implications of the change in Africa in 1960. On the issue of South Africa's absence from some of the Independence Day celebrations, the *Rand Daily Mail* (1960e) again pointed a finger at the general image of South Africa by stating that, "South Africa was not only left off the invitation list; she was virtually rebuked for believing that she should be asked to the party". This article concluded with a comment on the fact that South Africa's relations with the newly independent states needed serious attention and work.

There was, however, one occasion where South Africa's actions directly related to the independence celebrations in Africa. Prime Minister HF Verwoerd sent his regards to some of the African countries that gained their independence when South Africa could not attend, or was not invited to the Independence Day celebrations. The Afrikaans newspapers avoided reporting on South Africa's exclusion from these international events. They rather focused on in-depth reports of Verwoerd's diplomatic "well wishes" to newly independent countries, with *Die Transvaler* (1960l) and *Die Vaderland* (1960n) publishing Verwoerd's entire message of congratulations to Nigeria. Generally, the English newspapers

did not report on these messages of congratulations, but rather focused on South Africa's absence from these independence celebrations. The South Africa isolation and exclusion was overshadowed by the portrayal of the NP's good diplomacy in the Afrikaans newspapers, specifically *Die Transvaler*. The English newspapers were more conscious of the isolation that African independence brought to South Africa.

## 2.5 The fear of the “Kremlin Crimson”

At the time, the Cold War environment of 1960 also influenced events on the African continent and, subsequently, the press coverage of these important developments. Articles in all of the analysed newspapers focused on the “threat” or “danger” of communism in the newly independent African states. In an article discussing the 80 countries that would attend the Independence Day celebrations of the Congo, *Die Transvaler* (1960c) singled out the fact that five “communist countries” would be attending the celebrations. The reporter also mentioned that communist Czechoslovakia would send numerous representatives. In light of the fact that South Africa would not be present at these celebrations, the article further emphasised South Africa's growing isolation. Another article focused on a similar topic under the subheading, “17 rooies” (17 reds), that stated that Russia had sent 17 representatives to the newly independent Congo (*Die Transvaler* 1960d). Again, the newspaper was possibly trying to draw attention to the communist ties of a country that was hostile towards South Africa. An article entitled, “Nice shot says Mr. K. to Congo” mentioned that Nikita Khrushchev, then Prime Minister of Russia, commended the Congo on dealing a fatal blow to the colonial system and mentioned how “Communist China” also saw the independence of the Congo as a significant event in this regard (*Die Transvaler* 1960i).

*Die Vaderland* (1960e) emphasized the communist presence in Africa with a cartoon published in June 1960. The cartoon depicted a vulture flying over Africa, casting a shadow in the form of a communist hammer and sickle. The cartoon was entitled “Red shadow over black Africa”. The cartoonist seemed to be implying that the communists were scavenging for any role that they could play on the African continent. By saying “black Africa” the cartoonist might also be excluding South Africa from the rest of the continent, and thus also from the “scavenging” communists. An opinion article on the post-colonial Congo also used similar imagery in saying that the unrest in the Congo was, “a development that could bring the new republic Congo within reach of the claws of communism” (*Die Vaderland* 1960i).

In an article on the independence of Cameroon, the new Cameroonian Government's policy that it would accept help from any country, including Russia, spoke clearly about its stance and attitude towards colonialism and independence. Even though the article did not make any outright statement

about communism, the new government was portrayed as indifferent for also being willing to accept help from “communist Russia” (*Die Vaderland* 1960c). *The Star* (1960i) newspaper also portrayed the communist presence in Africa surrounding the independence events and sarcastically mentioned that, “the Russians, as usual, flew in at noon yesterday in a Red Air Force plane” on the day before Somali’s independence. Also reporting on the communist presence during the time of Nigeria’s independence, reporter John Spicer (1960) indicated that one of the problems for the new Nigeria was the, “tinge of Kremlin crimson”, but that Nigeria did not partake in the, “flirtations with Moscow that Ghana and the Congo have indulged in”. The reporter also mentioned that the newspapers in Lagos, “have been staunch in its support for Russia” and that it would be, “unrealistic to suppose that they will snub Russia” (Spicer 1960). Interestingly, the *Sunday Times* did not specifically mention communism or communist countries in the articles published during this period. The *Rand Daily Mail* (1960b) directly acknowledged the possibility of the Cold War playing out on the continent, with Africa becoming a figurative battleground by stating that, “there are signs that the new ‘peaceful contest’ between Communism and Western democracy will be fought chiefly in Africa”.

With the independence of Nigeria, *Die Vaderland* (1960l) identified and discussed the presence of communism in an article investigating the country’s new status. It began by stating that one of several questions that would need to be answered was, “Will he [Nigeria] allow communism to get a hold on him?”. The article then pointed out several instances where Nigeria had already made its support for the West apparent, such as keeping strong ties with the West; prohibiting the importation of certain communist literature; and that they would act against any Nigerian who was suspected of “communist action”. The communist presence in Africa was a concern noted in both the Afrikaans and the English press and was portrayed as a threat. Coinciding with the abovementioned views on paternalism, these articles argued that communism would not have been a problem in Africa if independence had been delayed until nations were “equipped” to handle political pressures.

## 2.6 Reporting trends

The table below (Table 1) indicates the general reporting style for each newspaper and how they reported on the days surrounding African independence in 1960. The table gives an indication of which newspapers reported on a specific country’s independence by publishing an exclusive report and also highlights the number of reports published. This gives an indication of the coverage or publishing space given to the topic by the newspapers.

**TABLE 1: Reporting trends for the selected dates of African independence days of 1960**

<b>Independent country</b>	<b>Publications featuring full reports</b>	<b>Number of full reports over three-day period</b>
Cameroon	The Star Rand Daily Mail Die Vaderland	2 1 1
Togo	Rand Daily Mail	1
Mali	Rand Daily Mail Die Transvaler Die Vaderland	1 1 1
Senegal		
Madagascar	The Star Rand Daily Mail Die Transvaler Sunday Times	2 1 1 1
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Sunday Times Die Transvaler Die Vaderland The Star Rand Daily Mail Die Burger	10 9 6 5 5 4
Somalia	The Star Rand Daily Mail Die Transvaler Die Burger	4 3 3 2



Benin	Rand Daily Mail	2
	The Star	2
	Die Vaderland	1
Niger	Die Vaderland	1
Burkina Faso	Rand Daily Mail	1
	Die Burger	1
Côte d'Ivoire	The Star	1
Chad	Rand Daily Mail	1
	The Star	1
	Die Transvaler	1
Central African Republic	Rand Daily Mail	1
Republic of the Congo	Rand Daily Mail	1
	The Star	1
Gabon	The Star	1
	Rand Daily Mail	1
Nigeria	Rand Daily Mail	6
	The Star	5
	Die Vaderland	4
	Die Burger	4
	Die Transvaler	2
	Sunday Times	1
Mauritania	The Star	3
	Die Vaderland	1

As can be seen from the table, in this sample the English daily newspapers published in excess of 58% more reports on African independence than Afrikaans papers. Some newspapers reserved African independence for general

reports, such as was the case with *Die Burger*, whereas others chose to dedicate articles to the specific topic of independence in Africa, such as *The Star*. The English press was much more concerned with the events in Africa, whilst the Afrikaans newspapers either avoided the topic, or made it relevant to South African politics. Key issues, such as communism, were portrayed in a similar manner in all the publications, and there was negativity towards these newly independent countries to be found in all these publications. There were some differences to be noted between the Afrikaans and English papers. The fate of whites on the continent was overemphasized by the Afrikaans press and omitted by the English press. Instead, the English press approached the topic by rather focussing on the development of nations through paternalism and civilization on the continent. Towards the end of 1960, most of the publications acknowledged the fact that South Africa was on the verge of isolation and used various events to reflect on South Africa's increasingly tenuous political situation.

### 3. CONCLUSION

At the start of 1960, Macmillan's address seemed "timely", but, as the year progressed, the Sharpeville massacre and the Congo crisis would, in fact, expand the meaning of the "wind of change". What is however apparent, is that across the board, with some minor exceptions in the *Rand Daily Mail*, Africa was persistently portrayed as "dark Africa" that still needed "paternalism" and assistance from the West on the gradual road to independence. It is significant to note the similarities in attitudes towards Africa in the newspapers from both language groups, as opposed to differences they are reported to have had regarding internal South African politics. A strong adherence to "civilised" and "Western" ideals is noted in the newspaper reports. Even though some indication of "conservative" and "liberal" views could be detected in the newspapers, there was a similar approach to African independence in these newspapers. With the Afrikaans newspapers concerned about the survival of "whites" on the continent, and the English newspapers insistent on paternalism, publications from both language groups defended a specific lifestyle or advocated to maintain certain social structures. Although the English newspapers published more articles on the topic, the content was not all that different from what was being published in Afrikaans newspapers. Through their cynicism, these publications were acknowledging the changes occurring in the political sphere in Africa. By insisting that "Western civilization" was of value, these publications were also acknowledging that South Africa was being isolated. With the exception of a few articles in the *Rand Daily Mail* that saw these challenges as a much-needed reflection for South Africa and its government, the majority of the titles showed elements of fear and insecurity in a changing political environment.

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1960b. "Die Belgiese Kongo – Toe en nou", 25 June.

1960c. "Our place in the new Africa", 25 June.

1960d. "Bloed vloei in nuwe swart staat", 2 July.

1960e. "Slawe en ruimvaarders hou jool in Kongo", 2 July.

### *Die Transvaler*

1960a. "Afrika tot 1970", 4 January.

1960b. "Kanonskote, beierende klokke vandag deel van 6 000 000 natu-  
relle se vryheidsfees", 20 June.

1960c. "80 lande by Kongo se fees", 29 June.

1960d. "Botsings in Kongo", 30 June.

1960e. "Kongo vandag vry: Bly kookpot", 30 June.

1960f. "Somaliland erken nie SA", 30 June.

1960g. "Eerste onvolwasse skrede", 1 July.

1960h. "Kongo-gevaar is tussen swartes", 1 July.

1960i. "Mooi skoot, sê mnr. K. aan Kongo", 1 July.

1960j. "Wil blankes uit die Kongo help", 1 July.

1960k. "Oproer woed in Nigerië: 14 al dood", 30 September.

1960l. "Boodskap van SA aan Nigerië", 1 October.

*Die Vaderland*

1959a. "Die belangrikste jaar vir swart nasionalisme breek nou aan", 31 Desember.

1959b. "Swartman se nuwe geloof het verdere ambisies by hom wakker gemaak", 31 Desember.

1960c. "Anti kolonialisme nêrens so sterk as in Franse Kameroen", 4 January.

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1960e. "Rooi skaduwee oor swart Afrika", 20 June.

1960f. "Nuwe kragmanne in Afrika wil alles in Unie vernietig", 28 June.

1960g. "Vlugtelingskamp beplan by Brakpan", 29 June.

1960h. "Kongo vandag onafhanklik", 30 June.

1960i. "Republiek Kongo", 30 June.

1960j. "Die eerste tree", 1 July.

1960k. "Swart twis Kongo se groot gevaar", 1 July.

1960l. "Nigerië môre ook vry: So sal hy uitsien", 30 September.

1960m. "Onafhankheidskoors styg hoog in Nigerië", 30 September.

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1960d. "Tribesmen still demonstrating in the Congo", 29 June.

1960e. "Not wanted", 30 June.

1960f. "Test case", 1 July.

1960g. "Tanganyika warning: no hasty freedom", 3 August.

1960h. "New flag unfurled in Africa", 6 August.

1960i. "Riot death toll in Nigeria 14", 30 September.

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1960e. "Native seizes King Baudouin's sword", 30 June.

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1960g. "Now Madagascar", 1 July.

1960h. "Police fire on Somali crowd", 2 July.

1960i. "New Somali state will emerge at midnight", 30 July.

1960j. "Dahomey gets independence", 1 August.

1960k. "France's help welcomed by new state", 2 August.

1960l. "Gabon is free and stays with France", 17 August.

1960m. "Union Jack comes down at midnight", 30 September.

1960n. "Independence in Nigeria", 1 October.

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