

'Rather a special family of nations':
Ideas of the family in the Commonwealth
and Africa.

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Politics and International Relations at Royal Holloway University of London

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Lyn Johnstone, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Date: _____ September 2016 _____

Abstract

Since the days of Empire, Britain has employed familial discourse, often with negative connotations, to describe her relationship with her colonies. In the nineteenth century the idea, put forward by the British, that the Empire was a family blurred the lines between the domestic and the international arenas. This practice of familial discourse continues today, albeit in something of a different form, as Britain and the fifty-two states, which make up membership of the intergovernmental organisation known as the Commonwealth, frequently refer to themselves as a *family of nations*. From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, the Commonwealth and its familial rhetoric might seem outdated, even anachronistic; yet, the notion of the Commonwealth as a ‘family’ continues to endure and is used liberally by the Head of the Commonwealth (the Queen), the Commonwealth Secretary General, and Commonwealth Heads of Government during their biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings.

When a group of post-colonial states and their former coloniser continue to refer to themselves as family, what is the significance of this label? Is it simply a way for smaller, less powerful states to cement ties with richer, more powerful ones? Perhaps, a way for former colonial powers to hold on to some semblance of power? Or is there some kind of legitimacy behind this rhetoric, that positions the Commonwealth, in the eyes of its member states, as analogous to an actual family? These questions form the puzzle at the heart of this thesis. In attempting to answer these questions, the thesis combines historical and theoretical analysis with empirical evidence to consider African understandings of the Commonwealth in order to question whether a familial metaphor, employed in the nineteenth century to bring the idea of the wider Empire home to the British, is anything more than an empty signifier for post-colonial Commonwealth states today.

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At the head of the Commonwealth is a family. This family does in a very real sense symbolise the family nature of the Commonwealth...Thus not only the British, but French Canadians, Maltese, Africans and others, people of advanced and people of primitive culture, see this family symbol not as something alien, but as something which is their own. It is not altogether fanciful to compare this conception with that of the Holy Family in the Christian world.

- Clement Attlee (1949)

I am thinking of rather a special family - a family of nations - as I recall fascinating journeys to opposite ends of the world. During the course of these visits we met and talked with a great number of people in every sort of occupation, and living in every kind of community and climate. Yet in all this diversity they had one thing in common: they were all members of the Commonwealth family.

- Queen Elizabeth II (1970)

Introduction: Rather a *special* family of nations?

1.1 Introduction

Since the days of Empire, Britain has employed familial discourse, often with negative connotations,¹ to describe her relationship with her colonies. In the nineteenth century the idea, put forward by the British, that the Empire was a family blurred the lines between the domestic and the international arenas. This practice of familial discourse continues today, albeit in something of a different form, as Britain and the fifty-two states, which make up membership of the intergovernmental organisation known as the Commonwealth, frequently refer to themselves as a *family of nations*.² From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, the Commonwealth and its familial rhetoric might seem outdated, even anachronistic; yet, the notion of the Commonwealth as a ‘family’ continues to endure and is used liberally by the Head of the Commonwealth (the Queen), the Commonwealth Secretary General, and Commonwealth Heads of Government during their biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings.

When a group of post-colonial states and their former coloniser continue to refer to themselves as family, what is the significance of this label? Is it simply a way for smaller, less powerful states to cement ties with richer, more powerful ones? Perhaps, a way for former colonial powers to hold on to some semblance of power? Or is there some kind of legitimacy behind this rhetoric, that positions the Commonwealth, in the eyes of its member states, as analogous to an actual family? These questions form the puzzle at the heart of this thesis. In attempting

¹ I discuss both the negative and positive uses of the familial label in Chapter 2. For an example of these practices see John Carothers, *The Psychology of the Mau Mau* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1955); Jock McCulloch, *Colonial Psychiatry and 'the African Mind'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Willie Abraham, *The Mind of Africa* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962). For discussion and analysis of British discursive practices see Roxanne Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (Minneapolis, MN and London: Minnesota University Press, 1996).

² Philip Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire: The House of Windsor, the British Government and the Postwar Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

to answer these questions, the thesis combines historical and theoretical analysis with empirical evidence to consider African understandings of the Commonwealth in order to question whether a familial metaphor, employed in the nineteenth century to bring the idea of the wider Empire home to the British, is anything more than an empty signifier for post-colonial Commonwealth states today.

While valuable contributions to our understanding of the origins, growth, and development of the Commonwealth as an international organisation have been made by historians and international relations scholars, there has been no sustained theoretical or critical analysis of the Commonwealth, nor has there been any real discussion of the meaning behind the continued usage of the metaphor of the Commonwealth as a family. This has resulted in a body of literature that is largely prosaic and lacking in any critical exploration with little in the way of questioning how or whether the family label has any meaning for contemporary Commonwealth states. Interested in injecting a more critical and theoretical analysis into what is an enormous canon of literature on the Commonwealth, this thesis explores ideas of identity and responsibility, shared history and shared values by examining the Commonwealth through cosmopolitan and communitarian theory, alongside African experiences and ideas about the Commonwealth collected from interviews with elites in Zimbabwe and Rwanda. I then use these ideas to draw conclusions both about the endurance of the Commonwealth and the wider theoretical debate.

The thesis works in two directions. Firstly, through the lens of historical analysis and normative communitarian theory, I examine the Commonwealth from its roots in the British imperial 'family,' where the family metaphor was used both to blur the lines between home and away while Britain attempted to shore up the idea of a wider British national racial identity geographically across the Empire in the settler colonies; and also as a way in which to describe the perceived superiority of the British against the inferiority of the colonised peoples. I then bring the historical focus forward to apply a communitarian lens to the roots and development and shared history and practices of states within the Commonwealth family since the organisation's official inception in 1948/9. Following this examination of what I perceive to be the communitarian side of the Commonwealth, I then, secondly, explore the changes that took place, firstly around 1965, with the establishment of a Commonwealth Secretariat, and later in the 1990s with the adoption of a set of human rights principles and the later

opening up of Commonwealth membership beyond states with a constitutional connection to Britain. These changes, many on the back of the organisation's successful anti-apartheid crusade, ushered in a Commonwealth which appeared to be less reliant on the idea of shared history as its *raison d'être* and more in tune with changes in the global arena following the end of the Cold War and the turn towards human rights. Through these changes and the Commonwealth's focus on shared values and individual rights, the organisation appears to have taken a cosmopolitan turn.

I will expand and elaborate on communitarianism and cosmopolitanism in later sections of this chapter, suffice it to say for my attempts to inject a more critical and theoretical analysis into the study of the Commonwealth, an exploration of the organisation through the twin lenses of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism gives the impression that the Commonwealth appears to be both communitarian - troubling the way in which communitarian IR theorists typically theorise the community, and cosmopolitan - expanding its membership beyond its shared history to become a more inclusive organisation which, rather than uphold the organisation's previously rigid non-interference policy, now claims to value and protect the rights of all two billion citizens across Commonwealth states.

From this theoretical foundation I then narrow the lens to focus on the Commonwealth in Africa and offer a much needed and, until now, neglected understanding of the Commonwealth from its non-Western members using understandings and experiences by Zimbabwean and Rwandan elites to help praxis speak back to theory. I argue that by examining the Commonwealth through the lens of cosmopolitan and communitarian theory we can understand relationships between post-colonial states as thicker - in the Clifford Geertz sense of the word³ - and more nuanced; but before expanding on theoretical explanations and outlining the ways in which the theoretical and empirical analysis employed over the following five chapters will proceed, I first want to give a clearer idea of how the concepts of the Commonwealth and the family are to be understood throughout the thesis; beginning with the idea and understanding of the Commonwealth and in addition offer an understanding as to where the organisation stands on the international stage.

³ As I explain in more detail in Chapter 3, Geertz uses the idea of thick descriptions to refer to the social and cultural commonalities between groups and the idea that inherited membership means stronger more meaningful connections. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

1.1.1 The Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is an often forgotten organisation in an international arena overflowing with, *inter alia*, international, transnational, intergovernmental organisations. While the organisation - which was officially formed in 1948/9 and now consists of fifty former British colonies, plus Britain, Mozambique and Rwanda - might once have had a clear purpose and relevance as a group of postcolonial states, together with their former coloniser, offering assistance and recognition to newly independent fledgling states, what powers of political persuasion it once had were laid to rest with the dismantling of the South African apartheid regime in 1995. It is largely understood in the literature on the Commonwealth, which, until the mid 1990s was bursting with accounts and descriptions of Commonwealth-wide boycotts and Commonwealth agreements against arms trade with South Africa, as well as Commonwealth assistance in bringing Rhodesia/Zimbabwe to independence, that the organisation's grand mission was to assist with the decolonisation process and promote anti racism across Southern Africa.⁴ These accounts of a group of post-colonial states working together, under the Commonwealth banner, to bring down the last vestiges of colonialism have since been usurped by research which is largely focused around the continued relevance of the Commonwealth in contemporary world politics.⁵

This research often takes the form of one of two themes: either a lament for what was once an organisation with the power to unite over a third of the world's population through its shared values of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights; or a blinkered understanding that the end of the organisation might be nigh, followed by suggestions and strategies of how the organisation might regain something even close to the sense of purpose it once seemed to enjoy.⁶ Some of the Commonwealth's keenest observers, and those who refuse to acknowledge its demise, have laid the blame for the organisation's lack of relevance and forgotten

⁴ For an overview of the history and grand mission of the Commonwealth see W. David McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth, 1965-90* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); James Mayall, 'Introduction', in *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment, 1965-2009*, ed. James Mayall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 1-20.

⁵ Michael Kirby provides a good overview of the relevance of the Commonwealth, see Michael Kirby, 'The Commonwealth of nations today: Historical anachronism or focus for universal values?', *Commonwealth Law Bulletin* 37, no. 1 (2011): 39-59.

⁶ See Zoe Ware, 'The Commonwealth at 60: Thoughts from the new generation', *The Round Table: Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 98, no. 404 (2009): 547-554; Don McKinnon, 'Where next for the Commonwealth?' in *The Commonwealth Yearbook* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2008); Victoria te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand: Global Voice, Local Action* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

status on the Commonwealth Secretariat not doing enough to advertise its brand.⁷ Poor brand management has resulted in accusations that the Commonwealth is a neo-colonial institution from some Commonwealth heads of state.⁸ Compounding this argument is the fact that Britain is its largest funder, and the Commonwealth's headquarters (the Secretariat) are based in London, sometimes giving the impression that Westminster still holds the reins. And yet, in spite of the Commonwealth's relatively weak stature as an international grouping, new states have continued to join, often citing, in the case of Rwanda - the newest state - the Commonwealth's shared values as the attractive part of membership.⁹

Over the years, since its official inception, with the accession of a newly independent India, the Commonwealth has grown and developed from a club-like group of white settler colonies with Dominion status, to an international organisation with shared values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. One of the biggest changes to the Commonwealth, and the one to receive the most attention in the academy, was the organisation's official transition from a club-like association of states into an international organisation with the establishment of an independent Secretariat along with the appointment of a Secretary General, in 1965.¹⁰ Since the establishment of the Secretariat, under the supervision of various Secretary Generals, the Commonwealth has developed a number of mechanisms to help persuade Commonwealth governments to remain committed to democracy and the rule of law. These include the creation of a set of human rights principles, by which Commonwealth states agree to abide, and the establishment of a committee, referred to as the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, which has the power to suspend member states for up to two years.¹¹

The preceding paragraphs offer something of an overview of what the Commonwealth is and its position in world politics, but to conclude that this is all

⁷ For a discussion of the Commonwealth's lack of brand awareness see Oren Gruenbaum, 'Brand awareness', *The Commonwealth Update* (2015). Available at: <http://www.commonwealthroundtable.co.uk/commonwealth/brand-awareness/>

⁸ I refer here to accusations of neo-colonialism by the Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and the Gambian President Yahya Jammeh.

⁹ As I will show in Chapter 6, many interviewees as well as the Rwandan media point to shared values of democracy and the rule of law as Commonwealth attractions.

¹⁰ The establishment of the Secretariat and its importance of the Secretary General is discussed in Stuart Mole, 'From Smith to Sharma: The role of the Commonwealth Secretary General', in *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment, 1965-2009*, ed. James Mayall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 65-82.

¹¹ The principles, referred to as the Harare Principles from the 1991 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting from which they were launched, are now officially a part of the organisation's new membership criteria.

that I have in mind when I refer to the Commonwealth in the thesis would be only half the story. This is because, in an ontological sense, the Commonwealth is often referred to as more than the sum of its parts,¹² and this makes explaining, or pinning down what the organisation is rather more difficult. Key figures in the Commonwealth have, over the years, declared that it is easier to define what the Commonwealth is not, rather than what it is. This can be seen in the former Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson's proclamation that the Commonwealth:

is not an empire, an alliance, a power bloc, or a mutual security group. It is neither a diplomatic unit nor a trading and currency system for its members. Indeed, it is not an organisation requiring formal obligations or commitments...While there is no constitutional or legal relationship amongst all its members, there is a social, even a family, relationship which persists. This is not easily defined but does certainly distinguish Commonwealth meetings and discussions from other international gatherings...¹³

What is significant about Pearson's observation is that although made over fifty years ago, we can find similar references articulated more recently. In 2013, former Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon, described the organisation as meaning something different depending on where you lived geographically and politically across its fifty-three states. As McKinnon put it, with differing views of the Commonwealth from Africa, Europe, South and East Asia, or Oceania, 'you are never going to get one definition which everyone will say 'yeah, that's it.'¹⁴

These snapshots of elite opinion go some way to understanding my comment above that the Commonwealth is more than the sum of its parts. But these references are not confined to descriptions by Commonwealth elites. According to empirical research carried out by the Royal Commonwealth Society across a number of Commonwealth states, the very idea of what the Commonwealth is, what it does, and what it stands for, as understood by Commonwealth citizens, stretches further than intergovernmental bodies to include, 'the web of informal

¹² This was a phrase used most recently by the previous Commonwealth Secretary General in his 2014 Commonwealth day message. See Kamallesh Sharma, 'Secretary-General's message, Commonwealth day 2014'. Available at: <http://thecommonwealth.org/media/press-release/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-message-commonwealth-day-2014>.

¹³ Lester Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Lester B. Pearson, Volume Three: 1957-1968* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 289.

¹⁴ McKinnon makes these observations in the BBC Radio 4 programme 'Start the Week' aired on 25 February 2013. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01qw8bq>.

ties, shared experience, language, business links, legal frameworks and parliamentary systems that bind together countries with a shared colonial legacy.¹⁵ For the some 500 interviewees and contributors to discussions, surveys, and opinion polls, the Commonwealth is about ‘values and principles;’ as one interviewee put it, ‘more like a family than a factory.’¹⁶ What, then, does this mean for our understanding of the Commonwealth in the chapters that follow?

Over the following five chapters, the definition I have in mind when referring to the Commonwealth is primarily the idea of the group of states and their interactions under the auspices of Commonwealth relationships guided by a Secretariat accorded little in the way of decision making or power. As the Commonwealth is an organisation that follows the idea that heads of state and their foreign ministers are the key decision-makers on Commonwealth policy, including decision-making with regards to disciplining any state that has gone off the rails, and that all decision-making will be made among leaders with the idea of consensus in mind, this gives a firm foundation to this view of the organisation. While the thesis does not ignore the existence of the Secretariat and the Secretary General - it even discusses the establishment of the Secretariat in Chapter 4 - the nature of the Commonwealth as an international organisation remains clearly a focus on state-state relations with the link being Britain, and this is the idea I have in mind throughout the thesis - an idea that, likewise, appeared to be shared by most of the Zimbabweans I interviewed for the discussion in Chapter 5.

With these points in mind, much of the first three chapters of the thesis takes a relatively broad look at the membership of the Commonwealth as a whole. But, as the Commonwealth consists of fifty-three member states, with a combined population of around two billion, and stretches geographically across five continents, it became clear during the planning stages of the thesis that, at a certain point, a tighter geographical focus would be needed. I have chosen to focus the empirical chapters of this thesis on the African Commonwealth, more specifically Zimbabwe and Rwanda, for this purpose. I will expand in more detail

¹⁵ The research consisting of public opinion polls conducted to test the awareness about the Commonwealth among citizens in South Africa, Canada, Jamaica, Britain, Australia, Malaysia, India, as well as a series of online discussions and interviews in Sri Lanka, Cyprus, Ghana, New Zealand, and Trinidad and Tobago. See Joanna Bennett, Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah and Zoe Ware, *An Uncommon Association, a Wealth of Potential: Final Report of the Commonwealth Conversation* (London: The Royal Commonwealth Society, 2010).

¹⁶ Bennett, Sriskandarajah and Ware, *An Uncommon Association, a Wealth of Potential*.

on my reasons for the focus on Zimbabwe and Rwanda later in the chapter, for the remainder of this section I want to elaborate on the theme of the Commonwealth family.

1.1.2 The Commonwealth family

In her Christmas broadcast in 1970, the British Monarch - Queen Elizabeth II - referred to the member states of the Commonwealth as 'rather a special family of nations.'¹⁷ This was not the first time that a member of the British royal family had utilised familial discourse to refer to the collection of former British colonies. Following the abdication of King Edward VIII and the ensuing scandal, the British government, along with the media, had attempted to build a picture of family and family values around the new king and royal family. In her first Christmas speech in 1952, soon after the death of her father, Queen Elizabeth promised to continue her father and grandfather's work and pledged duty and allegiance to the wider Empire/family.¹⁸ As Jennifer McGuire points out, 'In much the same way as the monarchy had been promoted since George VI, the Palace and the BBC represented Queen Elizabeth to the Commonwealth in terms of traditional family values linked to Christian virtue.'¹⁹ In many of her addresses to the Commonwealth since, the Queen has made familial references, either drawing comparisons between her own family and the wider group of Commonwealth states or referring directly, as in the 1970 speech, to the Commonwealth as a family.

As the Queen holds the symbolic position as the Head of the Commonwealth, the reference to the fifty-three states as a family has been taken up and utilised by the Commonwealth Secretariat as an unofficial description of the organisation and the some two billion people that it represents.²⁰ The application of the familial

¹⁷ The Royal Family, 'Christmas broadcast 1970'. Available at: <https://www.royal.uk/christmas-broadcast-1970>.

¹⁸ The Royal Family, 'Christmas broadcast 1952'. Available at: <https://www.royal.uk/queens-first-christmas-broadcast-1952>.

¹⁹ Jennifer McGuire, 'Till death do us part? Commercial TV, Changing family values and Queen Elizabeth II's Commonwealth', in *Orb and Sceptre: Studies on British Imperialism and its Legacies, in Honour of Norman Etherington*, ed. Peter Limb (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2008). Available at: <http://books.publishing.monash.edu/apps/bookworm/view/Orb+and+Sceptre%3A+Studies+on+British+Imperialism+and+its+Legacies%2C+in+Honour+of+Norman+Etherington/141/xhtml/chapter12.html>.

²⁰ The Commonwealth Secretariat has taken the family metaphor further and has produced a short film showing who and what the Commonwealth family are, and what it

metaphor to describe the group of states with a constitutional connection to the United Kingdom, however, pre-dates Queen's 1952 speech to the Empire and Commonwealth and was first used officially in the mid nineteenth century to help bring the idea of the British overseas Empire home. As I outline in more detail in Chapter 2, in an attempt to shore up the Empire in the wake of turbulent economic and political changes, the British blurred the lines between home and away/international and domestic by thinking of the settler-colonies of the Empire as an extension of the British national community 'bound by shared norms, values, and purpose.'²¹ The idea that it was possible to translate a sense of national self-consciousness across the globe was helped by the idea that the Empire - and the idea of a Greater Britain - was a family forming what J. R. Seeley called an 'ethnological unity.'²²

The family metaphor has undergone distinct temporal changes both in ideology, in reference to the Empire/Commonwealth since the mid-nineteenth century, and in terms of what the family does, or means, in practical terms for its members. This was evident with regards to Britain's relationship with her colonised peoples beyond the Anglo-Saxon ethnological unity outlined above. Ideas about race and nationality intersected in the nineteenth century in complex ways.²³ To add to this complexity, familial discourse was often utilised by the British alongside scientific racist ideology to preclude the possibility of equality or progress by the native indigenous populations of the colonies, and to justify the need for continued British rule.²⁴ Indigenous peoples, in the role of the family children to the British parent, were described, utilising the rise in popularity of Darwinian explanation and scientific discovery, and this was a practice that continued well into the era of decolonisation.²⁵ As decolonisation proceeded apace and Britain needed to maintain a relationship with states such as India, what the family meant and its purpose for member states changed once again into, for Britain, compensation for

means to be a part of the Commonwealth family. See: The Commonwealth Secretariat, 'The Commonwealth family'. Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxoIQMNjppc>.

²¹ Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 113.

²² J. R. Seeley cited in Bell, *The Idea of a Greater Britain*, 113.

²³ For an interesting overview on the many complex and confusing intersections between race, nationality, and gender see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995).

²⁴ See Bell, *The Idea of a Greater Britain*.

²⁵ I will discuss the British use of scientific racist ideology in more detail in Chapter 2.

the loss of Empire,²⁶ and for former colonies, an anchor against which they could moor their new found recognition and growth.²⁷

Today, the family metaphor continues to be applied by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Queen to describe the fifty-three states and over two billion people who inhabit those Commonwealth states. But the Queen and the Secretariat are not the only ones to refer to the Commonwealth as a family. While the application of familial rhetoric is far from routine or regimented, references to the Commonwealth as a family can be found frequently by British politicians, particularly Conservative backbenchers and Lords. Perhaps the most well-known of these is Lord David Howell, formerly Minister for the Commonwealth in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office under Margaret Thatcher and keen observer of the Commonwealth, who, when I interviewed him for this thesis, reiterated the Queen's reference to the Commonwealth as a special family.²⁸ For Howell, the Commonwealth is an excellent channel for Britain's soft power as well as a way in which to solve many of the issues of inequality today.²⁹ Howell's opinion is one which is shared by previous Commonwealth Secretary Generals and special envoys whose opinion pieces frequently appear in *The Round Table* the Commonwealth journal of international affairs.³⁰

References such as these, from sources such as these, to the Commonwealth as a family point directly to familial discourse being utilised by the British to compensate for loss of its position on the world stage and loss of Empire. To further fan the embers of Britain's imperial past, these same Commonwealth Secretary Generals, Conservative politicians, and some high commissioners,

²⁶ For discussion around lingering ideas of Empire see Kwasi Kwarteng, *Ghosts of Empire: Britain's Legacies in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁷ For a discussion on the benefits of post-colonial relationships see Tamar Golan, 'How can France do everything that it does in Africa and get away with it?', *African Affairs* 80, no. 318 (1981): 3-11.

²⁸ Interview with Lord David Howell, London, 1 May 2015.

²⁹ See David Howell, 'The place of the Commonwealth in the international order', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 87, no. 345 (1998): 29-32.

³⁰ These views are held up particularly by Ramphal and McKinnon. See Shridath Ramphal, 'The Commonwealth in the global neighbourhood', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 86, no. 342 (1997): 175-85; Don McKinnon, 'A Commonwealth of values; a Commonwealth of incomparable value: Reflections of a Secretary-General 2000-2008', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 97, no. 394 (2008): 19-28. See also, Hugh Segal, 'The Commonwealth as a force for good', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 101, no. 3 (2012): 261-66.

special envoys and keen Commonwealth observers, over the years, have made claims that the Commonwealth is a unique organisation.³¹ Its uniqueness, they suggest, comes from its shared history and friendly, family-like relations between states.³² These claims, in practical terms, are nothing more than empty platitudes with little if anything in the way of evidence to back them up. Claims about the Commonwealth being unique in its familial discourse also fall short, as evidence and research show that the Francophonie and the Organisation of Ibero-American states also refer to themselves in familial terms.

In an article exploring the usage of familial labels among post-colonial groups of states, authors Alison Brysk, Craig Parsons and Wayne Sandholtz note that these familial relationships display some attributes of collective identity in which the 'notion of family implies ties of loyalty and solidarity, not just arm's-length exchange, and thus particular obligations.'³³ While the study offers insights beyond the Anglophone Commonwealth into some of the reasons why European former colonial powers hold on to familial discourse, the research views these relationships solely through the European ex-colonial lens, effectively ignoring the other side of the post-colonial relationship. The question then arises: if former European colonial powers continue to refer to their ongoing relationships with their former colonies in familial discourse, how do the former colonies understand these labels? But, this question is not raised entirely without evidence.

While I have painted a picture in this section of the Commonwealth family as largely a British reference, to conclude that this familial rhetoric is confined solely within the discourse of the British would be to ignore familial references made by Commonwealth heads of state and high commissioners beyond the Western frame. The most recent evidence of such familial discourse can be found in the transcripts of the closing press conference of the 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, held in Malta. The conference, chaired by a panel of heads of state consisting of: Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta (Kenya), Joseph Muscat (Malta), Baron Waqa (Nauru), John Dramani (Ghana), and Jerome Stuart (Barbados),

³¹ For examples of references to the 'unique family,' see Commonwealth Secretariat, *Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Report 2007* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2007).

³² I discuss the body of Commonwealth literature in more detail in later sections of this chapter.

³³ Alison Brysk, Craig Parsons and Wayne Sandholtz, 'After Empire: National identity and post-colonial families of nations', *European Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 2 (2002): 270.

closed the meeting, which had focused on three days of workshops and discussion around the theme of ‘Adding global value’ and the Commonwealth’s strengths to effect change on the global stage.³⁴ Pondering the outcomes of the three-day event, Prime Minister Stuart noted that the meeting had been a success ‘due to the values shared as a Commonwealth family.’³⁵ Taking this further, with an eye towards issues of climate change and international terrorism, Kenyatta added that the Commonwealth needed to move forward as a family to tackle such global problems.³⁶ These statements suggest the contours of a familial discourse that stretches further than speeches by British policy makers and the Queen.

It may be argued, of course, that these references to the Commonwealth family are little more than empty platitudes. On the one hand, I am cautious of attempts to reify non-British references to the Commonwealth as a family as evidence of something more than a signifier for a shared historical grouping. And yet, on the other hand, I think an attempt to look behind the notion of the Commonwealth as a family, in its various incarnations, may usefully open up a range of answers to questions raised about the organisation’s ability to endure. I thus approach the idea of the Commonwealth family with questions about the shared history and values of the Commonwealth to recover and illuminate an array of specific ideas about the organisation and the relationships between its member states. To help further our understanding of the Commonwealth I want to find a place for the organisation within international relations theories on identity and responsibility.³⁷ To do this, I want to apply cosmopolitan and communitarian theory and situate the Commonwealth within wider theoretical debates.

1.2 Cosmopolitanism and communitarianism

One of the central aims of this thesis, as I have outlined above, is to put the relevance of the contemporary Commonwealth into perspective. Understanding what the organisation means to its member states is a key factor in achieving this aim. To help understand the Commonwealth, I want to examine the organisation

³⁴ See ‘The Theme for the CHOGM Malta 2015’. Available at: <https://chogm2015.mt/about#commonwealth-theme>.

³⁵ Jerome Stuart in ‘Concluding Press Conference CHOGM 2015’. Available at: <https://chogm2015.mt>.

³⁶ Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta in Concluding Press Conference CHOGM 2015’. Available at: <https://chogm2015.mt>.

³⁷ These categories are based on Samuel Scheffler’s division of cosmopolitanism into two key ideas. See Samuel Scheffler, ‘Conceptions of cosmopolitanism’, *Utilitas* 11, no. 3 (1999): 255-276.

through the lenses of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism respectively. The field of normative IR theory has traditionally been mapped as a debate that centres around the ideas of identity, boundaries, and the ethics of co-existence,³⁸ in the belief that the global and the national are discrete conditions that mutually exclude each other.³⁹ On one side of the debate, there are cosmopolitans who believe that we, as humans, ought not be defined solely by the nationality into which we were born, but instead think of ourselves more as belonging (at least potentially) to a single community that encompasses all human beings regardless of their race, political affiliation, religion, or sexuality. For cosmopolitans, being a member of this worldwide community of human beings means that we have certain moral and ethical responsibilities to our fellow humans to alleviate hunger, poverty, persecution, homelessness, or any of the numerous other afflictions that continue to affect those in less fortunate positions than ourselves.⁴⁰

Contrary to the cosmopolitan view of the individual as untethered, communitarians believe that we are defined by the communities into which we were born, and our identities are fixed.⁴¹ For communitarians, the common locality of one's family, community, town, city, and state, represents a unified space that cultivates qualitative relationships and helps us to form identities.⁴² We cannot conceive ourselves as independent from the communities that we inhabit,

³⁸ For a detailed overview of the theoretical debate see Richard Shapcott, *International Ethics: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010); Ian Clark, *Globalisation and International Relations Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Janna Thompson, *Justice and World Order: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992); Molly Cochran, *Normative Theory in International Relations: A Pragmatic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

³⁹ The debate largely centres around the debate over distributive justice and the question: *to whom do we owe duties?* There is an enormous body of literature on distributive justice. I provide a small snapshot here: David Held and Garrett Wallace Brown, eds., *The Cosmopolitanism Reader* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010); Charles Jones, *Global Justice: Defending Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Gillian Brock, *Global Justice: Cosmopolitan Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); Brian Barry, 'Humanity and justice in global perspective', in *Ethics, Economics and the Law*, eds. J. Ronald Pennock and John Chapman (New York: New York University Press, 1982), 219-52; Brian Barry, 'International society from a cosmopolitan perspective', in *International Society*, eds. David Maple and Terry Nardin (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 144-63.

⁴⁰ Thomas Pogge, ed., *Freedom from Poverty as a Human Right: Who Owes What to the Very Poor?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Peter Singer, *The Life You Can Save: How to Play Your Part in Ending World Poverty* (London: Picador, 2010); Peter Singer, 'Famine, affluence and morality', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1972): 229-43.

⁴¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

⁴² Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

and our highest and most complete moral existence is one we can only obtain through being members of a community.⁴³ Hannah Arendt captured the communitarian position well when she observed that you cannot be a citizen of the world as you can a community, because the world is vague and hopelessly vacuous.⁴⁴

Shared language and shared memories help to cement communal feelings and interests associated with being part of a community, which, in turn, make it easier to comply with the norms and values of one's community.⁴⁵ We are embedded in the common history and values of our communities and this helps to solidify mutual recognition of a 'we-feeling' or belonging among members.⁴⁶ When it comes to ethical and moral responsibility, for communitarians, one's ties to one's family, community, and nation dictate the boundaries of our responsibilities.⁴⁷ Communitarians argue for a politics of the good – that is the good of the community – over a politics of the rights of the individual. As most communitarians see it, this solidarity or 'we-feeling'⁴⁸ is established by a number of shared elements, which work together to help present a picture of the common good. These elements, which I describe in the thesis as inheritance, shared values, and solidarity, all work together to give the impression that the communities into which we are born are meaningful.⁴⁹

One of the central arguments of this thesis that, despite the fact that it is an international organisation made up of independent states, the Commonwealth, which views itself as a family, shares many of the elements that are central to the communitarian thesis outlined above. This shared history and family element, as well as shared language and shared values, points which I will elaborate on and return to throughout the thesis, are often described both by the Commonwealth Secretariat and in the vast body of literature devoted to the organisation as the unique selling points of the Commonwealth. This observation troubles the idea of

⁴³ Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴⁴ Hannah Arendt quoted in Jean Bethke Elshtain, 'Really existing communities', *Review of International Studies* 25 (1999): 143.

⁴⁵ Emanuel Adler, *Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁴⁶ Chris Brown, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

⁴⁷ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*.

⁴⁸ Brown, *International Relations Theory*, 70.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Frazer, *The Problems of Communitarian Politics: Unity and Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 43.

communitarianism, which theorises identity and responsibility within the borders of the state. And yet, while the Commonwealth appears to exhibit communitarian traits, thus presenting a more nuanced understanding of relationships between states on the international arena, the organisation has, since the mid 1990s, adopted a cosmopolitan outlook. This grew in part out of attempts to establish clear goals for the organisation beyond the decolonisation process and the issues of race, human rights, and equality amplified by the struggles in South Africa against the apartheid regime.

Cosmopolitanism, within the Commonwealth, centres largely around the promotion of universal principles of human rights which were enshrined in the Harare Declaration in 1991. Accompanying the Principles was a more relaxed approach to cross-border intervention and a willingness to use diplomatic tools to contribute to the attainment of global goals shared by Commonwealth member states and beyond. To fully adapt to this cosmopolitan outlook, the Commonwealth, for the first time, defined itself officially as an organisation of peoples as well as states and went a step further in 1995 when it opened up its membership to states outside of the constitutional/colonial connection to Britain.⁵⁰

How are we to view the Commonwealth through the cosmopolitan and communitarian frame? From one angle, the organisation appears to be stretching communitarian understandings of community with ideas of shared history that stretch beyond the state. From a different angle, the Commonwealth is striving to be a cosmopolitan organisation where states work together to achieve universal human rights goals. It is difficult to position the organisation in one camp or the other, or, indeed, if we should position it at all. With this in mind, the argument of this thesis is that the Commonwealth inhabits a kind of threshold zone between its communitarian past and its cosmopolitan future. In exploring this claim, I have attempted to find a balance between theoretical analysis and empirical observation by firstly examining the organisation through the lenses of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism and showing the agreements and shortfalls of each, and secondly by examining the views and understandings of the Commonwealth from two states on opposite sides of the shared history/shared

⁵⁰ The first state to be admitted to the Commonwealth outside of the Anglophone group of former British colonies was Mozambique. te Velde discusses Mozambique's accession in detail in her study of the continuing attraction of the Commonwealth as a global brand. See te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*.

values debate. For the remainder of this section of the chapter I want to outline in more detail how the empirical chapters of the thesis will help to draw conclusions about the communitarianism and/or cosmopolitanism of the organisation.

1.2.1 The communitarian family

I have already outlined why I believe that the Commonwealth family appears to offer a more nuanced understanding of relations between states. But, what I have not yet addressed is that the thesis likewise shines a spotlight on the tendency by many communitarian theorists to over-simplify cultural homogeneity and gloss over the fact that communities - or in this case families - are far from the neat, culturally homogenous, happy, safe, loving places that communitarians describe. What interests me in this respect are the messier aspects of the Commonwealth family. While the thesis argues that the Commonwealth conforms to many of the main tenets of the communitarian thesis - shared history, shared values, and so on - it likewise troubles the communitarian thesis by showing that families can be cruel, messy, ambiguous, as well as, in the case of the Commonwealth family, culturally and historically diverse places. Throughout the thesis, I am deeply interested in the myriad examples of this messiness and diversity, however where the thesis makes its most original contribution is in its empirical study of two cases in the African Commonwealth - Zimbabwe and Rwanda.

The choice to focus my empirical chapters on Zimbabwe and Rwanda is informed by the fact that both states have challenged the shared values and shared history of the Commonwealth and, as such, have raised important questions about the continuing relevance of the organisation. What is significant about both of these cases is they provide a cross section of the main elements under scrutiny in this thesis and, when viewed together, demonstrate a certain amount of flaunting of both cosmopolitanism and communitarianism. As a means by which to explore African understandings of the Commonwealth with its messy and violent history, diverse culture, and problem children Zimbabwe and Rwanda are exemplary cases. By focusing on Zimbabwe and Rwanda, I wish to open the idea of the Commonwealth as a family to a theoretical analysis that has so far been sorely lacking in the Commonwealth literature. Seeking only the view from the British side of the Commonwealth, as I argue in the following section most of the literature does, cannot, in my view, explain what lies behind Commonwealth endurance or the continuation of the family theme. To ask why being a member of

the Commonwealth family remains attractive to states - despite its lack of real purpose - involves investigating not only the reasons for interest from new members but also the tensions that manifest in the old.

Beginning with Zimbabwe, if one of the aims of the thesis is to show how the Commonwealth family troubles communitarian thinking in IR, then the empirical study in the case of Zimbabwe is exemplary as it troubles the communitarian idea of the family itself. This is because, in 2003, amid accusations of human rights abuse and election tampering, and after being suspended from the Commonwealth for a two year period, the Zimbabwean government withdrew the troubled state from the family altogether. As I will show in more detail in Chapter 5, there were many additional factors that drove the Zimbabwean President to walk away from the Commonwealth, and, likewise, many additional ways in which Zimbabwe troubles the idea of family, but the most noteworthy, for the purposes of this introduction, was the role of three key players: the Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, the South African President Thabo Mbeki, and the Australian Prime Minister John Howard. Each of these figures played a key role in the Commonwealth's decision to suspend Zimbabwe.⁵¹ But where the Zimbabwean familial story becomes most interesting is that each one of these men is viewed differently and variously as a traitor, partner, brother, and betrayer of the Zimbabwean state.

This information was conveyed to me during fieldwork in Zimbabwe. In a bid to understand the withdrawal of Zimbabwe and whether, or how, the withdrawal had affected the troubled state, I travelled to Harare in 2015 to carry out a series of interviews. I will elaborate on the methodological aspects of the fieldwork in later sections of this chapter, as well as in the empirical chapters themselves, but for the purposes of this overview the information that I was given, and the stories that I was told by Zimbabwean elites, painted a very ambiguous picture of a state and its people who, as they saw it, were not fully out of the Commonwealth, but out enough to feel the loss of not being part of a family that helped facilitate the

⁵¹ The Commonwealth sent two missions to Zimbabwe in 2002, one was the official Commonwealth Election Monitoring Team and the other was a Troika which consisted of Obasanjo, Howard, and Mbeki. The Troika had the final say on whether the Commonwealth would announce the Zimbabwean elections free and fair. I expand on the Troika and the key figures involved in Chapter 5 of the thesis, but for an overview of the events that led to the withdrawal of Zimbabwe from a Commonwealth perspective, see Don McKinnon, *In the Ring: A Commonwealth Memoir* (London: Elliott and Thompson, 2013).

independence of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe in 1979.⁵² Compounding the complication further was the fact that, even though Zimbabwe is no longer officially a member of the Commonwealth family, many Zimbabweans believe that only one person left the Commonwealth and the rest of the country remains.

The inside-but not quite/outside-but not fully dichotomy that the Zimbabwe case presents complicates the communitarian idea that families and communities are neat, settled places. Through the case of Zimbabwe the Commonwealth becomes interesting as it is through the fudging of the distinctions between inside and outside, international and domestic that we can begin to see how its member states help make the Commonwealth family such an exemplary case for grounding the theoretical dichotomy at the heart of normative IR studies. And yet, what makes the Commonwealth more intriguing is that, while on the one hand the thesis attempts to show, through both theoretical analysis and empirical application, that the Commonwealth fits the main tenets of the communitarian thesis, on the other hand it also provides a view of how the Commonwealth appears to look through a cosmopolitan lens.

1.2.2 Cosmopolitan organisation?

In 1991, out of the messy, clogged up family infighting around the question of sanctions on the apartheid regime in South Africa, and following the end of the Cold War, the Commonwealth attempted to recreate itself as a more ideal-utopian cosmopolitan organisation. A key characteristic of this cosmopolitan outlook was a set of human rights principles - the Harare Declaration - which turned the focus from a family of nations to a family of two billion members with individual human rights. One of the first real tests for the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism saw the organisation attempt to discipline Zimbabwe, which led the troubled state to walk away. This loss left the Commonwealth vulnerable and, since then, it has largely focused its suspension and disciplinary mechanisms on military coups and the restoration of democracy.⁵³ But, in 2009, following a change in membership

⁵² For an overview on the role the Commonwealth played in the independence of Zimbabwe see Mayall, 'Introduction', 3-20.

⁵³ Since the suspension and withdrawal of Zimbabwe, in spite of widespread human rights abuse across the Commonwealth, the only states to have been suspended are Fiji and Pakistan. Both states were suspended for coups. In the entire time that the Commonwealth Ministerial Group (CMAG) has existed, it has only suspended states on 5 occasions: Nigeria, Fiji x2, Zimbabwe, Pakistan x2. See 'Withdrawals and suspension', *The Commonwealth Network*. Available at:

criteria, which opened up the Commonwealth to a more cosmopolitan and inclusive membership, based more on the shared values of democracy and human rights, rather than the shared history of colonialism, Rwanda joined the organisation, offering a chance to repair the hole that Zimbabwe had left behind.

Rwanda had no historical, nor constitutional, connection to any of the other fifty-two members of the Commonwealth and, therefore, none of the messiness that often accompanies familial relationships. Much like Achille Mbembe's description of Africa, Rwanda, by analogy, and coming from a recent history of genocide, was characterised by its apparent emptiness.⁵⁴ For the Commonwealth, paraphrasing Mbembe, Rwanda provided a blank slate, it was an exemplar of nothingness onto which the Commonwealth could project its ideal values.⁵⁵ But, while Rwanda might have seemed the ideal test case for the Commonwealth's turn to cosmopolitanism, the troubled state also brings its own baggage.

On closer examination the case of Rwanda tells a double story, as we begin to see that by turning its gaze towards the Commonwealth, the fragile East African state was turning its back on the malignant communitarianism of its own Francophone family. While there is nothing particularly striking about this observation, after all, France's alleged role in the Rwandan genocide is the subject of much research,⁵⁶ what is particularly interesting is that, when we look behind Rwanda's application to the Commonwealth we find questions and potential sources of disjuncture around Rwanda's ability to project the image of an ideal child who has come to save the family. This is because, by embracing the Anglophone Commonwealth, the Rwandan government has been able to advance an anti-Francophone agenda, which has potentially damaging results for the Francophone Rwandans who are being excluded or left behind.

The case of Rwanda, then, is a messy one, and yet, it is an increasingly common assumption, by many of the Commonwealth's keenest observers, that the accession of new states, such as Rwanda, are proof that the organisation remains

<http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/commonwealth/commonwealth-membership/withdrawals-and-suspension/>.

⁵⁴ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony: Studies in the History of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 2001), 4.

⁵⁵ Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 4.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Daniela Kroslak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007).

relevant.⁵⁷ In Chapter 6, I question whether Rwanda's own troubled, violent family, characterised by a number of laws ushered in by the Rwandan government since the 1994 genocide, makes it such an ideal member of the Commonwealth in its cosmopolitan form.

Over the next 5 chapters I will examine the Commonwealth, first in its entirety as it moved from a small group of Dominion states to the fifty-three strong membership it enjoys today, and then through the ideas and understandings of these two African states, but before doing so I want to discuss a number of problems within the existing Commonwealth literature. This will help underscore the originality of the thesis, while also showing why a study of this kind makes an important contribution to both the body of literature on the Commonwealth.

1.3 Commonwealth literature and its discontents

While there is an enormous canon of literature devoted to the Commonwealth, these studies have taken a largely historical focus on the developments within the organisation,⁵⁸ and as a result, questions of a critical or theoretical nature have historically been excluded. This exclusion has, to an important degree, been complicit in building a particular construction of the Commonwealth as something much more important, and much more relevant, than it is in reality. In a scathing attack in 2000, Ian Taylor drew attention to this issue when he pointed out that the corpus of literature devoted to the Commonwealth is,

⁵⁷ This is an argument that runs throughout the discourse from the Commonwealth Secretariat and the literature on the Commonwealth. Although no significant study has been done on why states evince an interest in joining the organisation, te Velde's research offers a brief discussion of states that have taken an interest. See te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*.

⁵⁸ The most comprehensive studies, which provide perhaps the best overview of both the organisation itself and the vast literature devoted to it, are McIntyre, *British Decolonisation, 1946-1997*; McIntyre, *A Guide to the Contemporary Commonwealth*; W. McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth 1965-90*; W. David McIntyre, *The Commonwealth of Nations: Origins and Impact, 1869-1971* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); W. David McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth* (London: Blandford Press, 1974); J. D. B. Miller, *The Commonwealth in the World* (London: Duckworth, 1965); David Adamson, *The Last Empire: Britain and the Commonwealth* (London: Tauris, 1989). However, for a thematic overview of Commonwealth literature up until the early 1990s, see Patricia Larby and Harry Hannam, *The Commonwealth* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 1993). For an overview of the main journal articles by historical theme see Alex May, ed., *The Commonwealth and International Affairs: The Round Table Centennial Selection* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

‘overwhelmingly descriptive, historical and lacking in theoretical substance.’⁵⁹ In Taylor’s view, much like the Commonwealth itself, the literature devoted to the organisation, ‘has...sought to avoid controversy and has been largely devoid of any strong critical reflection.’⁶⁰ Taylor’s critique prompted those interested in the Commonwealth to think beyond the disciplinary borders of historical observation. And yet, since Taylor made this observation, little has changed.⁶¹ Those who write on the Commonwealth continue to produce prosaic studies rarely critical and seldom theoretical in their approach to the organisation.

It is not entirely clear why this is the case. A survey of the literature reveals, however, two interesting observations, which might go some way to explaining the reasons for the largely critically and theoretically anaemic Commonwealth canon. The first is Krishnan Srinivasan’s suggestion that, some of the organisation’s keenest observers feel that criticising the Commonwealth is akin to criticising the Queen, who remains widely respected across the Commonwealth as the head of the organisation.⁶² Evidence for this can be found in a number of sources including, but not restricted to, both the British and international media as well as biographies of former African heads of state.⁶³ Reflecting on the Queen’s connection to the Commonwealth and her popularity, Charles Douglas-Home, editor of *The Times*, in 1984, observed, ‘in thirty two years as Head of the Commonwealth, the Queen’s stature had increased enormously...Crown and Commonwealth are in my view indivisible.’⁶⁴ A further example, in 2003, shows the Director-General of the Royal Commonwealth Society refer to the unifying role which the Queen had undertaken in the last 50 years. In his view, ‘That role has at times been decisive in holding together a diverse association in times of crisis...There is no groundswell in the Commonwealth to diminish the role of its

⁵⁹ Ian Taylor, ‘Legitimation and de-legitimation within a multilateral organisation: South Africa and the Commonwealth’, *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Science* 27, no. 1 (2000): 51.

⁶⁰ Taylor, ‘Legitimation and de-legitimation within a multilateral organisation’: 51.

⁶¹ There is, perhaps, one exception which is te Velde’s attempt to examine the Commonwealth through the lens of its membership criteria, its recent enlargement, and its constant reincarnation. See te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*.

⁶² Srinivasan charts a number of incidences where the Queen is mentioned by governments for their continued membership in the Commonwealth. See Krishnan Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁶³ Particularly noteworthy in this respect are studies on Kwame Nkrumah’s relationship with the Queen. See David Rooney, *The Political Kingdom in the Third World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988); David Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Father of African Nationalism* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1990).

⁶⁴ Charles Douglas-Home, ‘Crown and Commonwealth (II)’, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 73, no. 292 (1984): 360.

head: indeed, the opposite is the case.⁶⁵ Such examples are striking in their unbending assurance of the Queen's Commonwealth stature, and go some way towards underscoring Srinivasan's claim.

The second observation, related to the reasons for the largely prosaic nature of Commonwealth literature, relates to the lives of the authors themselves. While critically surveying the body of literature, in 1976, J. E. Spence pointed out that many of the authors writing on the Commonwealth were 'publicists or politicians at the end of their careers.'⁶⁶ While there is nothing particularly striking about this observation, it is Spence's conclusion that these political figures, in the twilight of their careers, are desperately searching for 'some magic formula to give the Commonwealth a 'vital' role to play as a 'third force' in international politics,'⁶⁷ that is revealing. Putting a more recent spin on Spence's observation, Srinivasan points out that the Commonwealth segment of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), 'for years oversold the special quality of Commonwealth relations, while the rest of the FCO remained unconvinced and was more oriented towards Europe and the United States.'⁶⁸ This observation is interesting, it suggests that the search for an elusive magic formula continues to be the spectre that haunts the Commonwealth as, contrary to Spence's observation that this practice is restricted to those who no longer have an active role in politics, the practice of elevating the Commonwealth's status is something that is much more common and much less restricted to retirees.

Whatever the reasons for the lack of critical focus on the Commonwealth, the body of literature on the organisation can at best be understood through a loose typology accredited to Peter Lyon, who divides the literature into two categories, which he labels, on the one hand, 'utopian boosterism' and on the other, 'cynical dismissal.'⁶⁹ Those who practice utopian boosterism fit the descriptions of the previous paragraph, while those who cynically dismiss the Commonwealth frequently sound the death knell of the organisation. Neither group, in Lyon's view, has subjected the Commonwealth to any searching analysis.⁷⁰ If there

⁶⁵ Director General of the Royal Commonwealth Society cited in Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth*, 111.

⁶⁶ J. E. Spence, 'The future of the Commonwealth', *The Ditchley Journal* 3, no. 1 (1976): 70.

⁶⁷ Spence, 'The future of the Commonwealth': 70.

⁶⁸ Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth*, 119.

⁶⁹ Peter Lyon, 'Foreword', in Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), xiii.

⁷⁰ Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth*, 3.

appears to be a sense of frustration here, it concerns the extent to which the gulf between prosaic descriptions of the Commonwealth, which have a tendency to utopianise its achievements, and real critical analysis appears to widen even in the face of efforts to bridge them. Equally concerning is a tendency, by many contributors to the literature, to confuse the difference between what they believe the Commonwealth is capable of achieving and what it *actually* achieves.⁷¹

In many ways this thesis is a sustained quarrel with this body of literature. But, while I am critical of the attempts to utopianise the Commonwealth in the literature, this utopianisation, in its various incarnations, usefully opens up a range of questions that shape my inquiry. For example, why does the Commonwealth continue to refer to itself as a family and why does it believe, despite the French and the Spanish post-colonial organisations likewise applying the family label, that its family is unique? Does the family label disguise the messiness and dysfunction that often appears to define relations between Commonwealth member states? Is the family metaphor and the family rhetoric employed by the Queen, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and some heads of state, anything more than a simple description of a group of states who were once part of a larger imperial family - by force rather than by choice? And, finally, as I have already mentioned, has the fact that the organisation refers to itself as a family had an effect on Commonwealth endurance?

What is of interest here is that there has been very little attention to any of these ideas or questions in the literature. While valuable contributions to our understanding of the application of metaphor in politics have been made by a number of political scientists and sociologists,⁷² who note that many political leaders are highly dependent on familial metaphors and analogy to cement their

⁷¹ Many of the Commonwealth's most avid exaggerators are former Secretary-Generals, in particular Shridath Ramphal and Kamallesh Sharma. See, for example, Shridath Ramphal, 'The Commonwealth in the global neighbourhood', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 86, no. 342 (1997): 175-85; Richard Bourne, ed., *Shridath Ramphal: The Commonwealth and the World: Essays in Honour of his 80th Birthday* (London: Hansib, 2008). Recently, the out-going Secretary General Kamallesh Sharma has begun to do this also. See Sharma's speech to King's College London, Kamallesh Sharma, 'The global value of the Commonwealth' *Public Lecture Series*, 21 November 2013.

⁷² George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Sara Hayden, 'Family metaphors and the nation: Promoting a politics of care through the million mom march', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 3 (2003): 196-215; Adrian Beard, *The Language of Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000); Jan Bosman, 'Persuasive effects of political metaphors', *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 2, no. 2 (1987): 97-113; Zoltán Kövesces, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

hold on power domestically,⁷³ rather less attention has been paid to the question of whether the familial metaphor extends to the domain of international relations and foreign policy. Michael Schatzberg, in his study of the use of the familial metaphor in the politics of states in Middle Africa, found that, although not as prevalent as the domestic arena, familial, particularly paternal, metaphors do cross into the realm of the international.⁷⁴ While contributions such as Schatzberg's are invaluable to our understanding of the political use of the family metaphor, there has been no exploration in the Commonwealth literature around the roots and origins of the family label, and whether this might have different meaning across the different regions and individual states.

It is curious that such a gap exists, given the extensive focus in recent years on the nineteenth century family in history and literature.⁷⁵ We have only to turn to the work of Jennifer McGuire and Philip Murphy to recognise the scope for such enquiry. While, in the past, McGuire's work has focused on the British royal family as a model for the Commonwealth and explored how the family of George VI was upheld as the ideal Christian family and model for the wider Empire,⁷⁶ Murphy's more recent research charts the relationship between the Queen, the British government, and the Commonwealth.⁷⁷ Both McGuire and Murphy provide a useful window into the world of the British Monarch and her relationship with the Commonwealth. They can be situated in the context of a burgeoning interest in the interrelated histories of post-war Britain, Empire, and decolonisation. Yet, whereas both authors take an interest in the Commonwealth, the Queen, and the idea of the family, their work is, nevertheless, entirely British-centric.

⁷³ The most prolific example is, of course, the Kim dynasty in North Korea. For a discussion on the intergenerational strength of the familial metaphor in its starkest form see Charles Armstrong, 'The role and influence of ideology', in *North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy and Society*, eds. Kyung-Ae Park and Scott Snyder (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 3-18.

⁷⁴ By Middle Africa Schatzberg refers to Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, and Kenya. Michael Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 17-19.

⁷⁵ There has been extensive focus see for example Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britain and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Leonore Davidoff, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink, and Katherine Holden, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830-1960* (London: Longman, 1999); John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005); Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, eds. *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁷⁶ McGuire, 'Til death do us part?'

⁷⁷ Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*.

While some may not view this as a major criticism, after all the Commonwealth is essentially a British organisation, what is intriguing is the lack of non-Western voices writing in the corpus of literature devoted to the Commonwealth. Even more noteworthy for the purposes of the focus of the empirical chapters later in this thesis, is the relative lack of empirical evidence - in the form of interviews or media analysis - on the Commonwealth from any of the fifty-two (non-British) Commonwealth member states. It is seldom that the literature on the Commonwealth invokes the voices and opinions of elites from Commonwealth countries, or attempts to read the organisation through non-Western eyes.⁷⁸ And seldom that the views and opinions of the wider Commonwealth family are sought in connection to any of the issues and questions outlined above. Ruth Craggs made a similar observation in her review of Murphy's research on the Queen and the Commonwealth. As Craggs points out, while viewing the Queen's relationship with the Commonwealth through the eyes of a British Commonwealth and royal historian is interesting, a non-British view from elsewhere in the Commonwealth would be equally, if not more, interesting for the purposes of understanding the idea of Commonwealth, Empire, and royalty from the perspective of Britain's former colonies.⁷⁹

Cragg's suggestion is particularly pertinent in the light of the recent events such as the lawsuit brought by the group of elderly Kenyans (known as the Mau Mau) against the British government in 2012,⁸⁰ or the recent decision by Jamaica to push forward for a republican agenda.⁸¹ In light of these and other developments, the notion of the Commonwealth as a family appears to lose its shine. If members of the Commonwealth are bringing lawsuits against Britain and attempting to cut

⁷⁸ Although there are a small number of *Round Table* articles written by African authors, these writers largely fit the description of Spence's 'publicists and politicians' at the end of their careers. There is very little if any empirical evidence of interviews with African elites across the African Commonwealth.

⁷⁹ Ruth Craggs, 'Review of Monarchy and the end of empire: The House of Windsor, the British government, and the postwar Commonwealth', *Reviews in History* no. 1610 (2014), online.

⁸⁰ The Mau Mau lawsuit involved a group of elderly Kenyans who were interned in a concentration camp in Kenya during the 1950s and early 1960 during the Kenyan Emergency. They successfully sued the British government for colonial compensation in 2013. For an overview of the case see 'The Mau Mau claims', available on the website of the British law firm who helped fight the legal case. Available at <https://www.leighday.co.uk/International-and-group-claims/Kenya/The-Mau-Mau-claims>.

⁸¹ For a simple yet thorough discussion of Jamaica's decision to become a republic see Joseph Wint, *The Queen of Jamaica* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2012).

their ties to the British Monarch, what does this mean for the notion of the Commonwealth as a family?

It is rare that critics invoking the concept of the Commonwealth as a family reflect on what this really means for the Commonwealth's non-British members. Most obviously, and highly surprisingly, the voices across the rest of the Commonwealth have been all but ignored.⁸² As an exploration of the metaphor of family and how we might use the concept to ground the normative debate, then, this thesis offers a corrective to the largely prosaic and Western-centric literature by including the voices of Zimbabwean and Rwandan elites.

The thesis largely focuses on the period from when the official Commonwealth began, with the accession of India in 1948/49, to the contemporary Commonwealth today. Nevertheless, in evaluating critically the conception of the Commonwealth as a family and the ways in which it can, and has, contributed to the appearance of more nuanced relations between Commonwealth states, it is necessary to take a step back briefly into the British Empire where the application of familial discourse began. In this way, the thesis begins with a less theoretical and more historical exploration of the family label and how it has been employed by Britain to describe her relationship with colonial and post-colonial states since the middle of the nineteenth century. In this way, the thesis provides some historical context for the idea of the Commonwealth as a family, before engaging with the more theoretical and analytical debate. By attending to the Commonwealth as a family with its roots stretching back to the past, we may at once broaden our sense and understanding of the endurance of the organisation in a much broader way than exists in the current literature.

The central aim of this thesis, then, is to provoke a critical analysis of the Commonwealth while injecting some long overdue theoretical and empirical research, through the cases of Zimbabwe and Rwanda, into what, as I have shown in the section, is a very stale uncritical literature. In order to explore the cases of Zimbabwe and Rwanda and how they both view, fit into, and problematise the theoretical puzzle at the heart of this thesis, the thesis draws on qualitative data in the form of interviews carried out with elites in both states. My project is to

⁸² te Velde does include interview data in her exploration of changing Commonwealth membership, but this is little more than interviews with officials from the Rwandan High Commission in London. te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*.

explore how elites in the African Commonwealth understand the organisation and what valence and political and social meaning the Commonwealth family has for African states. Through the views and opinions of elites, we can broaden our sense of the complexity and messiness that runs through the Commonwealth family and by doing so open up new theoretical and critical channels through which to study the Commonwealth and its family beyond the British idea. By steering the discussion towards a view of the Commonwealth from two very different members of the Commonwealth - one historic and one new - I provide a new and unique perspective on how non-Western members view the Commonwealth. In the following section I am going to provide an overview of the methods and approaches I use to do this.

1.4 Methods and methodological influences

Methodologically, the thesis is grounded in a constructivist approach that views international relations between states as being fundamentally shaped by shared meanings, ideas, and norms.⁸³ Constructivist Alexander Wendt has argued that change is a slow process, it follows then that if norms and ideas are internalised or institutionalised over a long period, such as those of loyalty, solidarity, and reproduction, that are ingrained in family membership, then they are deeply embedded and difficult to change.⁸⁴ In employing a constructivist approach, I intend to push beyond the simple 'fact' that a group of post-colonial states refer to themselves as a family in order to probe how embedded meanings, ideas, and norms have shaped identity and the relationship between Britain and other members of the Commonwealth. To supplement the constructivist approach, and in light of the discussion earlier in the chapter regarding the lack of critical or theoretical studies on the Commonwealth, the thesis draws on a number of additional literatures in its study of the Commonwealth family, most notably imperial history, Victorian literature, and post-colonial theory.⁸⁵

⁸³ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1, 24; Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International norm dynamics and political change', *International Organisation* 52, no. 4 (1998): 891.

⁸⁴ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 315. Brysk, Parsons and Sandholtz argue that the self-described families of states (Commonwealth, Francophonie, Ibero-American Organisation) present a distinctive set of identities and norms in the period since decolonisation. Brysk, Parsons and Sandholtz, 'After Empire': 270. See also: Jo Ann Fagot Aviel, 'Spanish aid policies', in *The Ibero-American Space: Dimensions and Perceptions of the Special Relationship between Spain and Latin America*, eds. Joaquin Roy, Albert Galinsoga Jordá (Miami, FL: University of Miami Press, 1997).

⁸⁵ There is a wealth of relatively new research on Victorian views and attitudes of the family and its wider application to the Empire. This new direction has largely been

One study in particular has helped push the research in several directions. This is Michael Schatzberg's work on the political legitimacy of paternal and familial metaphors in the governance of several middle African states.⁸⁶ For Schatzberg, who has researched extensively the use of metaphor in African politics, the idea that the nation is an extended family with the head of state as father, is an notion which is deeply rooted in many African cultures.⁸⁷ Schatzberg's classic work, which operates at one level as an insightful discussion of the family metaphor in African politics, has also been a significant player in looking beyond the West, and the Weberian forms of legal domination that underscore the legitimacy of the state,⁸⁸ to create an analytical space for a combination of cultural, mental, and emotional images of local importance which might rival established Western notions of power and legitimacy.⁸⁹ Schatzberg's work proved invaluable as a starting point in attempting to understand how the metaphor of the family might be viewed as something deeper than a simple label to describe a group of states.

In addition to Schatzberg's work on Africa, the thesis draws on the vast body of literature devoted to the issues, domestic politics, and foreign policy in Zimbabwe and Rwanda, in order to understand more fully the political climate in both states

influenced by feminism, postcolonial critiques, and cultural studies, through the work of scholars such as Antoinette Burton, Catherine Hall, and Kathleen Wilson who, in their work, explore the ways in which gender, race, sexuality, and power are produced, represented, negotiated, and challenged in a number of imperial contexts as well as how identities were shaped by Empire both at home and abroad. See Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire, A Reader: Colonisers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸⁶ Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa*.

⁸⁷ See also Michael Schatzberg, 'The metaphors of father and family', in *The Political Economy of Cameroon*, eds. Michael Schatzberg and I. William Zartman (New York: Praeger, 1986), 1-19; Michael Schatzberg, 'Power, legitimacy and 'democratisation' in Africa', *Africa* 63, no. 4 (1993): 445-61.

⁸⁸ Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, 2 vols. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1978).

⁸⁹ For further analysis on political language and perceptions see: Alfred Schultz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, trans George Walsh and Frederic Lehnert (Evanston, IL: Northwest University Press, 1967); Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday-Anchor, 1966).

at the time of withdrawal and accession to the Commonwealth, respectively.⁹⁰ As might be expected, there is an enormous literature on both Zimbabwe and Rwanda and the domestic, regional, and international relations of the states,⁹¹ but rather less on the relationship that both states have, or have had, with the Commonwealth.⁹² Additionally, in comparison to the number of Western academics and policy makers, whose voices and opinions all add to an enormous corpus of Commonwealth observation and thought, there are far fewer African voices from which to gain a more nuanced perspective on whether the Commonwealth is still relevant in Africa.⁹³

This observation swayed my decision to build the empirical part of the thesis around interviews with elite actors from Zimbabwe and Rwanda. As a result, most of the empirical content of the thesis is based on approximately 30 interviews carried out with elites mostly in the capital cities of Harare and Kigali from the beginning of January until the end of March 2015. The elites include government and political authority figures, political activists, academics, trade unionists, civil society operatives, journalists, youth leaders, and individuals, often with some connection to the Commonwealth. I chose to carry out interviews with elites because, despite its declarative commitment to promoting the rights of each of its

⁹⁰ Zimbabwe withdrew from the Commonwealth in 2003, while Rwanda officially joined the organisation in 2009.

⁹¹ I do not want to list these here as both Chapters 5 and 6 cite heavily from these enormous literatures.

⁹² There is a reasonably large focus in Commonwealth literature on the Ian Smith regime and the lead up to Rhodesia-Zimbabwe independence, but apart from a few chapter sections, which discuss Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the Commonwealth in the wider context of political violence and election tampering, there are very few studies devoted to discussion or analysis of Zimbabwe-Commonwealth relations. The one study that is possibly the exception for its detailed discussion of Zimbabwe and the Commonwealth is Ranka Primorac and Stephen Chan, eds., *Zimbabwe in Crisis: The International Response and the Space of Silence* (Abingdon: Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2007). In as far as Rwanda-Commonwealth relations are concerned, this thesis is the first comprehensive, detailed, and empirical study to devote any attention to Rwanda since its accession to the Commonwealth.

⁹³ Ali Mazrui probably provides the most comprehensive study. See Ali Mazrui, *The Anglo-African Commonwealth: Political Friction and Cultural Fusion* (London: Pergamon Press, 1967). Since the 1969 publication of Mazrui's work on the Commonwealth and Africa, however, there has been no detailed study on Commonwealth-African relations from an African scholar, beyond academic articles and book chapters. There is, perhaps, one exception and that is the work by the Nigerian ex-Commonwealth Secretary-General Emeka Anyaoku, nevertheless, this work consists rather less of reflection on the Commonwealth and Africa and more on the Commonwealth during his time as Secretary-General. See Emeka Anyaoku, *The Missing Headlines: Selected Speeches* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997); Emeka Anyaoku, *The Inside Story of the Modern Commonwealth* (London: Evans Brothers, 2004); Emeka Anyaoku, *The Commonwealth: Facing the Challenge of One World* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1994); Emeka Anyaoku, *The Commonwealth: A Force for Democracy and Development* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997).

two billion members, the Commonwealth is largely a top-down political organisation. Thus, while it may be recognised by many across the Commonwealth for its historical connections, the Commonwealth Games, and the Queen, there is a far greater understanding of what the Commonwealth is and does among political and non-state actors who, in some cases, have had direct contact with Commonwealth decision or policy-making.⁹⁴

Interviewees were gathered through a snowballing process which began, in both Rwanda and Zimbabwe, by contacting potential interviewees cold. To supplement interview data, the empirical chapters of the thesis also draw on Commonwealth and government reports, political speeches, official reports by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), local media articles, and also on my own, personal, observations while I was out in the field. All interviewees have been kept anonymous due to the somewhat politically volatile nature of their governments.

At the heart of the research are semi-structured interviews; which speaks to my epistemological commitment to giving a voice to Zimbabweans and Rwandans. The semi-structured interview provided open-ended questions,⁹⁵ which were aimed at encouraging subjects to talk about how they viewed the Commonwealth and its effect on, and dealings with, their respective countries. Interviewing elites in Rwanda and Zimbabwe offered an empirical insight into African perspectives on the Commonwealth rarely seen before in the Commonwealth literature. Following the constructivist logic outlined above, my analysis focuses on the generation of familial-communitarian discourses in Zimbabwe and ideological-utopian-cosmopolitan discourses in Rwanda, and makes related arguments about the significance of these discourses to the theoretical discussion at the heart of the thesis. Here I am contributing to a tradition of accentuating the significance of the social context in which politics occurs, while highlighting ideational factors as influential in international relations.⁹⁶ For constructivists, the discourses generated by state actors are influential in determining state conduct as well as, often in the case of non-state actors, generating influential discourses about

⁹⁴ I refer here to a number of interviewees I met in Zimbabwe who had had behind the scenes roles in the Lancaster House talks - the talks which led to Zimbabwe's independence. Additionally, at least one Rwandan interviewee had had connections to the Commonwealth Young Leaders Programme.

⁹⁵ Anne Galletta, *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

⁹⁶ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

norms and ‘appropriate’ state behaviour.⁹⁷ My interviewees provided fruitful insight into how both Zimbabweans and Rwandans view the Commonwealth, and how they understand the effect that each of their respective states has had on the Commonwealth, and vice versa.

In spite of the relative ease with which the interviewees talked about the Commonwealth and reflected on their states’ position in, or out, of it, there were, at times, some difficulties with methodology. Writing on the challenges of doing ‘dangerous fieldwork’ in Africa, Pamela Nilan has noted that ‘the researcher as human subject is in flux, dealing constantly with shifting realities and contradictions.’⁹⁸ These realities and contradictions came to the surface during my fieldwork in Rwanda and caused me to grapple with the question of how to treat what interview subjects said; how to do justice to what they meant; and how to distinguish between the hidden and public transcript.⁹⁹ Truth is always an issue in fieldwork experience as the wealth of literature on this topic suggests.¹⁰⁰ But how do we determine what is the true opinion and what is the government line? ¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ See, for example, Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Finnemore and Sikkink, ‘International Norm Dynamics and Political Change’; Mervyn Frost, *Global Ethics: Anarchy, Freedom and International Relations* (London, Routledge, 2008).

⁹⁸ Pamela Nilan, ‘Dangerous fieldwork’ re-examined: The question of the researcher subject position’, *Qualitative Research* 2, no. 3 (2002), 368.

⁹⁹ This concern stems from the nature of my questions and discussion with interviewees in Rwanda, and more specifically, around the subject of language and identity. It is a well known and widely researched fact that the Rwandan government has attempted to recreate the idea of identity in Rwanda since the 1994 genocide. This involves the passing of a number of laws which make it illegal for Rwandans to talk about ethnicity using the pre-1994 labels: Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. In post-genocide Rwanda everybody is, in theory, simply Rwandan. See Helen Hintjens, ‘Post-genocide identity politics in Rwanda’, *Ethnicities* 8, no. 1 (2008): 5-41; Helen Hintjens and David Kiwuwa, ‘Not ethnicity, but race: Unity and conflict in Rwanda since the genocide’, in *Perspectives on Contemporary Ethnic Conflict: Primal Violence or the Politics of Conviction?*, ed. Santosh Saha (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), 77-105.

¹⁰⁰ Larissa Begley, ‘The RPF control everything! Fear and rumour under Rwanda’s genocide ideology legislation’, in *Emotional and Ethical Challenges for Field Research in Africa: The Story Behind the Findings*, eds. Susan Thomson, An Ansoms and Jude Murison (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 70-83; Andrea Purdeková, ‘Even if I am not here, there are so many eyes: Surveillance and state reach in Rwanda’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 49, no. 3 (2011): 475-97; Lidewyde Berckmoes, ‘Dealing with deceit: Fieldwork encounters and lies in Burundi’, in *Emotional and Ethical Challenges for Field Research in Africa: The Story Behind the Findings*, eds. Susan M. Thomson, An Ansoms and Judith Murison (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 123-38; Judith Vorrath, ‘Challenges of interviewing political elites: A view from the top in post-war Burundi’, in *Emotional and Ethical Challenges for Field Research in Africa: The Story Behind the Findings*, eds. Susan M. Thomson, An Ansoms and Judith Murison (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 57-69.

¹⁰¹ In the last two decades following the genocide in 1994, the Rwandan government, led by Paul Kagame and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), have implemented a major

I discuss these difficulties and further issues of positionality in some detail in both empirical chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), nevertheless, one of the most important realisations that came from my interviews in Rwanda, is the unlikelihood that there would be a position or truth, beyond the government position, given by interviewees. In Zimbabwe, this did not seem to be an issue, as many of my interviewees seemed happy to talk freely and candidly about what they understood to be their take on the reasons why Zimbabwe withdrew from the Commonwealth, and whether it would ever return. Their responses often appeared to be driven by emotion, which saw them swing from simple storytelling narrative to exasperation and annoyance at the way Zimbabweans had been treated by both their government, the Commonwealth group of states, and the wider international arena. No story followed exactly the same narrative - which suggested interviewees were not repeating the official stories told by the Zimbabwean government.

What interview subjects say provides a springboard into wider conceptions of the Commonwealth and what it means to the their particular state. The bulk of the empirical part of the study deals with elite actors' experience being part of a state that has left or joined the Commonwealth. Much of their contribution is based on feelings towards the accession or withdrawal of their respective states from the organisation. This has also informed the ways in which I have used interviewees' ideas to implicitly depict wider conceptions of the relationship between their state and the Commonwealth and their state and Britain. Since the study is based on an interpretive reading of the interview data, my analytical judgment inevitably comes into play. As the task of qualitative research, to borrow Allan Kellehear's phraseology, is on persuading rather than proving,¹⁰² the precision granted to certain alternative, quantitative forms of methodology is neither a possibility nor a goal in these circumstances. The veracity of my judgment, therefore, is a task that I leave in the reader's hands.

crackdown on discussing ethnicity. Although two decades have passed since the genocide and there has been little active violence in this time, the political situation in Rwanda is restrictive, with the government tightly controlling the media, limiting civil society, and intimidating the general public into silent acquiescence. See Timothy Longman, 'Conducting research in conflict zones: Lessons from the African Great Lakes region', in *Research Methods in Conflict Settings: A View from Below*, eds. Dyan Mazurana, Karen Jacobsen and Lacey Andrews Gale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 260.

¹⁰² Allan Kellehear, *The Unobtrusive Researcher* (St. Leonard's, New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 25.

1.5 Plan of chapters

The thesis plays out over five chapters and introduces a range of historical, theoretical, and empirical perspectives through which we might explore how, from its historical antecedents to its contemporary usage, the Commonwealth family label might be understood today. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 form the theoretical and historical backbone of the project and provide the basic orientation. The three chapters follow a loose chronological framework, which begins in the colonial period, in Chapter 2, moves away from the colonial context to the formation of the Commonwealth and the period between 1949 and 1965, in Chapter 3, and ends with an exploration of how the Commonwealth attempted to modernise both around 1965 and following the end of the Cold War until the present day, in Chapter 4. I have chosen, in this way, to show a progression in thinking between the Commonwealth's communitarianism, which I largely argue is grounded in the organisation's past, and its cosmopolitanism, which I argue is the Commonwealth's attempt to stay relevant as an international organisation by looking to the future. And yet, as I have already pointed out, the Commonwealth appears to be both cosmopolitan and communitarian.

Chapter 2 provides a brief and broad introduction to the Commonwealth family label by exploring the historical foundations, beginning with its usage during the nineteenth century. After surveying the Victorian cult of domesticity and the ways in which the idea of the family left the confines of the domestic realm and was used in a more international capacity to describe the wider imperial family, the chapter considers the ways in which the British applied the language of family in a more derogatory capacity, firstly to provide an 'Other' against which to juxtapose the superiority of the British, and later during the decolonisation process. The final part of the chapter considers the more contemporary usage of the family label.

While Chapter 2 provides some historical background to the family label, Chapters 3 and 4 take a more theoretical route. The chapters attempt to strike a balance between the empirical and the theoretical by examining the Commonwealth through the twin lenses of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism. Chapter 3 examines the extent to which the Commonwealth might be described as communitarian. It begins by tracing three main ideas within communitarian thinking that appear to underscore the idea of community.

Many critics are frustrated by the lack of clarity by communitarian theorists to explain what they mean when they talk about community, but the chapter argues that we can find running through much communitarian literature three main ideas which are: inheritance, shared values, and solidarity. After fleshing out the main ideas and arguments within these three constituent elements, the chapter then attempts to examine the Commonwealth through the communitarian lens. The final section of the chapter turns the lens back on to the theory and uses the more messier communitarianism of the Commonwealth to problematise the idea that communities are over-simplified and culturally homogenous as some communitarian theorists like to claim.

Chapter 4 examines the Commonwealth's turn to cosmopolitanism that gathered speed following the dismantling of the apartheid regime in South Africa and the end of the Cold War. It demonstrates how the Commonwealth attempted to take a more cosmopolitan outlook to encompass the individual rights of all two billion Commonwealth citizens. These rights were enshrined in the Harare Declaration which has become the organisation's principle rights-based document. But while the heads of state agreed by consensus to adopt the Harare principles, there has been less enthusiasm about abiding by the promise to protect the human rights of Commonwealth citizens. This lack of enthusiasm for human rights is one of the main reasons that Zimbabwe walked away from the family in 2003. Since the loss of Zimbabwe, the Commonwealth has opened up its membership criteria to become a more inclusive forward-looking cosmopolitan organisation. But what does this mean for the organisation's communitarianism that it seems reluctant to leave behind?

Chapter 5 begins the empirical exploration behind the claims that the Commonwealth appears to be both communitarian and cosmopolitan offering a view of the withdrawal of Zimbabwe through a familial lens. If the Commonwealth as a whole troubles the notion of communitarianism, then Zimbabwe troubles the very idea of the family itself. Through the voices and opinions of Zimbabwean elites the chapter explores how the conception of the Commonwealth as a family was troubled by the departure of one of its most problematic children, and how Zimbabweans feel about being on the outside of the Commonwealth family looking in.

If Chapter 5 is concerned with the family of the Commonwealth's past, then Chapter 6 offers a glimpse at the organisation's future. The chapter explores the accession of Rwanda to the Commonwealth through the voices and opinions of Rwandan elites. Little has been written on Rwanda's reasons for joining the organisation and the effect, if any, that joining the Commonwealth has had on Rwanda.¹⁰³ I draw on evidence from a series of interviews I carried out in Rwanda to paint a picture of how Rwandan elites believe that that Rwanda and the Commonwealth have mutually assisted each other. Behind these stories of mutual affection however lie the realities of the Rwandan government's draconian attempts to recreate ethnicity and identity in the fragile state. The Rwandan president talks in the language of the Commonwealth, about togetherness and good practice; likewise, Rwandan elites speak about the Commonwealth as if salvation will be forthcoming in their accession to the organisation. But what do the Commonwealth and Rwanda really gain from each other? And is this enough to keep the Commonwealth's cosmopolitan aspirations alive?

Taken together, these chapters provide resources for thinking about the Commonwealth on a more critical and theoretical platform. The concluding chapter brings together these resources and the analyses of the five chapters. I discuss the nuances as well as the messiness of the Commonwealth family. Family itself is a messy concept and much of the thesis is concerned with the ways in which family - in the way the Commonwealth uses the term - is problematised.

¹⁰³ As I mentioned earlier, to date there is less than a handful of studies on Rwanda in the Commonwealth, this consists of: Will Jones, 'Rwanda: The way forward?', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 103, no. 3 (2014): 347-49; te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*.

England...resembles a family, a rather stuffy Victorian family, with not many black sheep in it but with all its cupboards bursting with skeletons. It has rich relations who have to be kow-towed to and poor relations who are horribly sat upon, and there is a deep conspiracy of silence about the source of the family income. It is a family in which the young are generally thwarted and most of the power is in the hands of irresponsible uncles and bedridden aunts. Still, it is a family. It has its private language and its common memories, and at the approach of an enemy it closes its ranks. A family with the wrong members in control - that, perhaps is as near as one can come to describing England in a phrase.

- George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1940)

Mapping the Family: From Empire to Commonwealth

In the introduction chapter, I briefly discussed how the idea of the Empire as a family permeated British political discourse long before the Commonwealth's inception as an intergovernmental organisation;¹ but what are the *political* roots of this metaphor and why does the family label continue to be used so liberally, not only by the British monarch, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and British politicians, but also by Commonwealth heads of government? In later chapters, I will examine two empirical case studies, looking for ways in which individual Commonwealth member states in Africa have helped to complicate the idea of family and how they view their place in the organisation and its history and future. In this chapter, I want to explore the wider, more historical and metaphorical side of the family label in order to lay down some foundations for the discussion in the chapters that follow.

I am going to do this by thinking about how the notion of the Empire as a family was created by the British during the nineteenth century and how it moved through different manifestations both domestic and international, from the mid-nineteenth century, where familial discourse first appears, to its modern usage, where the label is used liberally by Commonwealth Secretary Generals and the Queen, as head of the Commonwealth, to describe fifty-three states and approximately two billion people who make up the wider contemporary Commonwealth. Underlying these manifestations are temporal changes of two distinct kinds: firstly how the meaning and ideology of 'family' changes over time and at different historical junctures - for example, the transformation of family from the private to the public realm during the reign of Queen Victoria; secondly, what families do also changes with time - for example what Britain, as parent state did, or need to do, to shore up a sense of national identification globally across the Empire in the settler colonies, was necessarily different during the colonial era as compared to at the time of decolonisation.

¹ McIntyre, *British Decolonisation, 1946-1997*, 16.

In showing these two distinct temporal shifts, I sketch an outline of the family, as the label was employed by the British, from the mid-nineteenth century usage of the term, where the variability of family forms became commonplace in British political and social discourse;² through decolonisation, where, in some well documented cases, the British used the language of family to show the childlike nature of colonial subjects in an effort to hold on to African colonies such as Kenya; and finally to the present application of the label to symbolise unity among Commonwealth states. Along the way, I explore the idea of the imperial/Commonwealth family as it moved from an emphatically white concept premised on a racialised notion of hierarchy as a way in which the British could bolster their position as the superior race;³ as a crutch against which newly independent states could anchor their search for recognition and identity;⁴ and as a way for the Queen to carry on a bond with her former Empire.

This is not an attempt at a history of the Commonwealth - there is already an enormous literature that charts and describes the history of the organisation. However, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, very little of this literature has focused on the description of the Commonwealth as a family. This means that the language and imagery of the Commonwealth family are often used without much thought to what lies behind their usage. While this lack of attention might not seem significant, what is intriguing are the many ways in which the family label has come to be synonymous with the picture put forward by many who write on the organisation - in particular Secretary Generals and High Commissioners from bygone eras - as a unified and unique organisation; but as I outlined in the introduction chapter, the Commonwealth is not unique. Many of the organisation's features that are held up as unique by its keenest observers - shared history, shared values being the most talked about among these - are nevertheless

² In their extensive research on the nineteenth century family and Empire, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall argue that the variability of family forms cannot be overstressed. According to their research, the term 'family' was diverse and flexible with permeable boundaries which, *inter alia*, stretched to networks of kin, friends, and household servants. See Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), 31.

³ See Anne McClintock and Roxanne Doty provide good introductions to the British use of familial discourse both during the Empire and at decolonisation. See McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Doty, *Imperial Encounters*.

⁴ Both Crawford Young and Tamar Golan have suggested that the Commonwealth and Francophonie were used by their African states as a way of mitigating the struggle for recognition. See Golan, 'How can France do everything that it does in Africa and get away with it?'; Crawford Young, 'The heritage of colonialism', in *Africa in World Politics: Post-Cold War Challenges*, eds. John Herbst and Donald Rothchild (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 19-39.

also the defining features of the Francophonie, the Organisation of Ibero-American states, and, to a great extent, also, the European Union and the African Union.

The chapter begins with an exploration of the idea of family in nineteenth century Britain as a way of understanding how the notion of family moved from the personal to the domestic and from the domestic to the international. While I do not want to dwell too much on the colonial side of the family metaphor, as my focus in the thesis is on post-colonial Commonwealth relations, the implications of understanding Victorian family life are, however, of tangential relevance to my work, since I am interested in the ways in which the family metaphor came to be applied internationally. It is necessary therefore to step back and understand the temporal changes in the idea of the family and how this idea was changing in Britain in the middle decades of the nineteenth century in order that we might get a better picture of how, and why, the idea began to take on a more international aspect.

2.1 The ideology of a Greater Britain and the ideology of the family

I want to begin this section by putting the idea of the imperial family into context through the lens of the quest by the British in the nineteenth century for the idea of a Greater Britain - that is, an imagined community of British sharing the same race and values, stretched out geographically across the Empire. Duncan Bell has written that, the turbulent economic and political landscape of the nineteenth century was the reason behind British attempts to shore up the Empire as a guarantor of strength.⁵ One of the ways in which this was done, and the subject of Bell's study - *The Idea of Greater Britain* - was to attempt to unite the United Kingdom with its settler colonies of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and parts of South Africa. For the late Victorians, the Empire was an extension of the British national 'self' beyond the physical, geographical shores of the United Kingdom. It was through this imagined community composed of 'neo-Britains'⁶ who were 'bound intimately by commonality of race, institutions, sensibility, and citizenship,' that colonial political figures and unionists viewed the Empire at the time - as a seamless global nation.

⁵ Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 1.

⁶ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

While the idea of a seamless global British polity, mapped around the united peoples of the mother-land and the settler colonies, distorts the ‘history of multi-ethnic and polyglot societies far removed from the United Kingdom,’⁷ the idea of a global Britishness, nevertheless, sought to collapse distinctions between domestic and international/colonial and home and abroad while simultaneously emphasising the differences between those ‘neo-Britains’ in the settler colonies and the rest of the Empire.⁸ One of the ways in which these boundaries were troubled was semantically through the interchangeability of the idea of state and nation.⁹ This semantic muddying helped to grow the distinct idea that the wider global nation was populated by the same race, cementing the idea that Greater Britain was a racial polity. As Bell points out, there were largely two interpretations of the concept of nationality at work for the Victorians. For some, the notion of a Greater Britain conjured the image of a group of independent nations, yet for others the group was reduced to one large nation sprawling out geographically across the Empire.¹⁰ This division in interpretation centred around the question of whether national self-consciousness could translate across global distances.¹¹ Running parallel to ideas of race and global Britishness, was the idea that the Empire was a family.¹²

The Victorians, as John Burnett points out, were the most ‘family-conscious and home-centred’ society in English history,¹³ yet, while the ideology of the family had remained largely stable, from the mid-nineteenth century it was subject to a period of rapid change.¹⁴ Having been previously confined to the realm of the

⁷ Pocock, *The Discovery of Islands*, 181-91.

⁸ Bell, *The Idea of a Greater Britain*, 34.

⁹ Chris Brown, ‘State and nation in nineteenth century international political theory’, in *International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from the Ancient Greeks to the First World War*, eds. Chris Brown, Terry Nardin and Nicholas Rengger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 457-469.

¹⁰ Bell, *The Idea of a Greater Britain*, 113.

¹¹ Bell, *The Idea of a Greater Britain*, 113.

¹² There is a vast amount of scholarship on the Victorian and imperial family, here I provide a small fragment of it: Buettner, *Empire Families*; Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998); Antoinette Burton, ed., *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities* (London: Routledge, 1999); Mary Procida, *Married to Empire: Gender, politics and Imperialism in India, 1883 - 1947* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 2002); Onida E. González and Bianca Premo, eds., *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).

¹³ John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing: 1851-1985* (London: Methuen, 1986), 98.

¹⁴ James Kilroy, *The Nineteenth Century English Novel: Family Ideology and Narrative Form* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 12.

private, the family was now - in the middle decades of the nineteenth century - catapulted by an array of political and social issues out of the private realm of the home and into the light of seemingly unrelenting public discussion. Among the political and social issues that brought the family out of the privacy of the home were: the passing of the 'Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act'; the spectacle of the single woman (personified by the widowed figure of Queen Victoria); women leaving the home to work (the popular cult of Florence Nightingale);¹⁵ and large scale forced and voluntary emigration.¹⁶ All of these things transformed the nineteenth-century family from a home-centred private, domestic space, into a site of instability, ideological conflict, and inconsistency.¹⁷ These social and political issues go some way to explaining how the notion of the family became something of a spectacle in Victorian Britain, but they do not explain how the notion of the family crossed from the domestic to the international. If working women, divorce, and emigration troubled the idea of family in the domestic sphere, how did these, or other factors, blur the familial lines between the domestic and the international?

The answer to this question finds parallels in the troubled semantics that underscored the debate around the idea of the nation and the national self discussed earlier in this section. We need only consider the fluid definition of the family as outlined in the 1851 census to get a clearer picture of how the familial lines between home and colonies became blurred. The census marked the beginning of a more advanced form of Victorian enquiry where everyone and everything could be looked upon scientifically and arranged hierarchically.¹⁸ This was the age of obsessive attention to detail and enquiry, and the definition of family reflected this as the census tackled the axiomatics of collective life. Included in this enquiry were questions such as: What was a family; and, what was a house? The Victorian family, that had once been famously described as 'a

¹⁵ For an interesting discussion of the life of Florence Nightingale and her outright rejection of the Victorian cult of domesticity see Signe O. Wegener, *James Fenimore Cooper Versus the Cult of Domesticity: Progressive Themes of Femininity and Family in the Novels* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2005).

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion of nineteenth century roots of globalisation and how forced and voluntary migration lends strength to theories of 'de-territorialisation' see Keith Hanley and Greg Kucich, eds., *Nineteenth-Century Worlds: Global Formations Past and Present* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁷ Anne Digby, 'Victorian values and woman in public and private', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 78 (1992): 195-215.

¹⁸ McClintock offers an interesting analysis of the Victorian obsession with measuring and hierarchy. See McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

little kingdom within itself,¹⁹ was now defined in much more capacious social terms that saw it:

[not] as the children of one parent, but as the persons under one head...the householder, master, husband, father...wife, children, servants, relatives, visitors, and persons constantly or accidentally in the house...'Family,' in the sense which it has acquired in England, may be considered the *social unit* of which parishes, towns, counties, and the nation, are composed.²⁰

As the census shows, by the mid-nineteenth century the range and complexity of meaning and ideology of what a family was had moved from one of private to one of public extension that defied simple summary or exposition. The boundaries between what was considered family and non-family became increasingly fluid and, as Esme Cleall, Laura Ishiguru and Emily Manktelow have pointed out, this did not confine itself to the domestic arena.²¹

In a number of ways, and helped considerably by the imagined community of the united Greater Britain discussed at the beginning of this section of the chapter, this looser definition of family stretched beyond the borders of the nation and was mapped onto the ideology of Greater Britain. As families were separated across geographical lines, either through emigration or through work, the family label helped to negotiate alternative constructs of domesticity overseas.²² In these ways, the emotional and structural dynamics of family life blurred the boundaries between domestic and imperial and troubled the meaning of family. While there are myriad examples in the literature to support this observation, one that is particularly telling in this respect is an observation by Cleall, Ishiguru, and Manktelow who note:

Imperialism provided new arenas for sexuality, domesticity and kinship, and contestations over the implications of these opportunities were intimately entwined with understandings of identity and power in

¹⁹ This was the description of the family by the liberal physician Peter Gaskell in 1833. Gaskell cited in Anthony Wohl, ed., *The Victorian Family: Structures and Stresses* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 202.

²⁰ Census xxxiv cited in Karen Chase and Michael Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

²¹ Esme Cleall, Laura Ishiguru and Emily Manktelow, 'Imperial relations: Histories of family in the British Empire', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 14, no. 1 (2013). Online.

²² Elizabeth Buettner has written extensively on the re-construction of family life in colonial India where she refers to the colonial administration, quoting Kipling, as 'British men making their careers in India.' See Buettner, *Empire Families*, 1.

colonial contexts. Whilst absence, distance and surrogacy stretched the limits of the family...sexual relationships that bridged what were construed as distinct 'racial' groups could reconfigure the boundaries of colonial rule.²³

This 'reconfiguring of boundaries' is even more specifically taken up and problematised by Elizabeth Buettner, who troubles the idea of family in her description of the imperial family in colonial India. For Buettner:

since India was not among the parts of Britain's Empire meant for permanent white settlement, those maintaining a presence there over several generations did so without formally emigrating...This created specific forms of racial, class, and geographical identity that enabled them to remain separate not only from Indians but also from members of European descended communities domiciled in India.²⁴

Unlike the so-called 'neo-Britains' in the settler colonies, these 'exiles' inhabited a shadowy space. As Angela Woollacott aptly sums up, they were 'insiders in the Empire because of their whiteness while simultaneously outsiders in England due to their colonial origins.'²⁵ These notions - 'reconfiguring boundaries' and 'shadowy spaces' - all help to trouble the idea of the family as a solely domestic entity and show how, in more than one respect, the demarcation between the domestic and the imperial grew blurred. What these examples all have in common is that they underscore the more social aspects of the family; but what about the political side?

Far from being confined to the more social aspects of society, changes in the political sphere formed an integral part of the Imperial family's crisis of publicity. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the parallel threats and upheavals of the Divorce Bill in England and the uprising in India which, despite taking place in different corners of the Empire, nevertheless had a profound influence both on each other and on the British political psyche. Threats to the family played out in the British government: as members of Parliament debated divorce, India appeared as an immense screen on which the fantasy structures of the imperial

²³ Cleall, Ishiguru and Manktelow, 'Imperial relations'.

²⁴ Buettner, *Empire Families*, 1-2. This inside/outside dichotomy is a theme which recurs in Chapter 5 of the thesis in the case of Zimbabweans who likewise trouble the idea of family with their claims that, despite the official withdrawal of their state from the Commonwealth.

²⁵ Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 34.

family could be projected.²⁶ In the most general field of analogy, Britain and India were the married colonial couple. As Chase and Levenson point out, ‘What to do about India and what to do about marriage? - became entangled in one another, to the point where in talking about one, members of Parliament could at the same time be talking about the other.’²⁷

If, as I argued earlier in the section, the British need to shore up the union of the United Kingdom with the so-called settler colonies was a reaction to the turbulent economic and political conditions of the era from which the British Empire faced encroachment of a powerful set of global challengers in the United States, Russia, and Germany, then the language of family was likewise applied as the guarantor of stability against the turbulence ushered in with the threat of losing India which paralleled social change. The cult of domesticity permeated every social and political orifice of Victorian life as the family became a spectacle discussed on every level. India’s attempted parricide and the spectre of divorce haunted the cult of domesticity as the image of the self-dependent single woman (whether single, divorced, or widowed) reshaped the dogma of domestic respectability and the ideology of the family. With divorce legal and women leaving the home, the privileged position of the British male began to diminish.²⁸ The family, and all it had come to represent, – legitimacy, race and national belonging – was in crisis. In the very real sense, the ideal of domesticity had fallen apart at home and Britain needed to (re)-stabilise the norm of family.

In addition to the shoring up of the Empire as a guarantor of British strength, what was needed was a scapegoat against which the Greater British family could define and re-affirm itself and with this came a temporal change not only in the ideology of the family and who was incorporated into and under the family label, but also in the function of the imperial family, that is, what Britain as parent could, or needed to, do to maintain its status as head of the family. In the name of Darwinism and anthropology, Britain discovered a way to reinvent the power of the patriarchal father and the colonies proved to be fertile ground.²⁹ The performance of superiority - in particular racial superiority - was crucial for the British, and, in the colonies, there was no shortage of ‘Others’ against which to juxtapose.

²⁶ Chase and Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy*.

²⁷ Chase and Levenson, *The Spectacle of Intimacy*, 192.

²⁸ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*.

²⁹ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 240.

2.2 The changing family role: From Empire to decolonisation

In an illuminating passage near the beginning of *Imperial Leather*, a study of the interconnection of race, gender, and sexuality during the Victorian era, Anne McClintock traces the etymology of the verb to domesticate, deriving from *dominus*, lord of the *domun* or home, to a pre-1964 usage that meant ‘to civilise.’³⁰ This hierarchical idea of domesticity helps to shed some light on the temporal shift in the function and use of the idea of the Empire as a family and how the idea of hierarchy and civilisation was utilised by the British - that is wider and much messier application of the family metaphor by the British across the Empire.

Through the advent of social Darwinism after 1859, the British discovered a way in which to sanction national hierarchy - through the image of the evolutionary Family of Mankind.³¹ As McClintock points out, ‘Since the subordination of woman to man and child to adult was deemed a natural fact, hierarchies within the nation could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature.’³² To the hierarchical structure, which placed the white British male squarely in the position of racial superiority, was then added the colonial native. Africans in particular were described variously as: children, backward and immature. These descriptions, wrapped up in the collective motif of ‘the family of man,’ enabled the British to portray imperial subjects as lacking the rationality generally attributed to adults.³³ While Britain, the patriarch at the head of the family, was rational and civilised, the members of her great global family, in juxtaposition, were irrational, uncivilised, and child-like. Arguably, not just the colonial native but also orphans, the diseased, the poor along with many other types ex-centric to the traditional family structure served this purpose of stabilising the norm via a process of othering.³⁴

³⁰ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 35.

³¹ Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³² McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 357-58.

³³ This was particularly significant in Kenya during the Emergency. The British needed to depict the Mau Mau as inferior and irrational. See E. G. Wyatt, ‘Mau Mau and the African mind’, *Contemporary Review* 184, no. 4 (1953): 206-11; Carothers, *The Psychology of Mau Mau*.

³⁴ Kohlke, Marie-Luise, and Christian Gutleben, eds., *Neo-Victorian Families: Gender, Sexual and Cultural Politics* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011), 20.

Descriptions such as these permeated British culture as the cult of scientific discovery garnered strength.³⁵ This spilled over into novels and popular culture as writers like Henry Rider Haggard in his adventure novel *King Solomon's Mines* described the intellect and nature of Africans as: 'some five centuries behind...Civilisation, it would seem, when applied to black races, produces effects diametrically opposite to those we are accustomed to in white nations: it debases before it can elevate.'³⁶ In this and myriad other ways, the colonised were depicted by the British to be permanently inferior and child-like.

While the mother country, in every sense of the word, was struggling to maintain its status and position, 'the trope of the organic family became invaluable in its capacity to give state and imperial intervention the alibi of nature.'³⁷ The concept of the family, then, with its ingrained ideas of hierarchy and inequality, beautifully denoted the superiority of the British coloniser over the inferiority of the colonised native subjects. Notwithstanding the usefulness of the social Darwinism to boost the image of Victorian male superiority, this 'Othering' appeared once more as a tool, not only when the Empire was at its highest power, but it also continued into the following century, where the Empire was seemingly coming to an end. A cursory examination of literature on decolonisation reveals that the family metaphor continued to be employed by the British to denote superiority well into the twentieth century and contained many of the oppositions shown above. This is most evident in the case of Kenya and the Mau Mau rebellion, where British attempts to hang onto the colony saw a continuation of violence which was often justified through the rhetoric of hierarchy, paternalism, and family discipline.

The British occupation of Kenya lasted until 1963, when the British ceded sovereignty over the East African colony. The achievement of independence followed a long and sustained period of struggle for freedom by the Kenyans, which the British attempted to quell through systemic violence which included the

³⁵ This was also the era of enforced child emigration as male delinquent children were sent to southern Africa, the removal of indigenous children from their parents - often into Church-run establishments intended to 'civilise' and turn native children into model Victorian girls and boys, and state-run institutions described in the language of family. See Ellen Boucher, *Empire's Children: Child Emigration, Welfare, and the decline of the British World, 1869-1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

³⁶ Henry Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (London: Signet, 1965).

³⁷ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 45.

use of internment camps, and torture.³⁸ It was this struggle that led to the outbreak of the Mau Mau rebellion,³⁹ and the British counterinsurgency, which has been described by many historians as the ‘great horror story of Britain’s Empire in the 1950s.’⁴⁰

The Mau Mau rebellion is interesting from the perspective of the familial metaphor because British responses to it were based on discursive and disciplinary mechanisms which were imbued with a rhetoric that painted Kenyans as naughty rebellious children, who could not think for themselves, and Britain as the responsible, rational thinking parents, who needed to use every tool necessary to keep the children in line.⁴¹ By framing the Mau Mau rebellion in familial terms, the British were able to shape the narrative of the Mau Mau as a war between ‘savagery and civilisation.’⁴² This idea of binaries was nothing new, as we have seen throughout this chapter so far. By framing the revolt in the language of savagery, the British hoped to shape thinking on the Mau Mau as a virtual collapse of the African mind.⁴³ Government propaganda, along with analysis by psychiatrists and anthropologists, offered a variety of tortuous interpretations of the Mau Mau as ‘atavistic,’ ‘tribalist,’ ‘racist,’ and ‘anti-Christian,’ which helped to cement the idea that many white settlers already believed: ‘that the adult African was simply a child.’⁴⁴ To help underscore this image of the child-like African, a number of psychiatric and scientific studies were commissioned which all painted the Mau Mau as mentally unfit for self-rule.⁴⁵

What applied to Kenyans was largely applicable to Africans in general. According to John Colin Carothers, the official colonial psychiatrist and expert on the

³⁸ There is a great deal of emerging literature on the British counter-insurgency and accompanying techniques. For a detailed overview and analysis see Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of the British Gulag in Africa* (New York: Owl Books, 2006); David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain’s Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Phoenix, 2005); Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³⁹ Michael Mwenda Kithinji, Mickie Mwanzia Koster and Jerono P. Rotich, ‘Introduction’, in *Kenya After 50: Reconfiguring Historical, Political, and Policy Milestones*, eds. Michael Mwenda Kithinji, Mickie Mwanzia Koster and Jerono P. Rotich (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3.

⁴⁰ Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 1.

⁴¹ Roxanne Doty, *Imperial Encounters*.

⁴² Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 1.

⁴³ Doty, *Imperial Encounters*, 107.

⁴⁴ McCulloch, *Colonial Psychiatry and ‘the African Mind’*, 60.

⁴⁵ The most well known of these studies are those by John Colin Carothers, see John Colin Carothers, *The African Mind in Health and Disease: A Study in Ethno-psychiatry* (Geneva: World Health Organisation, 1953); Carothers, *The Psychology of Mau Mau*.

‘African mind,’ whenever an African came into contact with European culture, which largely meant confrontation with new or unforeseen situations, he or she became highly vulnerable to psychotic breakdown.⁴⁶ Like children, Carothers noted, Africans were:

highly dependent upon physical and emotional stimulation; lacking in spontaneity, foresight, tenacity, judgment and humility; inapt for sound abstraction and for logic; given to phantasy and fabrication; and in general unstable, impulsive, unreliable, irresponsible and living in the present.⁴⁷

All these things pointed to one conclusion, which, particularly in the Kenyan case, was that the African members of the great global British family were delinquent children who were not ready for independence.⁴⁸ The practice of describing the Mau Mau as irrational children with a propensity for poor mental health successfully ensured that democracy and independence could be deferred until the African condition could be seen to become more akin with the Western individual. Until Africans could think rationally and see themselves as civilised, independence would not be forthcoming.

What I have been trying to show in the foregoing paragraphs is that, since its appearance at the height of the British Empire through to the final years of decolonisation, the British employed the family metaphor in two main ways. Firstly, as a way in which to encompass the enormity of the Empire with Britain at its head. And, secondly in a much more derogatory way to describe certain states, such as Kenya, that wanted independence before the British saw fit to let such states go. While a more comprehensive analysis of the British counterinsurgency against the Mau Mau is beyond the scope of this thesis, the evidence shown here suggests powerfully that the family label, when employed to encompass African states, was underscored liberally with ideas of racism, inferiority, and inequality. But this is only half of the story. The language of family employed by the British colonial administration in Kenya, was a far cry from the familial rhetoric being applied to persuade a newly independent India to retain her ties with Britain. While the British were infantilising Africans in Kenya, the use of the family metaphor in other parts of the Empire/Commonwealth had taken on a new meaning. The family’s purpose, that is what the family did, or needed to do, was

⁴⁶ McCulloch, *Colonial Psychiatry and ‘the African Mind’*, 52.

⁴⁷ Carothers, *The African Mind in Health and Disease*, 87.

⁴⁸ Beverley Naidoo, *Burn My Heart* (London: Puffin, 2007).

about to undergo a major temporal change with the sole purpose of shoring up India - Britain's largest creditor and buffer against the rising threat of Communism. This change forms the focus of the following sections of the chapter.

2.3 The family motif: 'Rather a special family of nations'

While the family metaphor had taken on a more violent image as a way to justify the delay in the independence of African colonies, elsewhere the theme of the great British global family had begun to take on a much gentler tone. One notable example of this can be seen in the familial rhetoric employed by the British Prime, Minister Clement Attlee, as he attempted to persuade his Indian counterpart, Jawaharlal Nehru, to halt India's rapid progress towards republican status. Attlee, writing to Nehru in 1949, drew on the idea of the family and collective belonging, noting: 'at the head of the Commonwealth is a family. This family does in a very real sense symbolise the family nature of the Commonwealth...people of advanced and people of primitive culture, see this family as their own.'⁴⁹

It is not difficult to appreciate the rationale behind the Attlee's framing of the Commonwealth in familial terms; as I noted above, Britain needed to retain its ties with India as a creditor and trading partner, as well as needing a buffer against the rising tide of communism from the East.⁵⁰ India, or, more accurately, Nehru, on the other hand, showed signs of wishing to remain in the Commonwealth, but was opposed to the idea of pledging allegiance to the Crown.⁵¹ The formula that emerged was the 'acceptance of the King as the symbol of free association of the member nations and as such the Head of the Commonwealth.'⁵² For Nehru, under this agreement, no Indian citizen would owe allegiance to the British Monarch, nor could the British Monarch have any role in the functioning of the Indian government. This was a successful compromise, which paved the way for other newly independent republics to follow. By couching the Commonwealth in familial terms, Attlee was able to manoeuvre the figure of the King, as he put it, from 'an abstract symbol connoting authority, often

⁴⁹ Attlee cited in Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*, 3.

⁵⁰ Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth*, 11.

⁵¹ For a detailed analysis of the debates within India over India's accession to the Commonwealth see Y. Rafeek Ahmed, 'India's membership of the Commonwealth - Nehru's role', *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 1 (1991): 43-53.

⁵² Sankar Ghose, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1993), 259.

connected in the minds of some with an external power,⁵³ into a father figure and effectively reinvent the family trope as a metaphor for unity. Attlee's attempt to separate the idea of Empire, as authoritarian and powerful, from the idea of Commonwealth, as united and family-like, marked a turning point in the British usage of the familial rhetoric to describe the relationship between Britain and her soon-to-be-independent colonies.

It was almost certainly no coincidence that the family-as-unity ideology was being pushed at the end of the 1940s. In addition to changes taking place on the international arena, which saw Britain losing her grip on her once powerful Empire, there were significant changes taking place on the domestic front *vis-à-vis* the social landscape and family values. David Cannadine highlights the rise in divorce as one significant change and threat to family values noting that, in the same year that India gained independence, the divorce rate in Britain reached a peak due to the disruption of war.⁵⁴ This was aided, in no small measure, by the 'Legal Aid Act' of 1949, which made divorce more accessible and more affordable.⁵⁵ Divorce had loomed large in the British imagination following the abdication of Edward VIII and as a countermeasure against the damage inflicted on the Royal image, when George VI replaced his brother as the British Monarch he was promoted not only as King, but also as a family man with the ideal family.⁵⁶

When Queen Elizabeth came to the throne in 1952, she brought with her a revival of the Christian faith,⁵⁷ which attempted to put family values back at the heart of society. This was achieved, as Jennifer McGuire notes, because 'the Queen was seen to represent strong Christian moral leadership through her role as Supreme Governor of the Church of England.'⁵⁸ The rhetoric of family values and Christian virtue became a common theme, most notably in the Queen's annual Christmas broadcasts to Britain and the Commonwealth. The Queen's first broadcast linked her own family and the families of her listeners to the concept of the

⁵³ Attlee cited in Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*, 3.

⁵⁴ David Cannadine, *History in Our Time* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 116.

⁵⁵ This is an interesting parallel with the legalisation of divorce in the mid-nineteenth century and its effect on Victorian society and the family image. Evidently Britain's divorce rate over the centuries appears to be connected to her relationship with India.

⁵⁶ Sarah Bradford, *George VI* (London: Penguin, 2011).

⁵⁷ William Shawcross, *Queen and Country* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2002), 43-44.

⁵⁸ McGuire, 'Till death do us part?'

Commonwealth as a broader family with shared values as she addressed the Empire:

We belong, you and I, to a far larger family...the British Commonwealth and Empire, that immense union of nations, with their homes set in all four corners of the earth. Like our own families, it can be a great power for good.⁵⁹

The speech worked to consolidate the loyalty and affection of the people of Britain.⁶⁰ What had been a metaphor for distinguishing degeneracy and hierarchy became a signifier for a supposed loving union of collective identity and belonging. This set a precedent for the years that followed where the family motif now permeates the discourse of the organisation. This sense of collective belonging and collective identity has transcended the conventional markers of national identity and has produced what some authors have described as a sense of ongoing solidarity and moral responsibility among Commonwealth states.⁶¹

But if the Queen can be credited with laying down the foundations of a softer, gentler imperial/Commonwealth family, then what is also striking is that the remarks in her inaugural Christmas broadcast belie a paradox. Only months before she addressed the Empire in 1952 the British had declared an Emergency in Kenya. Thus, while the Queen was declaring the imperial family, and all families in it, a 'force for good,' in the heart of East Africa, the British were using a different kind of force as they began a ten year battle to hold on to what had become a highly idealised version of Africa in the eyes of the British public.⁶² Rather than the family of one and indivisible, to which the Queen appealed in her speeches, the process of decolonisation taking place in the far flung corners of the Empire, as we saw in the previous section, was a much messier, violent process.

⁵⁹ Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II Christmas Broadcast 1952. Available at: <https://www.royal.uk/queens-first-christmas-broadcast-1952>.

⁶⁰ McGuire, 'Till death us do part?'

⁶¹ Brysk, Parsons and Sandholtz, 'After Empire': 270.

⁶² The Kenya Association, founded in 1932, launched a public relations campaign to promote the attractions of Kenya to prospective settlers and lobbied for their interests at home in Britain. As a part of this push to promote the East African colony they helped launch 'Truth for Kenya,' a campaign which included parliamentary lobbying in order to underscore 'the danger of Mau Mau to white civilised society in Kenya.' See Dane Kennedy, 'Constructing the colonial myth and remaking Kenya', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 25, no. 2 (1992): 256-7.

While the Royal speeches were permeated with ideals of family, tolerance, and values, in reality the great global British family was in disarray.⁶³

I began this thesis by questioning whether there was something more behind the simple family metaphor, but what I have not considered, beyond the brief discussion of Commonwealth literature in the previous chapter, is the Queen's enthusiasm for the organisation and the lingering affection for the Monarch from both heads of state and the wider Commonwealth. Might the Commonwealth's continued insistence on the unique family label, in spite of the obvious messiness of the family, have a deeper connection to the Queen and her role as head of the Commonwealth? This observation gestures to my earlier argument that the lack of critical analysis in Commonwealth literature may have some connection to a concern for the Queen. Given this observation, it seems important at this stage, then, to consider the role that the Queen has played in the up-keep of the conception of the Commonwealth as a family, and how this might contribute to strengthening the power of the family behind the metaphor.

2.4 Bonds of affection: The relationship with the Queen

Since fixing their gaze towards Europe in the 1970s, with membership of the European Economic Community (EEC), successive British governments have paid little more than lip service to the Commonwealth. More often than not, over the past two decades, each new government has announced its intention to put the 'C' back into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.⁶⁴ This was the case in 1997, when Robin Cook took up the position of Foreign Secretary, and once again when William Hague took over the position in 2010. In a lecture delivered in 2011 to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Hague drew attention to what he saw

⁶³ Elizabeth Buettner gives an interesting overview and analysis of the different views of decolonisation and the Empire in academic and popular literature, her findings are somewhat analogous with the real versus ideal view of the Commonwealth discussed here. See Elizabeth Buettner, 'Setting the record straight?: Imperial history in postcolonial British public culture', in *Hybrid Cultures, Nervous States: Britain and Germany in a (Post)colonial World*, eds. Ulrike Lindner, Maren Möhring, Mark Stein, and Silke Stroh (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010), 89-106.

⁶⁴ It has been widely documented that the British have lost any enthusiasm they once had for the Commonwealth. This, the literature argues, began during the 1970s with the British bid to join the European Economic Community. Various Foreign Ministers over the past two decades - notably Robin Cook and William Hague - have vowed to put the 'C' back in the FCO but nothing much has come of these promises. See William Hague speech to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference, 'The Commonwealth is 'back at the heart of British foreign policy'', 27 July 2011. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-commonwealth-is-back-at-the-heart-of-british-foreign-policy>.

as a problem with apathy and the Commonwealth. This is a problem which has fuelled an on-going debate, that I mentioned in the previous chapter, around the Commonwealth's relevance. As Hague put it, 'I'm not naïve about how difficult it is to breathe meaningful life into it. But it's definitely worth the effort because it is the ultimate network.'⁶⁵ While Hague's observation appeared to have signalled a desire to re-engage with the Commonwealth, an observation which is supported by a surge of attention in the British media around the Commonwealth as an alternative trade partner in the lead up to, and aftermath of, the British referendum on European Union membership,⁶⁶ this notwithstanding, very little attention has been given to the Commonwealth by the recent British government. In contrast, the Queen - in her capacity as the official head of the Commonwealth - has a much closer relationship with the organisation and its membership, and, as a result of this, some observers have argued, she might very well be the glue that holds the organisation together.⁶⁷

While the figure of a now aging monarch might seem like a crude foundation upon which to build an argument for the endurance of an international, intergovernmental organisation in the twenty-first century, it is nevertheless supported by a number of empirical observations. Among the strongest of which is that the Queen continues to be held in high esteem throughout the Commonwealth, both by heads of government, and by many of the two billion strong members of the wider Commonwealth family. Political biographer Robert Hardman has corroborated this view, noting that:

⁶⁵ Robert Hardman, *Our Queen* (London: Hutchinson, 2011).

⁶⁶ It will be interesting to see if the Commonwealth's profile is raised as a result of the referendum decision to leave the European Union. Speaking to the House of Lords, the new Commonwealth Secretary-General Baroness Patricia Scotland noted, 'now that the UK has made its decision, the Commonwealth will become more pivotally important than it has ever been.' Scotland cited in Alice Foster, 'What does Brexit mean for the Commonwealth? Nations to turbocharge trade cooperation' *The Express*, 21 July 2016. Available at: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/691826/Brexit-what-mean-for-Commonwealth-Britain-leaves-EU-impact-new-trade-deals-migration>. For a more detailed discussion of what Britain leaving the European Union might mean for the Commonwealth, see Sue Onslow. 'What Brexit means for the Commonwealth', *The Conversation*, 7 July 2016. Available at: <http://theconversation.com/what-brexit-means-for-the-commonwealth-61941>.

⁶⁷ Writing on the issue of Commonwealth endurance, David Starkey has conjectured that the Queen's passion and enthusiasm for the organisation, 'is the only reason the Commonwealth survives.' See David Starkey in conversation with Bidisha, Susanna Rustin, 'A right royal battle', *The Guardian*, 4 December 2010. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/dec/04/saturday-conversation-monarchy-starkey-bidisha>.

it is hard to detect the slightest appetite for severing the long and largely happy connection with the Crown...The monarchy is one of the few things which actually manages to reverse the organisation's gently declining profile and give it a certain star quality amid all the other international talking shops.⁶⁸

Hardman's point is interesting on a number of levels. Firstly, because it emphasises the point I made earlier in the thesis about the Commonwealth's obsession with its own uniqueness: the 'star quality' to which Hardman refers, like much of the Commonwealth literature, elevates the Commonwealth to a position of exceptionality because, unlike other international organisations, the Commonwealth has a reigning monarch as the head of its organisation.⁶⁹ And secondly, because it underscores a connection between the Queen and the Commonwealth that appears to have manifested in what we might describe as a 'close' relationship between the Monarch and certain Commonwealth leaders which, I believe, goes some way to understanding the link between Commonwealth endurance and the Queen.

Ben Pimlott and Matthew Neuhaus both put this down to royal diplomacy,⁷⁰ but there have been a number of notable instances where we might describe the relationship between the Queen and a small number of Commonwealth heads of government - particularly those in Africa - in more affective terms.⁷¹ One such example is the past relationship between the Queen and the Ghanaian President, Kwame Nkrumah. While taking something of an anti-British stance, during the

⁶⁸ Robert Hardman, *Our Queen*.

⁶⁹ It is difficult to speculate about how other international organisations view the Queen's role in the Commonwealth, or whether they view the Commonwealth at all, there is, however, good reason to suppose that an international organisation, such as the Commonwealth, which has attempted to take on a more cosmopolitan outlook in the past two decades, might wish to play down the fact that at the head of its organisational family sits one of the richest women in the world and whose royal status and privilege are built on a foundation of hierarchy and inequality.

⁷⁰ Matthew Neuhaus, former deputy Secretary-General to Don McKinnon shares this opinion, as he puts it one 'unique aspect of the Commonwealth is its symbolic headship, held by Queen Elizabeth II for historic reasons - and the Commonwealth respects its history.' See Matthew Neuhaus, 'Renewing the Commonwealth - A reform agenda for a new Secretary General', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 104, no. 5 (2015): 547; Ben Pimlott, 'Some thoughts on the Queen and Commonwealth', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 87, no. 347 (1998): 304.

⁷¹ Observing the affective relationship between the Queen and a number of African leaders led John Holmes of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs to note, in 1962, that 'Africans seem to have a fondness for Queens.' See John Holmes, 'The impact on the Commonwealth of the emergence of Africa', *International Organisation* 16, no. 2 (1962): 291-302.

1960s, in attempts to dilute British control of the Commonwealth,⁷² Nkrumah is said to have taken pains to save the Queen from any difficulty or embarrassment that might have arisen from his actions.⁷³ In a similar vein, while displaying open hostility to the British government, the Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe, has gone out of his way to not criticise or attack the British Monarch,⁷⁴ and has been reported, on occasion, to become emotional when discussing his past encounters with the Queen. As Heidi Holland recalls, when interviewing Mugabe he, ‘nearly cried when I mentioned the British royal family... the Queen and how she had stayed with him at State House.’⁷⁵

Commentators have offered a variety of interpretations for these various displays of attentiveness. Some, such as David Birmingham, writing on Nkrumah, describe the relationship as a kind of a love affair, particularly given the level of loyalty and affection shown by Nkrumah, who frequently referred to the Queen as ‘his fairy godmother.’⁷⁶ Others, like William Heseltine, describe these relationships using more familial discourse. As Heseltine observes:

From the very beginning, when the Queen made her way round the Commonwealth, she got to know some of those African leaders...they grew up together and had a relationship which was, in some cases, quite affectionate...I think they began to regard her as a mother figure in the Commonwealth.⁷⁷

This point is taken up by Philip Murphy, who has attempted to push the mother analogy further by suggesting that the female figure of the Queen, in the nurturing role of the mother, makes it easier for the Commonwealth to be portrayed as a

⁷² I refer here to Nkrumah taking the lead on pushing for a Commonwealth Secretariat and on sanctions against the South African apartheid regime. For more on Nkrumah’s role in these events see Stuart Mole, ‘From Smith to Sharma: The role of the Commonwealth Secretary-General’, in *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment, 1965-2009*, ed. James Mayall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 65-82.

⁷³ David Rooney, *Kwame Nkrumah: Vision and Tragedy* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2007), 200.

⁷⁴ Stephen Chan points out in his biography of Mugabe, during the 1991 Commonwealth Summit in Harare, there were many photographs of Mugabe meeting the Queen and looking proud. See Stephen Chan, *Robert Mugabe: A Life of Power and Violence* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 68.

⁷⁵ Heidi Holland interview with Kevin Harris from the documentary ‘Zimbabwe: Past the Post on a Dark Horse.’ Interview clip available at: <http://www.zimeye.net/mugabe-has-a-deep-love-for-the-british-journalist/>.

⁷⁶ Certainly the Queen was of a similar age, if not younger, than Nkrumah and other African leaders when she became the Monarch, which suggests a certain eroticism rather than a mother figure. See Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 129.

⁷⁷ Heseltine cited in Hardman, *Our Queen*, 301.

family.⁷⁸ Murphy's observation comes at the suggestion of Dorothy Thompson's groundbreaking research on gender, power, and Queen Victoria, which argues that the fact that Queen Victoria was a woman effectively put her above politics in the collective public consciousness.⁷⁹ It is worth remembering that, as I noted in section 2.1, in spite of the broadening definition of family, during Victoria's reign, as diverse, flexible, and able to stretch across distances and disjuncture of all kinds, there remained, as Thompson aptly points out, a tension between Victoria's public functions as sovereign and the need to conform to the contemporary notion of 'separate spheres,' in which the woman's role was expected to be within the family.⁸⁰ The current presence of a female monarchy under Elizabeth II has, likewise, troubled the way in which the monarchy has presented itself both domestically and internationally.⁸¹ The consistent reference, by the Queen, to the Commonwealth as a family, therefore, goes some way to reconciling the public and the private spheres.

The point I am trying to make here is that the Queen is, in many ways, responsible for the continued blurring of the lines between personal and political, domestic and international. While this point is, in itself, significant for the key claim in the thesis that the Commonwealth complicates the seemingly sacrosanct border between the domestic and the international sphere in normative IR theory, what makes the above observations even more interesting is that the notion of the Queen, as head of the Commonwealth and mother figure over the wider Commonwealth family, stands in sharp contrast to the tradition of the family in many African states, which works on the assumption of patriarchy and gender inequality.

It would not be an over-generalisation to argue that patriarchal practices are *deeply* ingrained in *most* African societies.⁸² This observation is borne out in the

⁷⁸ Murphy maintains that a common feature of the recollections of those closest to the Queen is the tendency to factor in the fact that she is a woman, when discussing her success as an effective figurehead. See Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*, 12-13.

⁷⁹ Dorothy Thompson, *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power* (London: Virago, 1990), 139-40.

⁸⁰ Thompson, *Queen Victoria*, 141-3. It is also worth remembering, as Thompson points out, that Victoria was the first monarch in history who combined the role of the public head of state with that of wife and mother.

⁸¹ Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*, 12.

⁸² Mojubaolu Okome, 'What women, whose development? A critical analysis of reformist feminist evangelism on African women', in *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood*, ed. Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyèwùmí (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003), 71.

growing body of research that focuses on gender and power in African politics.⁸³ One example from this, Schatzberg's careful empirical work on the political legitimacy of the metaphor in African politics and society, discussed in the introduction chapter of the thesis, reveals that paternal metaphors permeate all areas of social life in Africa.⁸⁴ In his account of African politics through metaphors of fathers, family, and food, Schatzberg observes that the head of state - usually male - is frequently portrayed in speeches, in images, and in the media, as the father of the nation who administers discipline and punishment as well as forgiveness.⁸⁵ To illustrate this point, Schatzberg draws on a speech by Chief Obafemi Awolowo who gives an account of this from a Nigerian perspective. As Awolowo sees it:

The FAMILY has an unwritten constitution which is essentially the same for any family in any part of the world...Here in Nigeria, it is the *paterfamilias*, advised and assisted by the *materfamilias* and the other adult members of the family, who keeps the reins of the family in his firm control. He combines in himself legislative, executive, judicial, and administrative functions. Because of his inherent affection for them, the *paterfamilias* does everything in his power to cater to the nurture, welfare, and happiness of all members of the family without discrimination.⁸⁶

Awolowo's description of familial hierarchy, with the patriarch at the head, straddles both the private sphere of the family and the political domain. Further, as Awolowo's description shows, this tradition affords very little, if any, power to women. Where they *are* afforded a voice or a place at the political table, more often than not, women are confined to the role of counsellor, where 'father-chiefs...heed their advice, and treat them...with respect.'⁸⁷

⁸³ For discussion and analysis of patriarchal practices see, among others, Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, *The Invention of Woman: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Regina Smith Oboler, *Women, Power, and Economic Change: The Nandi of Kenya* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985); Sharon Stichter and Jane Parpart, eds., *Patriarchy and Class: African Women in the Home and the Workforce* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988); Horace Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003); Horace Campbell and Rudo B. Gaidzanwa, 'Grappling with Mugabe's masculinist politics in Zimbabwe: A gender perspective', in *Mugabeism?: History, Politics, and Power in Zimbabwe*, ed. Sabele J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 157-80.

⁸⁴ Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa*, 19.

⁸⁵ Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa*, 23-31.

⁸⁶ Obafemi Awolowo cited in Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa*, 23-4. Italics in original.

⁸⁷ Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa*, 174.

Schatzberg's findings, along with Awolowo's description of the African family, raise a number of intriguing questions. If, as I argued earlier in this section, the Queen is held in high esteem by many heads of the African Commonwealth, might we simply ascribe the behaviour of heads of state to that of Schatzberg's 'father-chiefs' seeking counsel with the Queen in her gendered role of counsellor or advisor? While this explanation does have a certain cogency - it is entirely possible that heads of state view the Queen in an advisory role - the more persuasive explanation, I believe, lies in Murphy's Queen-as-mother-figure analogy. This idea is reinforced by observations from some writers of the behaviour of heads of state during the Commonwealth's biennial Heads of Government Meetings. As Martin Charteris remarked of the 1971 Singapore meeting, heads of government were 'really sour and bad tempered and that was because she couldn't attend. If she's there, you see, they behave. It's like nanny being there. Or perhaps it's Mummy.'⁸⁸ Does framing the Queen in the position of 'mother', then, make membership in the Commonwealth more endearing and therefore the Queen's presence an enticing incentive for states to remain?

Questions of this kind stretch the limits of political theory and seem to demand a more psychoanalytical way of thinking about families. While a psychoanalytical reading of the Queen's relationship in the role as mother is beyond the scope of the thesis, there are certain psychological components which are key to understanding most familial relationships which also apply to the Commonwealth family. These are ideas of duty, loyalty, and reproduction that go hand-in-hand with the endurance of families. What is immediately noteworthy here is that the concepts of duty and loyalty apply both to member states, which have remained loyal to the Commonwealth family, and to the Queen herself, who, as McGuire points out, has often, through the years, spelled out quite clearly in her broadcasts to the Commonwealth, her loyalty and devotion to the wider family of nations.⁸⁹

So, where does this get us? The Queen, as I have already pointed out, is perhaps *the* most enthusiastic supporter of the family label, and is herself responsible to some extent for the legitimacy of the family metaphor, given that she repeatedly refers to the Commonwealth as family. But, she has also taken her role as

⁸⁸ Martin Charteris cited in Robert Lacey, *Royal: Her Royal Majesty Queen Elizabeth II* (London: Little Brown, 2002), 256.

⁸⁹ McGuire, 'Til death do us part?'

symbolic head further, as Pimlott writes, ‘on several occasions the significance of the Monarch has been more than merely symbolic.’⁹⁰ The Queen’s known sympathy for the plight of black South Africans not only helped bring about the Lancaster Accord, which saw the independence of Zimbabwe, but also encouraged Nelson Mandela to take the new South Africa back to the Commonwealth as one of his first acts as President.⁹¹ As Pimlott sees this: ‘The Queen has actively helped to see the association through the period in which its survival seemed most in danger, to the point where a new generation has grown up that lacks the early post-imperial resentment and sees no particular reason to discard the set of relationships it provides.’⁹² This picture of the Queen as supportive mother figure might go some way to helping us to understand why the Commonwealth has endured long after many of its keenest observers, and greatest critics, had sounded its death knell.

2.5 Conclusions

I outlined in the previous chapter, my discord with much of the contemporary literature on the Commonwealth, that is alarmingly congenial to both the Commonwealth and its family label. I have shown in this chapter that if we look behind the sanguine rhetoric that the Commonwealth is a family of nations all equal in status, to the roots and development of the family metaphor, we find a rather different picture combining familial discord with silent harmony and negativity with affection, which both stretch and break across distances and disjuncture of all kinds. By elaborating on some of the ways in which the family metaphor has been manipulated by the British, since the mid-nineteenth century, I have attempted to flesh out a picture of the Commonwealth, which shows a somewhat more complex, troubled, and messier idea of the organisation as a family. This is because, behind the concept of family - in the way that the Commonwealth uses the term - there lies a complex history of inequality, violence, and hierarchy, which stem from the very real fact that the British Empire - the antecedent of the Commonwealth family - was founded and maintained for more than two centuries on ‘bloodshed, violence, brutality, conquest and war.’⁹³

⁹⁰ Pimlott, ‘Some thoughts on the Queen and Commonwealth’: 303.

⁹¹ Hardman, *Our Queen*.

⁹² Pimlott, ‘Some thoughts on the Queen and the Commonwealth’: 305.

⁹³ Richard Gott, *Britain’s Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (London: Verso, 2011), 2.

And yet, the Commonwealth continues to endure without any real discussion about its past. We might put this down to an idea that a number of post-colonial theorists have referred to as British imperial amnesia.⁹⁴ This is the description given to the British tendency to view the Empire as benevolent. While there is a growing body of empirical evidence that documents the brutality of the British colonial administration - for example, the migrated archives, which the British government was forced, in 2012, by a high court ruling, to disclose⁹⁵ - the idea that the Empire was a benevolent civilising mission remains deep rooted in the collective British psyche and acts as a kind of screen blocking other memories.⁹⁶

The Commonwealth's faithfulness to the family label, alongside the steady stream of familial discourse, might suggest that the family is the *sin qua non* of Commonwealth endurance, but in order to understand the organisation more fully, we need to do more than simply examine the history of the family label's usage. With this in mind, having provided a sense of the history of the roots and development of the Commonwealth family metaphor, I want now to begin my deeper engagement with the theoretical side of the thesis. Over the next two chapters, following loosely along a chronological framework, and using communitarian and cosmopolitan theory as critical tools, I am going to probe the

⁹⁴ Among those who have used this or similar terms are Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004); John Darwin, 'Memory of Empire in Britain: A preliminary view', in *Memories of Post-Imperial Nations: The Aftermath of Decolonisation, 1945-2013*, ed. Dietmar Rothermund (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 18-37; Andrew Thompson and Meaghan Kowalsky, 'Social life and cultural representation: Empire in the public imagination', in *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Andrew Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 251-97.

⁹⁵ For information on the discovery of the migrated archive see Mandy Banton, 'Destroy? Migrate? Conceal? British strategies for the disposal of sensitive records of colonial administrations at independence', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40, no. 2 (2012): 321-335; Caroline Elkins, 'Alchemy of evidence: Mau Mau, the British Empire, and the High Court of Justice', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39, no. 5 (2011): 731-48; Philip Murphy, 'Censorship, declassification and the history of end of Empire in Central Africa', *African Research and Documentation* 92 (2003): 3-26; Timothy Lovering, 'Expatriate archives', *Archives* 34, no. 121 (2009): 1-5.

⁹⁶ The notion of the screen, or screen memory, is the creation of Freud, who applied the concept of the screen in his attempts to understand why some memories from childhood are preserved while others are not. In particular, he found that memory works through displacement and substitution, moreover we often we use the banal memory of our everyday lives as a screen through which we can displace more disturbing or painful memories from our consciousness. The concept of the screen has spawned a vast literature, most of which, in history and political research, has focused on memory and the Holocaust; but recently a number of theorists have begun to apply the concept of the screen to the memory and trauma of colonialism. For an overview of screen memory and its different interpretations see Michael Lambek and Paul Antze, 'Introduction: Forecasting Memory', in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, eds. Michael Lambek and Paul Antze (London: Routledge, 1996), xi.

political legitimacy behind the family label and along the way build up a picture of two ways in which we might theoretically understand the Commonwealth as a family, beginning with communitarianism in Chapter 3.

The Commonwealth is certainly a form of free, uncommitted and non-binding association with the spirit of peaceful co-existence, a link or bridge which helps in bringing together nations for the purpose of co-operation and consolidation. Such associations are preferable to the more binding kinds of alliance or blocs. We, of course, consider the problem of our association with the Commonwealth in terms of independent nations coming together without any military or other commitments. There are no conditions attached except this desire to co-operate so far as it is consistent with the independence and sovereignty of each nation. One important factor about the Commonwealth association is that it reverses the other process of military or economic blocking together for what might be called the purposes of the 'cold war'. It has a certain warmth of approach about it regardless of the problems that beset any such association. There may be differences. There are. Nevertheless the overall approach to such controversies is a friendly one which helps to tone down friction and difficulties. That, I think, is all to the good and a development worthy to be followed in other spheres, larger spheres, also.

- Jawaharlal Nehru (1960).

‘Mystical unions’ and ‘invisible bonds’: The Commonwealth family through the lens of communitarianism

The last chapter took a largely historical approach to exploring the roots and development of the family metaphor, laying down some foundations for understanding how the idea of the family in the nineteenth century moved from the private to the domestic and the domestic to the international as it came to describe the wider British Empire. This, and the following chapter, begin the more theoretical endeavour at the heart of the thesis, which is to explore how the Commonwealth appears when viewed through the lens of communitarianism and cosmopolitanism respectively.

This chapter focuses on the communitarian half of the dynamic. As I explained in Chapter 1, from a communitarian perspective, our identities are always bounded in space and time.¹ This boundedness, communitarians claim, shapes and constrains the way we interact and the obligations we have to each other.² As communitarians see it, the strongest loyalties are those we have for our families, tribes, communities, and nations, and it is within these groups that ideas of justice are embodied within particular shared traditions.³ I argue, in this chapter, that there are certain key features, streams of ideas, and shared traditions that unite Commonwealth states - these are traditions that the British Empire left as its legacy, as W. David McIntyre points out, ‘language and education, agricultural and technical cooperation, and in some cases defence, law and citizenship.’⁴ These shared traditions, coupled with collective notions of solidarity and familial

¹ Robyn Eckersley, ‘Communitarianism’, in *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge*, eds. Andrew Dobson and Robyn Eckersley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 93.

² Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

³ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1988); Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

⁴ McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*, 9.

identity,⁵ work together to give a sense that relations between Commonwealth members can be described in a language which is more akin with domestic rather than international relations.⁶ Using these ideas as a springboard alongside communitarian theory, the chapter explores the extent to which we might argue that the Commonwealth, as a family, exhibits communitarian traits.

My point of entry into this discussion will be a consideration of the main ideas behind the ways in which communitarian theorists understand and theorise the idea of the community at the heart of their thesis. One of the key criticisms that has been levelled at communitarians is that they are typically, perhaps deliberately, vague when it comes to understanding what is meant by 'community.' This observation is intriguing, as not being confined by precise definition has allowed communitarians something of a free reign to play around with the idea of community and use it to mean whatever they want it to mean.⁷ Frustrated by the lack of clarity in the communitarian debate, the chapter traces certain key features and streams of ideas running through the work of most communitarian theorists that, when taken together, give us an understanding of the general features of what communitarians have in mind when they talk about community. This will provide the lens through which to weigh up the Commonwealth's communitarianism.

My aim, in this chapter, is to explore the extent to which the Commonwealth family might be viewed as communitarian, while also thinking about how viewing the organisation in this way problematises certain taken-for-granted notions that undergird some aspects of communitarian thinking. Specifically, the chapter challenges the claims by many communitarian theorists who fetishise identity and ethical responsibility within state borders, and instead puts forward the idea that we can perceive a thicker conception of identity and belonging between Commonwealth member states. The chapter attempts to do three things. First, it begins by thinking about the ways in which communitarians understand and

⁵ Other areas of collective identity within the organisation overlap and strengthen the idea of family; these are pan Africanism or kith and kin relations between white Dominions.

⁶ Maria Escudero argues that it is domestic, rather than international norms, which apply to the relations between post-colonial families of states. See Maria Escudero, 'The image of Latin America disseminated in Spain by the Franco regime', unpublished dissertation, History (San Diego, CA: University of California, 1994), 300. On solidarity between African states see Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Particularly chapter 5.

⁷ The argument from many critics is that there is no consistency in the literature as to what communitarianism or the term 'community' means. See, for example, Frazer, *The Problems of Communitarian Politics*, 60.

theorise the community, partly to lay down some conceptual foundations of the main ideas of communitarianism, and partly to challenge the idea, put forward by many critics, that there is no shared understanding among communitarians as to what the idea of ‘community’ entails. The effort here is to ground communitarian theory in order to provide a more tangible set of criteria against which to measure the Commonwealth. While communitarianism has been criticised for being deliberately vague about the idea of community, I argue that there are at least three elements which run through communitarian theory that help to ground communitarianism: inheritance, shared values, and solidarity. The second part of the chapter relates these practices to the Commonwealth drawing on a range of events and descriptions around the beginning of the organisation’s history which gave the Commonwealth the appearance of being communitarian. Building on the argument that there is a darker, messier side to inheritance, shared history, and solidarity, in the final section, I discuss the ways in which the Commonwealth family problematises communitarianism and offer a more nuanced view of the community and communitarianism.

3.1 Communitarianism: The idea of *community*

As I noted in the previous section, one of the main frustrations vented by critics of communitarianism is the confusion surrounding what communitarians mean when they talk about ‘community.’⁸ But, while most communitarian theorists dodge the question of precisely what they have in mind when they refer to the concept,⁹ I want to argue in this chapter that while there is no fixed definition advanced by communitarian theorists as to what we ought to understand community to be, within the corpus of communitarian thinking, there are at least three concepts that frequently appear in the literature.¹⁰ Tacitly, as I see it, the

⁸ Katerina Dalacoura has observed that the confusion surrounding the communitarian meanings of community is deliberate because of the difficulty of definitions. See Katerina Dalacoura, ‘A critique of communitarianism with reference to post-revolutionary Iran’, *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002): 75-92. A number of theorists have alluded to the elusive nature of the community understood by communitarians. This is testified to the number of books on the subject which are themed around searching for the community. For instance, Robert Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth: Social Theory and the Promise of Community* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); Paul Lichterman, *The Search for Political Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community: A Study in the Ethics of Order and Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

⁹ Frazer has criticised communitarians for using the term ‘community’ to mean whatever they want it to mean. Frazer, *The Problems of Communitarian Politics*, 60.

¹⁰ In their study of the history of community in the United States, Robert Bellah and his associates go further than most communitarians in that they do offer something of a

breakdown of what seems to be an unwritten understanding of the concept of community generally rests on three presuppositions, which I have identified as: inheritance, common values, and solidarity.¹¹ All three elements are interrelated and inseparable from each other. Comprehending them necessitates an understanding of the fact that inherent in all three is subscription to two powerful ideological claims and long-standing assumptions: that, the human race is inherently 'tribal,'¹² and that substantive moral considerations are anchored in a politics of the common good, where the interests of society and the state take precedent over the interest of individuals.¹³ All three of these ideas, as I will show later in the chapter, resonate, to a large extent, with the Commonwealth's description of itself as a family.

Beginning with the idea of inheritance: communitarians begin by emphasising a need to experience our lives as bound up with the good of the communities out of which our identity has been constituted. In international relations terms, this refers to nationality and the identity one inherits at birth,¹⁴ as Michael Sandel puts this, the relationships that we find ourselves in 'to begin with.'¹⁵ Sandel, when writing on the link between identity and inheritance, notes that:

We cannot regard ourselves as independent...without great cost to those loyalties and convictions whose moral force consists partly in the fact that living by them is inseparable from understanding ourselves as

definition of community; though this is never expanded on. As they see it, community is: 'a group of people who are socially independent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain *practices*...that both define the community and are nurtured by it. Such a community is not quickly formed. It almost always had a history and so is also a *community of memory*, defined in part by its past and its memory of its past.' Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swindler and Steven Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 333. Italics in original.

¹¹ Although these are my own categories, a number of theorists have attempted to pin down communitarian thought in this area. See, for instance, Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth*. Selznick defines community through seven primary elements: historicity, identity, mutuality, plurality, autonomy, participation, and integration. John Rawls formulates the notion of community as a collection of pre-figured and pre-constituted individuals who share final ends. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

¹² Walzer, *Thick and Thin*.

¹³ Amitai Etzioni, ed., *Rights and the Common Good: The Communitarian Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

¹⁴ David Miller discusses the issue of chosen versus inherited identity. While he concludes that identity ought to be freely chosen, in reality this is not the case and the very idea of choosing one's identity opens up a number of improbable decisions and questions. David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 152.

the particular persons we are - as members of this family, or community or nation or people, as bearers of this history...¹⁶

For Sandel, for the members of a genuine community, that is, a community where membership is not voluntary but inherited, attachment is 'not merely an attribute but a constituent of their identity.'¹⁷ Theorists, such as Sandel, Alasdair MacIntyre,¹⁸ and Charles Taylor,¹⁹ who ground their defence of collective identity in the community, posit there are deeper, more meaningful connections between citizens in inherited communities. These stronger, more meaningful, attachments have been described as: 'thick descriptions,' by Clifford Geertz.²⁰ For Geertz thick descriptions are based on the idea that culture is symbolic and meaningful. As he puts this, 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance.'²¹ Where we come from, what our identity is, tends to be defined by various communal attachments that we have inherited. It is in this sense that inherited membership creates a 'far stronger and more meaningful sense of attachment than does the sort of membership based on voluntary choice.'²²

Those who adhere to this interpretation of identity often claim, by way of supporting evidence, that the concept requires the existence of an external 'Other' in order to define itself. This has a resonance that can be heard distinctly in the work of Chantal Mouffe who advances this idea when she argues that 'collective identities can only be established on the mode of an us/them.'²³ The modern conceptions of sovereignty and nation contribute to the idea of collective identity and solidarity. As Alexander Wendt explains it, 'there is no sovereignty without an other.'²⁴ If, as communitarians suggest, democracy inherently depends on the identification of an enemy, adversary and above all other, then it also acts as solidarity. The community in this case is defined by its values against other entities - groups, individuals, communities - that do not share its values.²⁵

¹⁶ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 179.

¹⁷ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 150.

¹⁸ MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*

¹⁹ In his work *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor notes the importance of defining the community, but he, himself, does not offer a definition. See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*.

²⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

²¹ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5.

²² Derek Phillips, *Looking Backward: A Critical Appraisal of Communitarian Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 14.

²³ Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), 213.

²⁴ Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 412.

²⁵ J. Peter Burgess, 'The discourse of justice in political, legal and moral community', in *Spheres of Global Justice, Volume 1: Global Challenges to Liberal Democracy, Political*

Accordingly, we can view memory as playing a large role in the establishment of collective identity that serves the needs of nation building. The concepts of identity and memory are typically yoked together throughout history. Indeed, as Sharon Macdonald points out, 'Like 'memory,' the English word 'history' is ambiguous, referring both to the past - what happened - as well as to accounts of that past and study of it.'²⁶ We need not stray far to find examples of this, as many forms of contemporary identity politics take their lead from an idea that Laura Otis describes as 'organic memory.' Organic memory, Otis observes, is an idea that has its roots in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century theorising. It is an idea that proposes memory and heredity as essentially the same - just as one inherits physical attributes from one's ancestors it follows that one also inherits memories from one's ancestors.²⁷ As Otis points out, organic memory operates both at the individual and collective levels: it articulates a cultural form of memory, which is then passed on to subsequent generations through individual family members. In this way, memory is an important way for nations to internalise norms, as national history in the form of 'organic memory' is handed down from one generation to the next.²⁸

Framing identity around collective memory creates a sense of solidarity around the imagined community that has a shared history stretching back through several generations. Maurice Halbwachs' work has been particularly significant in honing the concept of collective memory. For Halbwachs, the dissemination of memory is wholly dependent on 'frameworks of social memory,'²⁹ in particular, the family, religion, and social class. Halbwachs is careful to point out that these social frameworks are not created after the fact, but are a means through which dominant groups can reconstruct the past through the constant retelling of

Participation, Minorities and Migrants, ed. Jean-Christophe Merle (Heidelberg, New York and London: Springer, 2013), 508.

²⁶ Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 13.

²⁷ Laura Otis, *Organic Memory: History and the Body in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 2.

²⁸ There have been recent studies which have found that the memory of severe trauma, such as that experienced by Holocaust survivors, is passed down genetically and inter-generationally. For example, see Rachel Yehuda, James Schmeidler, Milton Wainberg, Karen Binder-Brynes, Tamar Duvdevani,, 'Vulnerability to posttraumatic stress disorder in adult offspring of Holocaust survivors', *American Journal of Psychiatry* 155 (1998): 1163-71; Amy Bombay, Kim Matheson and Hymie Ainsman, 'The intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools: Implications for the concept of historical trauma', *Transcultural Psychiatry* 51, no. 3 (2014): 320-38.

²⁹ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 182.

constitutive narratives.³⁰ The social frameworks of memory, then, often serve the purpose of social cohesion: in this way, memory becomes a kind of glue, holding identity together over time.³¹ At the level of the state, this creates what Pierre Nora calls, a 'memory-nation.'³²

While collective memory forms create social solidarity, there is, however, another, darker side to social memory construction that some theorists have referred to as a memory competition.³³ According to collective memory theory, different social groups - or collective memory agents - often compete with each other (both in national and international arenas) to establish a 'master frame' of the past.³⁴ These contests are not only about what is being remembered but also about the why and how of remembrance.³⁵ In this contest, collective memories often become strategically manipulated by political actors to alter the balance of power between groups.³⁶ It follows that the group with the most power constructs the memory that suits their rational interests or needs.

Along with memory, language is given special importance by communitarians for creating a common identity. Perhaps the clearest defence of linguistic membership from a communitarian perspective is that put forward by Charles Taylor. For Taylor, there can be no individual sense of identity in the absence of other speakers, if people lose their identification with the moral or spiritual background they have gained through their communities or nations and the traditions in which they are imbued, then they will find themselves all at sea.³⁷ For Taylor, the self is always culturally specific and language is the embodiment of community. As Taylor puts this:

³⁰ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

³¹ For an overview and analysis of collective memory literature, see Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins, 'Social memory studies: From 'collective memory' to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 105-40.

³² Pierre Nora, 'Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire', *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-25.

³³ Walter Benn Michaels, 'Plots against America: Neoliberalism and Antiracism', *American Literary History* (2006): 288-302; Walter Benn Michaels, *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality* (New York: Metropolitan, 2006); Walter Benn Michaels, *The Shape of the Signifier: 1967 to the End of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

³⁴ Ronald Berger, *Holocaust, Religion and the Politics of Collective Memory: Beyond Sociology* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 22.

³⁵ Barry Schwartz, 'Social change and collective memory: The democratisation of George Washington', *American Sociology Review* 56 (1991): 225-7.

³⁶ Ronald Berger, *Fathoming the Holocaust: A Social Problems Approach* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2002).

³⁷ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 29.

I define myself by defining where I speak from – in my family tree, in social space, in geography of social statuses and functions, in intimate responses to the ones I love and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out.³⁸

There is no stronger way of showing our embedded-ness in the common history and values of a community for Taylor than being initiated into the ongoing conversation of the moral and the spiritual through the language of one's ancestors. While a common language might be seen as conveying a set of understandings, as Wa Thiong'o Ngugi notes 'European languages were seen as having a capacity to unite African peoples against divisive tendencies inherent in the multiplicity of African languages within the same geographic state,'³⁹ the idea of a common language across the Commonwealth also, historically, has negative connotations. Later in the chapter, I will discuss the more negative side to a common language, and Ngugi's work in this area, here I only want to point out that while English may be the official language of the Commonwealth, it is certainly not the mother tongue of all Commonwealth member states.

Communitarians are keen to point out that a true community requires that the bonds between the members rest on their mutual recognition of the 'we-feeling' or a belonging together. Sandel provides a glimpse of this when he emphasises that community involves 'fraternal sentiments and fellow feeling.'⁴⁰ The element of solidarity here concerns the extent and direction of people's fellow feeling and mutual concern for their fellow persons. The idea of the 'we-feeling' emerges in sharper focus in Durkheim's description of community solidarity as 'a pleasure in saying 'we,' rather than 'I,' because anyone in the position to say 'we' feels behind him a support, a force on which he can count, a force that is much more intense than that upon which isolated individuals can rely.'⁴¹ Durkheim's quote offers a reminder of the communitarian emphasis on the individual as rooted. And membership is important because members of a political community owe special obligations to one another that they do not owe to anyone else, or at least anyone

³⁸ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 35.

³⁹ Wa Thiong'o Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1987), 6-7.

⁴⁰ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 150.

⁴¹ Emile Durkheim, *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 240.

else to the same degree.⁴² Loyalty to the group is also a factor, as Rahel Jaeggi points out, ‘loyalty...means favouring the interests of members of the group at the expense of outsiders in certain circumstances.’⁴³

One clear example of the circumstances to which Jaeggi refers is the idea of distributive justice. So far in this section, we have seen the ways in which inheritance, values, and solidarity work together through ideas of collective identity, memory, and language to meet the needs of nation building. But how do these elements affect the way we understand our moral commitments to others? Communitarians argue that distributive justice exists only to those within the inclusionary side of the normative dichotomy. For Taylor, understanding ‘who are we/who am I?’ is logically prior to asking ‘what ought we/I to do?’ These questions can only be answered by locating people in particular communities, assigning them meaning, roles and relationships; only then can we fix our moral horizons.⁴⁴ For David Miller, nations are ethical communities. As he puts it, ‘In acknowledging a national identity, I am also acknowledging that I owe special obligations to fellow members of my nation, which I do not owe to other human beings.’⁴⁵ Such a view, argues Miller, may appear heartless, but it is underscored by respect for the autonomy of other states.⁴⁶

The purpose of this section has been to provide an outline of the main ideas running through communitarian theory in order to lay down some kind of criterion against which to measure the Commonwealth’s communitarianism. Now that we have a sense of the main idea of community, as communitarians view the concept, this would be the appropriate juncture to begin to examine the Commonwealth under its lens. In the sections that follow, I am going to look at how the ideas of inheritance, common history and values, and solidarity have shaped the Commonwealth, and how these different ideas feed into forms of communitarianism. I want to stress from the outset that the three propositions are linked together in such a way that is it difficult to feel the force of any one of them without acknowledging the others. It is not hard to see how inheritance and

⁴² Michael Walzer, ‘Welfare, Membership and Need’, in *Liberalism and its Critics*, ed. Michael Sandel (New York University Press, 1984), 200.

⁴³ Rahel Jaeggi, ‘Solidarity and indifference’, in *Solidarity in Health and Social Care in Europe*, eds. Rudd Ter Meulen, Wil Arts and Ruud Muffels (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer, 2001), 290-91.

⁴⁴ Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁴⁵ Miller, *On Nationality*, 49.

⁴⁶ Miller, *On Nationality*, 108.

common values both underscore the idea of solidarity, but what is more subtle - and I will bring this out as I go along - is the way in which heads of state and other keen observers describe the Commonwealth in the language of unity. This observation is significant, as it is no secret that the Commonwealth has been far from unified around key moments in the organisation's history.⁴⁷ And yet, since the organisation began, the language of unity has permeated the discourse of Commonwealth heads of state. We might simply put this down to the organisation's tendency to exaggerate its uniqueness. However, when we look behind the narrative we begin to see how, through the complex interplay of the elements above, the Commonwealth appears to be communitarian and this troubles the conventional understanding of communitarianism in IR.

3.2 The Commonwealth through the communitarian lens

Before exploring the extent to which we might argue that the Commonwealth family is communitarian, it would be useful to recall, briefly, the political context within which the official Commonwealth was formed.⁴⁸ I do not want to go deeply into the legal and constitutional dimensions of Commonwealth membership, valuable work has already been done in this area,⁴⁹ however, we saw, in the previous chapter, something of the progression and changes in the ideology of the family from Empire to decolonisation, it would be useful, therefore, for the reader to understand how the Commonwealth began as a political organisation or, to put it another way, how the imperial family became the Commonwealth family. We have already seen in Chapter 2 how the British Prime Minister, Clement Attlee,

⁴⁷ I refer here in particularly to the Suez crisis, the Rhodesia UDI, the issue of sanctions on South Africa, and the issue of Britain joining the EEC.

⁴⁸ There is a disagreement within the Commonwealth literature as to whether we ought to apply the adjectival marker of 'official' to the post-war 1949 Commonwealth, which the London Declaration officially legitimised, or the 1965 Commonwealth, which began to move towards a more official international organisation status with the opening of the Commonwealth Secretariat. For a discussion of these issues see William Dale, 'Is the Commonwealth an international organisation?', *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 31, no.3 (1982): 451-73; Margaret Doxy, 'The Commonwealth Secretariat', in *The Commonwealth in the 1980s: Challenges and Opportunities*, eds. A. J. R. Groom and Paul Taylor (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 15-39. For the purposes of this, and the following chapters, any reference to the 'official' Commonwealth should be taken to mean the Commonwealth that was brought into being with the 1949 London Declaration.

⁴⁹ For a detailed overview of the years of transition from colonies into Commonwealth see McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*; Percival Griffiths, *Empire into Commonwealth* (London: Benn, 1969); Clement Attlee, *Empire into Commonwealth: The Chichele Lectures Delivered at Oxford in May 1960 on 'Changes in the Conception and Structure of the British Empire During the Last Half Century'* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); L. J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2002); Martin Kitchen, *The British Empire and Commonwealth: A Short History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

used the language of family and the rather extravagant utopian comparison, in the epigraph of Chapter 2, of the British Royal Family to the Holy Christian Family. These things both underscore a distinct temporal change as Britain's relationship with her colonies, or former colonies, changed, so too did the way in which familial discourse was employed to describe post-colonial relationships. The British had once utilised the family metaphor to bolster the idea of a united national consciousness across the settler-colonies and the mother-country, while simultaneously using a more aggressive and racialised language of family - parents and children - to keep the non-Anglo Saxon peoples of the Empire in their subordinated place. They now needed to adjust the familial discourse to account for a change in what the British state needed the family to do. In short, as I noted in the previous chapter, Britain now needed to retain ties with India in order to fan the embers of the waning Empire and hold on to what semblance of unity with its former colonies. As Srinivasan puts this, 'the British government had an agenda for the Commonwealth. It felt that Britain could only match its two other big partners in world affairs by creating a Commonwealth third force.'⁵⁰

The political story of the Commonwealth family began with India and Jawaharlal Nehru in 1949, when the British changed membership in the organisation from one based on common allegiance to the British Crown, to one based on acceptance of the British Monarch as the symbol of free association at the head of the organisation.⁵¹ This move was essential to the Commonwealth's survival as it allowed India to remain a member of the Commonwealth family after becoming a republic.⁵² While the British had originally attempted to hold on to the traditional principle of alliance to the Crown, keeping India in the Commonwealth became a more important issue as Britain feared an India outside the Commonwealth might move toward an anti-Western community of Asian states.⁵³

In a bid to persuade Nehru that Commonwealth membership would be beneficial, Attlee, as we have seen, couched Commonwealth relations in the language of family. Compounding the Holy Family description, and likewise appealing to

⁵⁰ Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth*, 6.

⁵¹ It is interesting that the issue of the Crown should be the defining feature of why the Commonwealth continued especially when I have argued in this thesis that the Queen is one of the reasons, or at least a major draw card, for the Commonwealth's endurance.

⁵² W. David McIntyre, 'A formula might have to be found: Ireland, India and the headship of the Commonwealth', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 91, no. 365 (2002): 391-413.

⁵³ Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline, and Future of the British Commonwealth*, 10.

Nehru's philosophical approach to promoting world peace, Attlee assured Nehru that joining the Commonwealth would mean adherence to certain values, democratic institutions, the rule of law and toleration, which all worked towards a 'way of life', and, despite differences between states gave a sense of community and family.⁵⁴ To Britain's relief, in spite of recurrent tensions between India and Pakistan, both states, as republics, chose to remain in the Commonwealth. But, what is of interest here for the purposes of my interrogation of the Commonwealth as a family, is less the question of concessions made on behalf of India and more the fact that, by remaining in the Commonwealth, India's accession provided the lynch-pin for many states to follow.⁵⁵

The accession of independent India to the Commonwealth family opened the doors, first to Asian states, creating what many Commonwealth observers refer to as Nehru's Commonwealth,⁵⁶ and later to independent African nations, beginning with Ghana. Ghana's accession marked a decisive turning point as the first black African state to enter the Commonwealth family.⁵⁷ But what is interesting is that Ghana's accession was the catalyst for the withdrawal of South Africa on racial grounds. South Africa's protest dominated the Commonwealth family for the next three decades, but what is particularly noteworthy, and a point to which I will return in Chapter 5 of the thesis, is that although the minority white South African government withdrew from the Commonwealth, a large number of black South Africans claim that they were still in it.⁵⁸

This observation is intriguing as it helps to underscore the bonds between Commonwealth members. While India paved the way for the Commonwealth to develop into an international organisation of independent states, the familial ties

⁵⁴ Judith Brown, *Nehru: A Political Way of Life* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 252.

⁵⁵ Mayall, 'Introduction', 3-20.

⁵⁶ Srinivasan devotes a third of his study on Commonwealth history and relations to what he refers to as three different Commonwealths: Firstly, the Nehru Commonwealth - largely because of the accession of India and India's profound influence on the way the organisation would be run; Secondly, the African Commonwealth - because of the African issues and dominance of Commonwealth heads of Government meetings and Commonwealth relations from the 1960s to the 1990s; Thirdly, Nobody's Commonwealth - Srinivasan argues that the Commonwealth appears to be drifting and Britain should once again consider taking the helm. Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline, and Future of the British Commonwealth*.

⁵⁷ Mazrui, *The Anglo-African Commonwealth*, 1.

⁵⁸ This is an observation made by Oliver Tambo. See Shridath Ramphal interviewed in Gugulethu Moyo and Mark Ashurst, 'Sleights of hand at Lancaster House', in *The Day After Mugabe: Prospects for Change in Zimbabwe*, eds. Gugulethu Moyo and Mark Ashurst (London: Africa Research Institute, 2007), 163.

between these states appeared to remain relatively strong, despite periods of fighting and frustration. Surveying how far the Commonwealth had developed in 1960, the editor of *The Round Table* aptly noted that, the ‘children have grown into adult nations, preserving family ties without family discipline.’⁵⁹ It is these family ties which underlie the overarching point of the thesis that the Commonwealth offers a thicker view of relations between post-colonial states, but in what other ways does the Commonwealth appear communitarian? This is the focus of the rest of this section.

3.2.1 Continuity and distinctiveness

The starting point for my deeper exploration of the Commonwealth’s communitarianism lies in an observation by W. David McIntyre that the Commonwealth has survived largely because it has given a sense of ‘continuity and distinctiveness’⁶⁰ to its member countries. While McIntyre gives little in the way of expansion on this analysis, underneath his observation lies an understanding that states remain attached to the Commonwealth, and, by proxy, to Britain, through a series of continuous practices that give the organisation a sense of continuity and unity against external otherness.⁶¹ This represents a central theme in the history of the Commonwealth; the idea that the organisation is ‘a continuation of the past but in a different sense’⁶² permeates the discourse of heads of state and Secretary-Generals.⁶³ This understanding of the continuity of ideas linked to a common origin runs parallel to the conception of the organisation as a family and marks one aspect, I suggest, of inheritance, which helps to build a picture of the Commonwealth’s communitarianism.

If continuity, then, is the link to the Commonwealth’s communitarianism, through the idea of inherited bonds, then there are at least two ideas that provide the

⁵⁹ Editorial, ‘The Commonwealth: A United Kingdom view’, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 50, no. 200 (1960): 339.

⁶⁰ McIntyre, *The Commonwealth of Nations*, 333.

⁶¹ This is an argument also put forth by Brysk, Parsons and Sandholtz in their study on post-colonial families of nations. See Brysk, Parsons and Sandholtz, ‘After Empire’.

⁶² Sharma, ‘The global value of the Commonwealth’.

⁶³ As I discussed earlier in the thesis, this is an idea that has its roots in the British Empire but began to be applied to the Commonwealth by the British Monarch and Clement Attlee. Now, the idea that the Commonwealth is a family permeates the discourse coming out of the Commonwealth Secretariat, who, as I noted earlier, produced a short documentary in 2010 explaining what it means to be in the Commonwealth family. See The Commonwealth Secretariat, ‘The Commonwealth Family’ (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2010). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaXHtFoOdTU>.

scaffolding to this link. These are the organisation's shared history and the organisation's shared values, which go some way towards giving the perception of a shared identity among Commonwealth states. Beginning with the idea of history: as we saw in section 3.1, shared history is important for the sense of 'we-feeling' that communitarians posit is the shared good in the community. The Commonwealth's shared history, as I have noted in the previous chapters, is an idea that features heavily in the organisation's discourse, yet, where communitarians largely paint a positive view of this shared history and its link with memory, the Commonwealth goes against this grain with a shared history that is built on a foundation of colonialism, violence, and inequality. As I argued earlier in the thesis, it is no secret that the Commonwealth family has a violent past, nevertheless, in spite of this, many post-colonial states retained their ties with the organisation following independence. Thus, while communitarians argue that the communal attachments that we inherit are more meaningful than those we join voluntarily, the Commonwealth muddies this idea as many states have remained, voluntarily, in the family that began as a family by force. Further muddying the neat communitarian idea of shared history, A. J. R. Groom points out, in spite of many of the darker aspects of the Commonwealth's past, 'shared assets and values grew out of the relationship.'⁶⁴

One important asset and value to which Groom refers is a 'working knowledge of English.'⁶⁵ In the standard communitarian thesis, language is a staple of legitimate shared meanings, values, and ways of life.⁶⁶ As we saw in the previous section, for communitarians, such as Taylor, language functions as a nodal point around which identities are fixed, knowledge is produced, and a sense of unity is developed.⁶⁷ A. J. R. Groom and Paul Taylor shed light on the way in which language underscores unity among Commonwealth states, pointing out that with shared language comes a sense of familiarity, informality, and co-operative spirit.⁶⁸ The Commonwealth has rooted its idea of collective identity in its shared history and from that history came the widespread use of English as a common unifying language. While language is not the sole defining feature of the

⁶⁴ A. J. R. Groom, 'The Commonwealth as an international organisation', in *The Commonwealth in the 1980s: Challenges and Opportunities*, eds. A. J. R. Groom and Paul Taylor (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 295.

⁶⁵ Groom, 'The Commonwealth as an international organisation', 295.

⁶⁶ Walzer, *Thick and Thin*.

⁶⁷ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*.

⁶⁸ A. J. R. Groom and Paul Taylor, 'The continuing Commonwealth: Its origins and characteristics', in *The Commonwealth in the 1980s: Challenges and Opportunities*, eds. A. J. R. Groom and Paul Taylor (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 9.

organisation, as we might argue French language and culture is for the Francophonie,⁶⁹ many Commonwealth observers have noted, following Groom and Taylor, that ‘The role of English is important because language constitutes a paradigm which is shared and which has subtle but pervasive influence that facilitates bridge-building.’⁷⁰ The idea of a common language unites all member states under the Anglophone label and defines the way in which heads of state communicate with each other. But, if language is a proxy for unity and identity then, as I will show later in the chapter, the fact that the British enforced English upon their colonies casts something of a shadow over the communitarian idea that language and identity form a harmonious relationship as well as throwing into question the certainty with which Benedict Anderson claims that, ‘few things seem as historically deep-rooted as languages, for which no dated origins can ever be given.’⁷¹

So far in this section, I have discussed history, memory, and language as examples of the inheritance and shared values, which go some way towards explaining how the idea of the Commonwealth as a family resonates with the communitarian thesis. But, as I outlined at the end of the previous section, in addition to the seemingly more tangible features of history, memory, and language, that all point towards a certain amount of solidarity and a ‘we-feeling’ among Commonwealth states, there is also something in the way that certain key figures have described the Commonwealth over the years, since 1949, which suggests that the communitarian-like features of the Commonwealth are not simply observations in the literature, or platitudes of an ageing monarch, but are something very much recognised by member states themselves. One such observation is that relationships between states are often characterised by what Julius Nyerere described as, ‘friendship and likemindedness... Stronger than ties and treaties.’⁷² Expanding on Nyerere’s description, Alfred Kamanda, former High Commissioner of Sierra Leone, has suggested that, through the *inter se* doctrine of the Commonwealth association, member states do not consider each other as

⁶⁹ R. J. Harrison argues that the difference between the emphasis on the French language and culture across the Francophonie is that French language dominance creates a ‘dominance-dependence’ relationship rather than the looser link that English provides. See R. J. Harrison, ‘By way of comparison: French relations with former colonies’, in *The Commonwealth in the 1980s: Challenges and Opportunities*, eds. A. J. R. Groom and Paul Taylor (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 171.

⁷⁰ Groom and Taylor, ‘The continuing Commonwealth’, 9.

⁷¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 200.

⁷² Julius Nyerere cited in Arnold Smith and Clyde Sanger, *Stitches in Time: The Commonwealth in World Politics* (London: Andre Deutsche, 1981), 36.

foreign.⁷³ Kamanda's observation is particularly noteworthy as it echoes a similar observation by Nehru that ties between Commonwealth states are 'un-foreign.'⁷⁴ Kamanda bases his observation on the idea that the Commonwealth is a community of states in which the absence of any rigid legal basis of association is compensated by the bonds of common origin.⁷⁵

Compounding the idea that the Commonwealth offers a more nuanced understanding of relations between states, then, is the repeated reference to ties between member states in language which is familial - which undergirds the Commonwealth's view of itself as a family - or, alternatively, but nevertheless connected, ties between states have become so natural and so 'tenacious,'⁷⁶ that they are believed to defy easy explanation. Reflecting on the way in which heads of state and Commonwealth officials describe their relations with other states, John Conway has described the image invoked as often 'mystical' or 'invisible.'⁷⁷ These descriptions appeal to the notion of unity, to a sense that relations between Commonwealth members have an air of mystery which cannot be explained.⁷⁸ References to the organisation's invisible bonds and mystical unions have embedded themselves deep in the Commonwealth's familial rhetoric and are frequently repeated by the Secretariat and heads of state. But while we might point to descriptions such as these as propping up what I described in Chapter 1 as some observer's overinflated understandings of the Commonwealth's uniqueness, there is one description that the Commonwealth's keenest observers argue has contributed the most towards Commonwealth unity and endurance, and this is the description of the Commonwealth family offering newly independent states 'independence plus.'⁷⁹

⁷³ Alfred Kamanda, 'Law of the Commonwealth', in *The Commonwealth in the 1980s: Challenges and Opportunities*, eds. A. J. R. Groom and Paul Taylor (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 125.

⁷⁴ Nehru cited in Shridath Ramphal, 'Rekindling Nehru's internationalism', Eleventh Lecture to the Cambridge Trust, 25 November 1985. Available at: https://www.cambridgetrust.org/assets/documents/Lecture_11.pdf.

⁷⁵ This is the reason why Commonwealth states have High Commissions and not Embassies. See Timothy Shaw, *Commonwealth: Inter- and Non-State Contributions to Global Governance* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 12.

⁷⁶ H. V. Hodson, cited in Alex May, ed., *The Commonwealth and International Affairs: The Round Table Centennial Selection* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 105.

⁷⁷ John Conway, 'The changing concept of the Commonwealth', *International Journal* 12, no. 1 (1956/1957): 35.

⁷⁸ Conway notes that attempting to explain the terms would be too restrictive. See Conway, 'The changing concept of the Commonwealth'.

⁷⁹ Frederick Madden, *The End of Empire: Dependencies Since 1948, Part 1: The West Indies, British Honduras, Hong Kong, Fiji, Cyprus, Gibraltar, and the Falklands* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 2000), 2.

'Independence plus,' is the description that Nehru gave to membership in the Commonwealth as India's newly formed independent government weighed up the value of retaining ties with Britain and other former colonies.⁸⁰ Nehru's observation is credited as perhaps one of *the* defining moments in modern Commonwealth history as it implied that there was something more, something perhaps unique in Commonwealth membership, which encouraged other fledgling states to remain attached to the Commonwealth family.⁸¹ Juxtaposed with what he referred to as 'independence minus,'⁸² Nehru's image added not only a sense of legitimacy to the Commonwealth, but also showed states that remaining close to the family would offer them the support, and recognition if needed, against the problems and 'aggression' of the wider world.⁸³ Opting to remain in the Commonwealth offered the sort of loving care that the newly independent states, like children, needed to survive and become socialised into meanings and responsibilities beyond the family.⁸⁴

I do not want to push the unity argument too far, as it is clear from the disputes between members such as India and Pakistan, and South Africa and other Commonwealth members that the Commonwealth has been far from unified throughout recent history. Nevertheless, beyond the rhetoric of mystical bonds, invisible unions, and unforeignness, there are examples of solidarity which are illustrated by the willingness of member states to remain in the Commonwealth following serious political disagreements with other member states.⁸⁵ Perhaps the idea of unity is best summed up as Groom and Taylor point out as a unique blend of 'unity and diversity.'⁸⁶ This appears to be a better fit for an organisation which stretches across fifty-three states and two billion people with vast cultural and

⁸⁰ Deelip Maale, *Contribution of Pandit Nehru to Indian Politics - A Critical Study* (Solapur: Laxmi Book Publications, 2015), 201.

⁸¹ Mayall, 'Introduction', 11-12.

⁸² Maale, *Contribution of Pandit Nehru to Indian Politics*, 201.

⁸³ Lee Yuan Kew, the father of the Singaporean nation makes a similar observation that the continuity of association between Commonwealth states and Britain after decolonisation was a useful and valuable relationship to help both old and new Commonwealth member states in their struggle against the aggressive forces of the USA and Russia. He notes, continuing the family theme somewhat, that following independence, most states began to form an adult relationship with Britain. Alex Josey, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Crucial Years* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2012), 505.

⁸⁴ This has something of a Hegelian feel - that the family is where we learn to integrate into civil society.

⁸⁵ For various discussions of how the Commonwealth has remained together despite political differences of opinion see the collection of articles on the official Commonwealth in May, ed., *The Commonwealth and International Affairs*.

⁸⁶ Groom and Taylor, 'The continuing Commonwealth: Its origins and characteristics', 3.

deep historical differences, and, as Shridath Ramphal points out, 'is a commingling of great human variety - of race, of religion, of language, of political philosophy and forms of government.'⁸⁷

We are now in a better position to understand how the Commonwealth appears to be communitarian. However, while the notion of unity sits well with communitarian ideas of solidarity, diversity is not as welcome in the conventional understanding of the communitarian thesis. And yet, the Commonwealth appears to make these juxtaposing ideas work. The communitarian notion of solidarity does not accommodate this sort of tension. However, I suggest communitarians are wrong to ignore the realities and complexities of communities in praxis. Thus while we are now in a better place to see in what sense we might claim that the Commonwealth is communitarian, what the Commonwealth shows with its notion of unity and diversity is the idea that communities are not places of harmony where norms are settled and conflict rarely happens, but places of disagreement where norms are contested.

What this means for the way we understand communitarianism is discussed in the next section of the chapter, where I return to the three constituent elements of communitarianism and draw out some of the more troubling issues around the idea of Commonwealth unity, in order to trouble perceived understandings of communitarianism in IR. My aim here is to examine more closely the three propositions that underscore what I believe are the key communitarian understandings of community, and at the same time assess the main criticisms that can be brought against them.

3.3 Troubling communitarianism, troubling the Commonwealth

At first sight, then, as I have attempted to show above, there would seem to be little contradiction between notions of inheritance, values, and solidarity shared by states that make up the collective Commonwealth family, and the way in which communitarian theorists outline and describe the core constituent elements of community at the heart of the communitarian thesis. All Commonwealth states, with the exception of Rwanda and Mozambique, share a history of British colonialism and, as such, all Commonwealth states, at independence, inherited a

⁸⁷ Shridath Ramphal, *One World to Share: Selected Speeches of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, 1975-9* (London: Hutchinson Benham, 1979), 182.

number of systems and practices - such as English language, the rule of law, and compatible administrative methods⁸⁸ - which effectively give the impression, both theoretically and empirically, of a certain amount of solidarity between Commonwealth members. A thicker identity among Commonwealth member states was clearly visible during the decades after the Commonwealth was formed, as more and more states gained independence and opted to join the organisation, however, these collective affirmations of communitarianism notwithstanding, it would be inaccurate to conclude that the Commonwealth is communitarian without some consideration of the darker, messier history behind these constituent elements. I have briefly discussed this messier and more violent side of the family in the previous chapter. I now want to consider the messier side in more detail as a way of demonstrating how the Commonwealth further troubles the idea of communitarianism at the heart of normative IR theory.

I want to take as my starting point into this discussion one of the most fundamental criticisms of communitarianism, which is the tendency by many communitarian theorists to paint a picture of the community as a place where norms are essentially settled, rather than the subject of an ongoing contest.⁸⁹ This neatly packaged idea of community, where shared history, language, and memory all form the foundations of a 'we-feeling', fails to capture the idea that, in reality, the communitarian notion of inherited community which, paraphrasing Alasdair MacIntyre, is one's family, tribe, or nation,⁹⁰ is rarely the homogenous, harmonious place where all members share the same memories, history, and language, but often a more multicultural place where members come and go, and exclusion and difference also reside. Like a real family, the Commonwealth is emphatically not without skeletons in its closet. Moreover, these skeletons divulge a violent family history which complicates the notion put forward by Attlee, Nehru, Nyerere, and others, of a happy family where bonds between member states are 'mystical.' While this observation might make the conception of the Commonwealth as a family seem more authentic and genuinely more family-like, the question that arises is: how, exactly, does this trouble the communitarian thesis?

⁸⁸ Mayall, 'Introduction', 4.

⁸⁹ This is a view put forward by many communitarian theorists, although perhaps most strongly advocated by Amitai Etzioni. See Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda* (London: Fontana, 1995).

⁹⁰ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*.

To answer this question, we first need to return to Sandel's idea, outlined in section 3.1, that our identities are inseparable from the situation that we inherited at birth,⁹¹ and Geertz's accompanying notion that inherited attachments are far stronger and more meaningful.⁹² At first sight there would seem to be no contradiction here, and certainly one's attachment to one's family, community, nation, and so on, need not be questioned, yet this picture conceals the reality that inherited communities can often be less than harmonious; we need only think of cycles of abuse passed down through families as an example of a less than harmonious inheritance.⁹³ Additionally, Geertz's argument that inherited attachments are far more meaningful ignores the fact that, as Andrew Vincent points out, 'the self is constituted by often diverse, overlapping and conflicting groups, loyalties and associations.'⁹⁴

The force of this point lies in the fact that, although the Commonwealth is a family of nations that all share history and values, many, if not all, of its member states are members of other regional, trans-, or international organisations, which, as I pointed out earlier in the thesis, in the case of the Francophonie and the United Nations, for example, also refer to themselves as families. At times, as I will show in Chapter 6 with the case of Rwanda, a state is forced to choose between one or another membership in these organisations, on the whole, however, these overlapping memberships have not been seen to cause any real problems *vis-à-vis* identity for the member states in question.⁹⁵ This line of argument is a paradigmatic illustration of how communities can conform to the communitarian notion of community without the need for homogeneity.

⁹¹ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*.

⁹² Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

⁹³ On intergenerational abuse, see, for example, Juste Abramovaite, Sigghartha Bandyopadhyay and Louise Dixon, 'The dynamics of intergenerational family abuse: A focus on child maltreatment and violence and abuse in intimate relationships', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics* 27, no. 2 (2015): 160-74. Bending the intergenerational cycle of abuse argument to our purposes, we might argue that there are a number of Commonwealth states, Zimbabwe in particular, which have, in an intergenerational sense, carried on aspects of colonial violence. For a discussion on this subject see, Tendayi Sithole, 'A Fanonian reading of Robert Gabriel Mugabe as colonial subject', in *Mugabeism: History, Politics, and Power in Zimbabwe*, ed. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 217-36.

⁹⁴ Andrew Vincent, *Nationalism and Particularity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 155.

⁹⁵ An argument could be made that Britain's membership in the European Union appeared to be problematic, following this logic, however, the related issues and problems raised by this relationship are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Building on similar arguments, problems manifest when we return to the idea of memory and look beyond the tendency in Commonwealth literature to ignore the violent foundations on which the Commonwealth has built its family. While most Commonwealth scholars pay lip service to the fact that the organisation is the successor to the British Empire, there has been little or no discussion of the silence among Commonwealth states around the issue of colonial memory.⁹⁶ Contrary to the communitarian view put forward by Halbwachs that memory is the glue that holds the community together, memory theorists have since argued that memory is unstable, changing, and predictable.⁹⁷ Scholars of collective memory have taken note of what is missing, or what has been silenced, in representations of the past and this has manifested in an emerging scholarly literature on silence, omission, and exclusion.⁹⁸ Notwithstanding the obvious fact that, as Eviatar Zerubavel has pointed out, it is difficult to study those things about which individuals, families, or communities keep silent,⁹⁹ memory research has discerned that through memory contests, commanded amnesia, manipulation, and blocked memory, certain group memories or histories, have been permanently sidelined, forgotten, or denied altogether.¹⁰⁰ This appears to be the case with the Commonwealth and the memory of colonialism. And yet, the organisation appears to thrive.

Why the Commonwealth endures given the lack of attention to its colonial past is an interesting question. One suggested answer was put forward by the former Commonwealth Secretary-General Arnold Smith, in 1966, who surmised that for newly independent governments, the economic benefits of joining the Commonwealth outweighed any lingering 'unpleasant memories and resentments'

⁹⁶ In 2015, in the run up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta, the University of Malta hosted a conference on memory yet there was little, or no, mention of collective colonial memory or the continuing silence around colonialism. See Terry Barringer, 'Editorial: Memory Matters', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 104, no. 5 (2015): 527-30.

⁹⁷ Barbie Zelizer, 'Reading the past against the grain: The shape of memory studies', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no.2 (1995): 214-39.

⁹⁸ On collective forgetting see for example, Vera Zolberg, 'Contested remembrance: The Hiroshima exhibit controversy', *Theory and Society* 24, no. 4 (1998): 565-90; James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meanings* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, 'The Vietnam veterans memorial: Commemorating a difficult past', *American Journal of Sociology* 97, no. 2 (1991): 376-420; Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Chana Teeger, 'Unpacking the unspoken: Silence in collective memory and forgetting', *Social Forces* 88, no. 3 (2010): 1103-22.

⁹⁹ Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁰ Joanne Garde-Hansen, *Media and Memory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 25.

around the recent colonial past and, therefore, when faced with the choice of remembering or forgetting, heads of state opted in favour of forgetting.¹⁰¹ Smith's explanation might appear to be rather cavalier in its reduction of the brutalities of years of colonial rule to the term 'unpleasant memories,' yet, the lack of attention to the Commonwealth's violent history, both empirically and in the literature, suggests that there might at least be a grain of truth in Smith's reasoning.

This notwithstanding, a closer perusal of the power balance within the Commonwealth family throws up an alternative suggestion for the lack of attention to memory. This is the idea I touched upon in the conclusion to the previous chapter, the view that there exists a kind of imperial amnesia in Britain around the true nature of the colonial project.¹⁰² As theorists who work on imperial memory see it, deeply embedded in the collective British psyche is the belief that the Empire was a benevolent project underscored by,¹⁰³ as Gordon Brown once described it, 'tolerance, liberty, [and] civic duty.'¹⁰⁴ This collective memory has been formulated in the media, education, in the heritage industry, and in the language of politics effectively repackaging the British 'civilising mission' into a phenomenon steeped in altruistic intention, which effectively ignores the 'gory cruelties of the Empire'¹⁰⁵ in favour of a much more anodyne version.¹⁰⁶

In this sense, the narration of certain memories and silencing of others can be conceptualised as attempts by those who hold the most power within the Commonwealth family to set the boundaries on what is allowed to be remembered from the past.¹⁰⁷ Thinking about memory this way unsettles our understanding of memory prescribed by communitarians as a tool of unity and solidarity. The point

¹⁰¹ Arnold Smith, *Annual Report of the Commonwealth Secretary General* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1966).

¹⁰² Gilroy, *After Empire*.

¹⁰³ Dietmar Rothermund, 'Introduction: Memories of post-imperial nations', in *Memories of Post Imperial Nations: The Aftermath of Decolonisation, 1945-2013*, ed. Dietmar Rothermund (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 7.

¹⁰⁴ 'Gordon Brown on liberty and the role of the state', *The Guardian*, 13 December 2005. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/dec/13/labour.uk>.

¹⁰⁵ Maria Misra, 'Heart of smugness', *The Guardian*, 23 July 2003. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jul/23/congo.comment>.

¹⁰⁶ Studies such as Niall Ferguson's *Empire*, together with its accompanying television programme, have helped to reiterate the image of the benevolent Empire. See Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2004).

¹⁰⁷ The idea of imperial amnesia is remains deeply discomfoting particularly given the recent discoveries of colonial documents detailing systemic violence, including torture and internment, carried out by the British particularly during the independence struggles in Kenya. For discussion see Banton, 'Destroy? 'Migrate'? Conceal?'

I am trying to make here is that the Commonwealth complicates the communitarian idea of memory in a number of overlapping ways which, when taken together, ultimately show that although collective memories help cement a 'we-feeling' among groups, there is evidence that communities remain together even when their members hold different memories.

There is a further ambivalence in the Commonwealth's perceived communitarianism when read alongside communitarianism's understanding of the link between language, identity, and solidarity. While English is undoubtedly the language of business and progress in the contemporary globalising world, it was used as a tool by the British colonial administration to unite the colonised against divisive tendencies. For Farina Mir, it was often through the enforcing of language upon colonised that the British colonial officials believed that they could effect change.¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth Buettner has made similar claims around colonial administrations and language arguing that under colonial rule, English was often used to 'strengthen the bonds of loyalty.'¹⁰⁹ But, this was a practice which had a corrosive effect on a colonial relationships and also on native culture. Writing on this issue in the early years of African independence, Dan Jacobson observed:

most Africans who want to write want to do so in English or French, rather than in their native languages. Could there be, for a writer, a more dramatic sign of willed severance from the past than his adoption of a language other than the one spoken by his people in their own past?¹¹⁰

Ngugi agrees with this logic, as he sees it, cultural decolonisation must, for the African writer, ultimately mean writing in African languages.¹¹¹ For Ngugi, the negative practices pointed out by Mir and Buettner above were important vehicles through which the colonial administration could effect control over their subjects. In this way, as Ngugi sees it, 'language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner...Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation.'¹¹² Implicit in Ngugi's critique is the idea that language itself is a form of colonialism.

¹⁰⁸ Farina Mir, *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 4-5.

¹⁰⁹ Buettner, *Empire Families*, 240.

¹¹⁰ Dan Jacobsen, 'Out of Africa', *Encounter* xiii, no, 4 (1959): 69.

¹¹¹ Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind*.

¹¹² Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind*, 9.

The case of English, then, tells a double story. As Ngugi informs us: ‘it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture.’¹¹³ Shared language, following Taylor,¹¹⁴ might point to solidarity and unity, but when viewed through a more historical lens, and in the context of European colonialism, it changes personality and erases the original culture of the colonised. Franz Fanon’s work further sensitizes us to a different view of language as a symbol of unity and solidarity. For Fanon, like Ngugi, colonial language is less a tool for unity than for division and domination. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon asserts that language ‘means above all assuming a culture and bearing the weight of civilisation.’¹¹⁵ The use of English was a requirement for social mobility in the colonial hierarchy for the native populations.¹¹⁶ This is evident in Fanon’s observation that, ‘Historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak French because it is the key that can open doors which were still barred to him fifty years ago. Mastery of language affords remarkable power.’¹¹⁷ Rather than help cement a ‘we-feeling’ and sense of self, that Taylor pointed out earlier in the chapter, language, for the colonised then was something that had very much the opposite effect.

I have presented, in this section, an examination of the darker, more messier side of inheritance, shared values, and solidarity. These ideas give a rather less homogenous account of the shared elements that I identified earlier in the chapter as running through most communitarian theorists’ understanding of community. Much of this section has been discussing the over-simplification, appropriation and distortions of cultural homogeneity within communities, to which communitarian theorists turn a blind eye, but this raises the question of why communitarian theorists accept this over-simplification of cultural homogeneity despite the obviously damaging implications for communitarianism as a theory to be taken seriously. The acceptance, it seems, is the result not so much of a disrespect for difference and diversity, but of a particularly narrow vision of the real world and relations between states.

¹¹³ Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind*, 13.

¹¹⁴ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*.

¹¹⁵ Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 2008),

¹¹⁶ Kwesi Kwaa Prah, ‘The burden of English in Africa: From colonialism to neo-colonialism’, Unpublished paper, keynote address presented to the department of English: 5th International Conference on the theme: Mapping Africa in the English speaking world. University of Botswana, June 2009. Available at:

<http://www.casas.co.za/FileAssets/NewsCast/misc/file/The%20Burden%20of%20English%20in%20Africa%20University%20of%20Botswana%20June09%20Version2.pdf>.

¹¹⁷ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 9.

Shared notions of inheritance, history, and solidarity wrapped in a discourse of unity and ties make the Commonwealth appear communitarian, but this communitarianism is less settled than the picture of settled norms and stability put forward by communitarians. The Commonwealth's communitarianism is different from one of shared identity, it is messier, built on diversity, inequality and hierarchy, and above all fraught with ambiguity. The messiness between Commonwealth states bears a striking resemblance to real families, which, as many sociologists, feminists, and psychoanalysts argue, can be dysfunctional places in which cruelty as well as nurturing drives relationships.¹¹⁸ It might therefore be said to resonate well with Hegel's understanding of the family as the place where the individual is molded into a moral citizen, and equally well with descriptions of less nurturing families as messy, thick, dysfunctional spaces which breed inequality and where relationships can be fractious and cruel. Such a finding contradicts and complicates many of the assertions by communitarians, discussed earlier in this chapter, that communities are neat, homogenous places.

3.4 Conclusions

I began this chapter with the idea that there are certain key features and streams of ideas in the history of the formation of the Commonwealth to which we might point with confidence and state that, despite the fact that its membership is made up of fifty-three sovereign independent states, the shared inheritance of colonialism and the constituent elements which accompany this - language, memory, culture - give the appearance that the Commonwealth conforms to an idea of community put forward by communitarian theorists, with thicker ties between its states. As we saw in section 3.2, this position has not been difficult to defend: the British government, particularly in the early years of Indian independence, liberally applied familial discourse to encourage states to retain ties with Britain, and, likewise, described the wider grouping as a family of nations, going beyond conventional descriptions of the everyday workings of an international organisation to couch historical ties between states in the language of mystery, mystique, and magic.

¹¹⁸ For an overview on feminist and psychoanalytical views on the family see, for example, Hilde Lindemann Nelson, ed., *Feminism and Families* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997); Jessica Benjamin, *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998); Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

This idea, pushed by Attlee, and, still now, carried forward by the Queen and the Commonwealth Secretariat, that the Commonwealth was a family of nations, which, to some extent shared not only history but also identity and values, helped paint a picture of thicker ties, in Geertz's sense of the word, between Commonwealth members, and was helped, in no small part, by Nehru's insistence that membership in the family did not infringe on the sovereignty of newly independent states, but added an extra level of 'something' which, although never fully defined by Nehru himself, can be viewed along the lines of security or recognition: membership in the Commonwealth as an anchor against the trials of independence.

These more nuanced conceptions of relations between Commonwealth states, which spring from the idea of shared inheritance, shared history, and shared values, challenge the neatness and boundedness of the notion of community sketched out by communitarian IR theorists, as we saw in section 3.1; but even though ties between Commonwealth states appear to be somewhat more familial, we cannot dismiss the fact that, in as far as they pertain to the Commonwealth, behind what many communitarian theorists see as the glue that holds the community together - that is the aforementioned ideas of inheritance, shared history, language, memory, and identity - lies a violence which casts a shadow over communitarian ideals of homogeneity and unity. This violence, as I discussed in the previous chapter, is undeniable, but while it might tarnish the somewhat utopian way in which the Commonwealth describes itself, it also offers a much more realistic lens through which to critique the more harmonious and static view of community advocated by many communitarian IR theorists.

Thinking about the community in a messier, more ambiguous and complex way unsettles the idea of the community as a place where sharing language, memory, and culture appear to effortlessly create a 'we-feeling' between all members of the community. The idea of the community and communitarianism, then, in the way I understand these concepts, is not the stable pooling of identity, language, and culture suggested by Taylor, Sandel, MacIntyre, and others, who insist that the community is bounded within the domestic sphere, but involves a far less static and uniform idea. The case of the Commonwealth, understood in familial terms, fits the definition of communitarianism. However, this communitarianism is different from the largely harmonious picture of inheritance, shared values, and solidarity put forward by many communitarian theorists earlier in the chapter. It

is messier, involving both sameness and difference, unity and diversity, remembering as well as forgetting. Relationships between post-colonial Commonwealth states neither look nor operate like standard international relations. In later chapters of the thesis, I will show how the Commonwealth's messy communitarianism looks through the case of Zimbabwe. In the next chapter, however, I want to explore the Commonwealth from the other side of the normative dichotomy - through a discussion of the Commonwealth's turn to cosmopolitanism.

I have often thought that a visitor from another planet would marvel at the fragmentation of Earth's people, and would understand at once how important it is, in this age of proliferating atoms and threatened ecology, that we should work at building a global community. I believe that he would also see that not to use the Commonwealth as one of the instruments for this purpose would be monumental folly. To him it would not appear in terms of the past, but as an instrument of great potential use in the development of habits of consultation and cooperation that transcend the limits of race, region, and economic level.

- Arnold Smith, *Stitches in Time* (1981)

‘Intimations of a desirable future’:¹ The Commonwealth’s cosmopolitan turn

If the previous chapter showed how the Commonwealth offers a more nuanced understanding of relations between states with a discussion of the organisation through a communitarian lens, then this chapter gives a view of the organisation when we apply a cosmopolitan lens. The chapter explores the ways in which the Commonwealth attempted to move away from the communitarian-like family of the previous chapter towards a more cosmopolitan outlook. This largely took place from 1991 onwards when the organisation adopted a set of normative human rights principles at its Heads of Government Meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe.² The principles, known as the ‘Harare Declaration,’ became the defining guidelines of Commonwealth conduct and have since been worked into the organisation’s new membership criteria.³ They were accompanied four years later by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), which acts as the overseer of the Harare Declaration.⁴ While there is nothing particularly striking, or unique, about the Harare Declaration and CMAG themselves, as most international organisations have some kind of guiding principles or declaration,⁵

¹ This is Arnold Smith’s phrase in his attempt to couch the Commonwealth in cosmopolitan terms. Arnold Smith, ‘The need for the Commonwealth: Resisting a fragmented world’, *The Round Table: Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 56, no. 223 (1966): 227.

² The Commonwealth Secretariat, ‘The Harare Commonwealth Declaration, 1991.’ Available at: <http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/history-items/documents/Harare%20Commonwealth%20Declaration%201991.pdf>.

³ Any state wishing to join the Commonwealth has to agree to abide by the principles laid out in the Harare Declaration. See Commonwealth Secretariat, *Membership of the Commonwealth: Report of the Committee on Commonwealth Membership* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2007).

⁴ CMAG consists of a group of representatives of Commonwealth member states, usually foreign ministers, who meet on a biennial basis, alongside the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings. CMAG’s remit is to assess the nature of infringements of the Harare Principles and recommend collective Commonwealth action aimed at swift restoration of democracy and the rule of law. See Robert Colvile, ‘A place to stand: The problems and potential of the Commonwealth ministerial action group’, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 93, no. 375 (2004): 342-353.

⁵ In the manner that has now become typical of the Commonwealth, the Secretariat describes the Commonwealth’s human rights principles and enforcement mechanisms as ‘unique’ because of their suspension provisions. While this might be the case, the fact that the Commonwealth appears to shy away from using these mechanisms, even in cases of grave human rights violations, results in all claims of uniqueness falling flat. For a discussion and comparison across organisations see Karel Vasak, ‘The Distinguishing

what is particularly noteworthy for the question of Commonwealth endurance at the heart of this thesis is that, with the end of apartheid, as I noted in the introduction chapter, the Commonwealth had all but lost its purpose.⁶ The Harare Declaration and its accompanying CMAG mechanism, gave the Commonwealth the chance to reinvent itself from a messy family into a cosmopolitan organisation and pull itself in line with other international organisations.

The messiness of the years since Nehru had made his famous 'sovereignty plus' observation had seen Commonwealth states - formerly British colonies - attempt to neutralise the power of the parental state with the establishment of a Secretariat. While this was relatively successful, the messiness of familial relations did not stop there. During the years from the establishment of the Secretariat to the end of apartheid the issues of Rhodesia and South Africa dominated the Commonwealth agenda. These were accompanied by infighting between Commonwealth states, as Britain, under the Thatcher government, was reluctant to support sanctions against the white South African regime.⁷ When apartheid finally showed signs of coming to an end, the Commonwealth family emerged bruised but triumphant.⁸ But having survived the messy, volatile family feuds of the past three decades, the Commonwealth found itself with no real purpose. With apartheid ending and Zimbabwe independent, the last days of colonialism and decolonisation were coming to an end. What the Commonwealth needed was a new moral cause around which to reinvent itself. This came with a turn to cosmopolitanism.

Criteria of Institutions', in *The International Dimensions of Human Rights*, Vol. I, ed. Karel Vasak (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 3-10; Bob Reinalda, ed., *Routledge Handbook of International Organisations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

⁶ As Mayall points out, with the collapse of apartheid the Commonwealth achieved its grand strategy of assisting (former) British colonies to independence. When South Africa rejoined the Commonwealth in 1995, as Mayall puts it, 'the Commonwealth was confronted with a strategic vacuum, which...it has never fully succeeded in filling.' Mayall, 'Introduction', 18.

⁷ For more on Thatcher's approach and the fight over sanctions see Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Peter Lyon, 'On from Nassau', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 75, no. 297 (1986): 2-6; Peter Lyon, 'The August mini-summit and after', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 75, no. 300 (1986): 307-9; Shridath Ramphal, 'The Commonwealth since Saskatoon', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 76 no. 301 (1987): 7-17.

⁸ It is widely stated in the Commonwealth literature that some African states wanted to expel Britain from the Commonwealth over Thatcher's stance on sanctions. For a discussion of this see John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher, Volume Two: The Iron Lady* (London: Vintage, 2008).

In this chapter, I am going to examine this cosmopolitan turn by thinking about how the Commonwealth appears when viewed through the lens of cosmopolitan theory. I do this because with its human rights mechanisms the Commonwealth appears to have fallen largely, or perhaps loosely, in line with other international organisations,⁹ which claim to uphold the central tenets of the cosmopolitan thesis.¹⁰ And yet in spite of appearing to be cosmopolitan, with a more inclusive membership criteria and a focus on distributive justice, the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism, I argue, is more of a veneer. This is because, while in theory, cosmopolitanism with its promise to safeguard the rights of all two billion Commonwealth citizens, was an attractive prospect for Commonwealth states, particularly those in Africa, in the 1990s,¹¹ in praxis it has been much more difficult to implement. This has largely been due to the intensification of autocracy in a number of African states, along with the Commonwealth's reluctance to address anything more serious than a military coup in any of its member states.¹²

This is not to say that the Commonwealth has not had success in guiding new or interim governments towards the path of democracy, however military coups are only one among several other serious violations that have been flagged by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) as being carried out across the fifty-three states in the Commonwealth;¹³ many of which the CMAG has ignored. As a result of this inaction and loss of collective political will,¹⁴ I argue that,

⁹ Dale, 'Is the Commonwealth an international organisation?'

¹⁰ The exemplar organisation is perhaps the European Union that has attempted to bring in a collective culture and identity across Europe. For discussion of the European Union's cosmopolitanism see Chris Rumford, *Cosmopolitan Spaces: Europe, Globalisation, Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008); Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford, *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanisation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005); Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

¹¹ These states had witnessed Zimbabweans and South Africans suffer at the hands of the malignant communitarianism of their respective white minority governments, cosmopolitanism, in contrast, was an attractive alternative. For an interesting discussion on post-apartheid cosmopolitanism see Rosemary Nagy, 'Postapartheid justice: Can cosmopolitanism and nation-building be reconciled?', *Law and Society Review* 40, no. 3 (2006): 623-52.

¹² Akinrinade, 'Africa', 219. For a discussion of the Commonwealth's record with coups see Howard, *Human Rights in Commonwealth Africa*; John Hatchard and Tunde Ogowewo, *Tackling the Unconstitutional Overthrow of Democracies: Emerging Trends in the Commonwealth* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003).

¹³ The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative are a human rights group that monitors the behaviour of Commonwealth states. Chapter 6, with its exploration of Rwanda gives more of an overview into what the human rights group does.

¹⁴ Tom Porteous' scathing attack on the Commonwealth argues that the organisation's political will has completely evaporated. See Tom Porteous, 'The Commonwealth is a jamboree of repression', *The Guardian*, 24 November 2009. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/nov/24/commonwealth-jamboree-of-repression>.

despite the Commonwealth member states' declarative commitment to cosmopolitanism through promotion, standard-setting, and norm-creation,¹⁵ the organisation's lack of real attention to human rights issues, has effectively reduced the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism to little more than a utopian ideal.

My point of entry into the discussion of the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism is a brief and broad overview of the volatile family years between 1965 and 1991. I do this in order provide some insight into how the Commonwealth, from the early 1960s after the admission of Ghana, attempted to move towards international organisation status and leave the messiness of family behind. The Commonwealth Secretariat was established as a way of neutralising British patriarchal power and moving states onto a more equal footing. While this was not cosmopolitan in itself, it was a move in the direction of transforming the Commonwealth from a family of nations into an international, intergovernmental organisation.

Following this historical overview, the second section looks in more detail at how the Commonwealth appears to be cosmopolitan viewing it alongside cosmopolitan theory. The section argues that the adoption of the Harare Declaration, the re-definition of the Commonwealth as an organisation of peoples as well as states, and the adoption of new membership criteria, which has opened up the organisation to a more inclusive membership all point towards a picture of the Commonwealth as cosmopolitan.¹⁶ In this transformation, shared values - perceived as pure and universal¹⁷ - usurp the privileged place of shared history which, as we saw in the previous chapter, is steeped in the messiness of human relationships.¹⁸ But, as I noted above, the Commonwealth has largely failed to realise its cosmopolitanism, being much more skilled at norm-setting than norm compliance, and yet this has not stopped the Commonwealth, and its vast body of

¹⁵ Alison Duxbury points out that, broadly speaking, an international human rights system should include elements of both norm creation, standard setting, and implementation. Norm-creation without implementation is not enough. See Alison Duxbury, 'The Commonwealth Secretariat and the implementation of human rights', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 95, no. 385 (2006): 425-40; Alison Duxbury, 'Rejuvenating the Commonwealth - the human rights remedy', *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 344 (1997): 344-77; Alison Duxbury, 'Reviewing the Commonwealth's rights record: From recognition to realisation', *South African Journal on Human Rights* 19, no. 636 (2003): 636-62.

¹⁶ John Nagle, *Multiculturalism's Double-Bind: Creating Inclusivity, Cosmopolitanism and Difference* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

¹⁷ Here I am referring to the notion of cosmopolitanism that Chris Brown observes grows out of the idealist approach and combines pure altruism with enlightened self interest. See Brown, *International Relations Theory*.

¹⁸ I paraphrase here from Michael Walzer's description of thick norms imbued in 'qualification, compromise, complexity and disagreement'. See Walzer, *Thick and Thin*, 6.

literature, as I pointed out in the introduction to this thesis, from describing the organisation as a unique family with the potential to unite the world with its healing powers.¹⁹ We can see this in the exaggerated claims by Smith in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, or the claims by Ramphal that the Commonwealth is ‘truly a global phenomenon.’²⁰

4.1 Foundations of a cosmopolitan future

The roots of transformation of the Commonwealth family from the loose association of states kept together by mystical bonds and invisible unions, to something different, began to tentatively take shape in 1965. As the organisation had witnessed before, there was a distinct temporal change in the ideology of what the Commonwealth family was, as well as a change in what the family did, how it behaved, and what individual members got from membership. As decolonisation proceeded apace and time put distance between colony and independent state, the ideology of the Commonwealth family changed from the more intimate family, whose children required parental assistance to help facilitate their struggle for recognition, into a family with grown and independent children, who were becoming less dependent on Britain, for their recognition, survival and wellbeing.²¹

By 1965, an increasing sense of disquiet had begun to take place in the family ranks among Commonwealth members who no longer felt the need or the desire to be shackled to the disciplinary power of patriarchal Britain.²² One cause of this disquiet was the British government’s continued control of Commonwealth administration through the Commonwealth Relations Office. For newer Commonwealth members, as Stuart Mole points out, this ‘seemed like an increasingly unacceptable form of *primus inter pares*.’²³ How could the Commonwealth claim to be built on a framework of equality when one family member continued to play the *de facto* role of parent? To make matters worse, the

¹⁹ This is Nehru’s claim, often repeated by Ramphal, that the Commonwealth ‘brings a touch of healing to the world.’ See Groom and Taylor, ‘The continuing Commonwealth: Its origins and characteristics’, 1.

²⁰ Ramphal, ‘The Commonwealth in the global neighbourhood’: 176.

²¹ Margaret Doxey, ‘The Commonwealth Secretary-General: Limits of Leadership’, *Internal Affairs* 55, no. 1 (1979): 67-83.

²² Stuart Mole, ‘From Smith to Sharma: The role of the Commonwealth Secretary-General’, in *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment, 1965-2009*, ed. James Mayall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 43-64.

²³ Mole, ‘From Smith to Sharma: The role of the Commonwealth Secretary-General’, 45.

parent in question was beginning to show increasing contempt for fellow family members with an increasing sense of selfishness and what seemed like a mislaid ethic of care.

This manifested in a number of ways: first, in 1962, when Britain tightened regulations on immigration from Commonwealth countries (controlling movement of the family);²⁴ and again, in 1963, when Britain turned its focus away from the Commonwealth towards membership of the EEC (ignoring the family interests).²⁵ Both actions provoked growing animosity among Commonwealth states, throwing into question the mystical ties and the closer union between Commonwealth members. What the Commonwealth needed was something that would neutralise the power of the parent state. The solution, put forward by the Ghanaian leader, Nkrumah, and backed by a number of African states,²⁶ was to remove Britain from the role of administrator and parent, and replace it with a more neutral caretaker, in the form of a Secretariat and Secretary-General, who would preside over administrative matters.²⁷

The Secretariat represented the first break from the old communitarian-like family that we saw in the previous chapter. In Foucauldian terms, it replaced the disciplinary power of 'backward-looking rituals' with something aimed more towards a future-oriented organisation.²⁸ For Foucault, writing on the Victorian

²⁴ The 'Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962' (as well as a number of amendments over the following years) no longer gave citizens of British Commonwealth countries the right to migrate to the UK.

²⁵ Britain's application for membership in the European Economic Community signaled a realignment of UK trade away from the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth sought arrangements to compensate members for the loss of privileged access to the British market. For a discussion of the arrangements made for Commonwealth members when Britain joined the European Economic Community see Uwe Kitzinger, *Diplomacy and Persuasion* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973); Yusuf Bangura, *Britain and Commonwealth Africa: The Politics of Economic Relations, 1951-75* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); Alex May, *Britain, The Commonwealth and Europe: The Commonwealth and Britain's Applications to Join the European Communities* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001).

²⁶ In addition to African members, Nkrumah was also supported by Pakistan and Trinidad and Tobago.

²⁷ The proposed remit of the Secretariat was little more than to help with the organisation of Commonwealth meetings and distribute papers of common good. As the Agreed Memorandum put it, the Secretariat was strongly advised to not 'touch upon the internal affairs of a member country or disputes or serious difference between two or more member countries.' See Commonwealth Secretariat, 'Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat', *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 105.

²⁸ As Chloe Taylor points out, Foucault, in *Psychic Power*, gives a complicated account of familial power as sovereign. This sovereign power is grounded either in blood right or

family, the disciplinary power of the father maintained its hold on the family through backward-looking rituals of blood, birth, and shared history.²⁹ When viewed in a Commonwealth context, this account illustrates the shifting ideas among Commonwealth Heads of Government and the dichotomous relationship between shared history and shared values. The Commonwealth had begun to look towards the future, first by neutralising the father's sovereign power over the family, and then further by replacing this power with a neutral arbitrator of values.³⁰ The idea of a Secretariat was attractive both for its role in the official institutionalisation of the Commonwealth, and because, as Mole has suggested, its official Memorandum was enshrined with the liberal idea that conflict could be resolved through reason, arbitration, and the 'spirit of cooperation.'³¹

Although highly restricted in its remit at first, the Secretariat reflected the growing independence and equality of Commonwealth members.³² This was the first sign that the old familial idea of shared history was beginning to lose its grip on its member's imagination; as Nkrumah put this, the Commonwealth 'was no longer an association of like-minded countries deriving their institutions from Britain: the main bond was respect for each other's independence and if it was to have any future strength its members needed to accept new obligations.'³³ Nkrumah's suggestion might be said to be a nod in the direction of cosmopolitanism, but there was no harmony of interests here; from the establishment of the Secretariat until 1991, Commonwealth states continued to exhibit the messiness of family.

New obligations soon arrived in the shape of the Rhodesia. The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) proclaimed by the minority white-led government of Southern Rhodesia, on 11 November 1965, proved a major source of discord for almost fifteen years. While Rhodesia was a matter of decolonisation,

conquest. Sovereign power regularly re-inscribes its power through rituals which refer back to this original event of bloodshed or blood right. In contrast disciplinary power is future-oriented, replacing backward-looking rituals with exercises aimed at a future-oriented state. See Chloe Taylor, 'Foucault and familial power', *Hypatia* 27, no. 1 (2012): 201-18.

²⁹ Taylor, 'Foucault and familial power'.

³⁰ The British were worried that the Secretariat would establish a power-base of its own and therefore developed plans to keep the Secretariat's activities 'within prescribed limits' in order to prevent it from 'becoming a political pressure group.' See W. David McIntyre, 'Britain and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 28, no. 1 (2000): 135-58.

³¹ Mole, 'From Smith to Sharma', 46.

³² For a short but thorough analysis of the role of the Secretariat in its first two decades of existence see Doxey 'The Commonwealth Secretariat'.

³³ Nkrumah quoted in Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 4.

South Africa presented a different problem of enfranchisement and emancipation.³⁴ This was followed by the divisive issue of South Africa's relations with the Commonwealth, which, as I noted in the previous section, sparked an internal crisis as heads of government were forced to deal with the issue of how a non-member would change its internal policy of discrimination against its own citizens. The question of how to deal with South Africa fuelled the efforts to develop the Commonwealth's first attempt at a declaration of democratic common principles. As Olusola Akinrinade points out: 'it became necessary to affirm what the members of the association stood for and establish what its goals in certain areas were.'³⁵ The Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, in 1971, was the first real definition of what the Commonwealth was, outside of the widely repeated assertion that it was a family. As the Declaration put it, the Commonwealth was a 'voluntary association of independent states, each responsible for its own policies, consulting and cooperating in the common interest of their peoples.'³⁶

By 1991, the Commonwealth had successfully midwived Rhodesia into Zimbabwe and fought something of a relatively united campaign against a minority racist regime in South Africa. The dismantling of the apartheid regime saw the end of the Commonwealth's grand vision: to successfully bring colonialism to an end. It also signaled a threat to the Commonwealth's existence. To survive, what the Commonwealth needed was a change in outlook. The decades leading up to the end of apartheid had been plagued with messiness, squabbling, and in-fighting. The change, when it came in 1991, was rooted in the idea that the messiness of family could be transcended. The moral triumph over apartheid and racism in Southern Africa, a success story in which the Commonwealth had played a part, shaped the move towards a different kind of organisation; one where shared values would come to fight shared history in the battle over Commonwealth endurance.

The re-focused Commonwealth of the 1990s found a ready-made consensus in the international arena coinciding, as it did, with a number of international events and trends. Two events in particular formed the backdrop of the Commonwealth's

³⁴ Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline, and Future of the British Commonwealth*, 51.

³⁵ Akinrinade, 'Africa', 214.

³⁶ The Commonwealth Secretariat, 'The Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles 1971'. Available at: <http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/history-items/documents/Singapore%20Declaration.pdf>

turn to cosmopolitanism: the end of the Cold War and the release of Nelson Mandela, which pre-empted the dismantling of the apartheid regime.³⁷ These events were particularly significant because they meet a need for a new moral project around which the Commonwealth could collect itself.³⁸ The end of the Cold War brought a deepening perception of globalisation eroding the idea of the state as the centre of politics. This was accompanied by economic interdependence - aided by the removal of barriers to free trade - and a shrinking of distances with the help of new technologies.

The stage was set for a deepening of globalisation and governments adapted nationally to take advantage of these changes.³⁹ With the balance of power politics over, the talk of a new world order began to clear the way for what George H. W. Bush described as: 'A world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home among all nations.'⁴⁰ Part of the background of this historic shift, as I have already noted, was the weariness of the international community with the presence of autocratic governments. As a result of the weariness, in domestic affairs, states were now expected to adhere to the norm of democracy and good governance.⁴¹ As the move towards democratisation in many parts of Africa, and the wider world, built up momentum, the moral triumph of a free South Africa, a success story in which the Commonwealth had played a role, provided the will to take this forward. The Commonwealth had taken a cosmopolitan turn and cast its gaze towards a future where the onus was on shared values, rather than shared history, but how would this reconcile with the deeply embedded norms of sovereignty and non-intervention as well as the thicker, messier Commonwealth family we saw in Chapter 3? To answer this question, we need to look at what being cosmopolitanism involves and how this differs to the communitarianism discussed in the previous chapters. This will provide some theoretical context for a deeper engagement with the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism.

³⁷ Akinrinade, 'Africa', 217. See also, Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946-1994* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004).

³⁸ Mayall, 'Introduction', 18.

³⁹ Nicholas Bayne, 'The Commonwealth and the international economy', in *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment, 1965-2009*, ed. James Mayall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 107.

⁴⁰ George H. W. Bush, 'Speech to Congress, 6 March 1991', Available at: http://www.wwnorton.com/college/history/america7_brief/content/multimedia/ch36/research_01d.htm.

⁴¹ Akinrinade, 'Africa'.

4.2 The Commonwealth's Cosmopolitanism: A sketch of the arguments

I want to begin this discussion of cosmopolitanism by drawing a couple of distinctions. The first noteworthy point, acknowledged widely among those who have thought seriously about the subject, is that running through the literature on cosmopolitanism are three core themes that can be described as: individualism, universality, and egalitarianism.⁴² These three themes form the basis of a larger set of moral and normative commitments, which are based on 'the acknowledgement of some notion of common humanity that translates ethically into an idea of shared or common moral duties towards others by virtue of this humanity.'⁴³

To get a grip on the issues here, it is worth reminding ourselves upfront that the debate between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism is one about the scope of distributive justice. At its core is the question: 'to whom is justice owed?'⁴⁴ For communitarians, and the basis of my discussion in Chapter 3, the scope of justice is specific to the communities in which we find ourselves embedded to begin with. But, as cosmopolitans see it, these binding forces of political and social grounding, so clearly fetishised by communitarians - ancestry, place of birth, citizenship, and state borders - are morally arbitrary and, therefore, should not limit the way in which we distribute benefits and burdens among persons.⁴⁵ For cosmopolitans, the scope of justice is believed to be universal and, as such, individuals are the ultimate repositories of moral worth in political life. In this regard, through the cosmopolitan gaze, 'every human being has a global stature as the ultimate unit of moral concern.'⁴⁶

⁴² This typology is accredited largely to Thomas Pogge. See Thomas Pogge, 'Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty', *Ethics* 103, no. 1 (1992): 48-49; Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002).

⁴³ Catherine Lu, 'The one and many faces of cosmopolitanism', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8, No. 2 (2000): 245. On the same theme, see also Catherine Lu, *Just and Unjust Interventions in World Politics: Public and Private* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006).

⁴⁴ Onora O'Neill, *Justice Across Boundaries: Whose Obligations?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Onora O'Neill, 'Transnational justice: Permeable boundaries and multiple identities', in *Socialism and the Common Good: New Fabian Essays*, ed. Preston King (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 291-302.

⁴⁵ Jones, *Global Justice*. See also, Philippe Van Parijs, 'International distributive justice', in *A Companion to Political Philosophy*, eds. Robert Goodin, Philip Pettit and Thomas Pogge (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 638-52; Simon Caney, 'Review article: International distributive justice', *Political Studies* 49, no. 5 (2001): 974-97.

⁴⁶ Charles Beitz, 'International liberalism and distributive justice: A survey of recent thought', *World Politics* 51, no. 2 (1999): 287.

It is here that we find the key difference between the view of the Commonwealth in Chapter 3, and the view of the Commonwealth in this chapter. Where, I have argued that the Commonwealth exhibits many of the main tenets of communitarianism, as well as being described as a family, with many heads of state adding their own nuance to describe ties between states, in this chapter I want to argue that, with its turn to cosmopolitanism, the Commonwealth attempted to embrace the idea that it is an organisation where every member's rights are as important as the group's wellbeing. Thus, for the more communitarian-looking Commonwealth, outlined in Chapter 3, the scope of justice is rather more specific to the state, but, for the post-1991 Commonwealth, the scope of justice (at least potentially) becomes universal and individual members of the Commonwealth family are, as I pointed out earlier, the ultimate units of moral worth.⁴⁷

While this might sound like an unrealistic agreement - after all, how is it possible to meet the needs of two billion family members individually?⁴⁸ - this reshaping of the Commonwealth attempted to place the organisation on a similar footing to other international organisations, which can perhaps be understood as cosmopolitan through Mary Kaldor's definition as maintaining, 'a layer of governance that constitutes a limitation on the sovereignty of states and yet does not itself constitute a state...[which] would override states in certain clearly defined spheres of activity.'⁴⁹ Kaldor's argument is similar to one put forward by Daniele Archibugi in his work on cosmopolitan democracy. For Archibugi, like Kaldor, cosmopolitan democracy is 'a project that aims to develop democracy within nations, among states and at the global level, assuming that the three levels, although highly interdependent, should and can be pursued simultaneously.'⁵⁰ This means that, while the cosmopolitan project calls for the rights of every human being to be respected, Kaldor and Archibugi realistically

⁴⁷ Beitz, 'International liberalism and distributive justice: A survey of recent thought': 287.

⁴⁸ For debate and discussion on whether institutions can have 'responsibilities' see Toni Erskine, ed., *Can Institutions Have Responsibilities? Collective Moral Agency and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

⁴⁹ Mary Kaldor 'Proposal to the Economic and Social Research Council for a seminar on cosmopolitan democracy', cited in Daniele Archibugi, David Held, and Martin Köhler, eds., *Reimagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 216. For further debate and analysis of cosmopolitan democracy see Daniele Archibugi, *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁵⁰ Daniele Archibugi, 'Principles of cosmopolitan democracy', in, *Reimagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy*, eds. Daniele Archibugi, David Held, and Martin Köhler (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 216.

argue that this respect begins at the level of the state and is monitored, for all intents and purposes, by international organisations with the mandate to override state sovereignty in situations, for example, where it is agreed that military force is needed to protect human beings.⁵¹

Bending Kaldor and Archibugi's arguments to our purposes, we can see that the Commonwealth's attempted cosmopolitanism is analogous with the idea that the state takes care of its citizens, and the Commonwealth fellow family members, through the observational and disciplinary mechanism CMAG, as well as through the Good Offices of the Commonwealth Secretariat,⁵² help member states that are considered to be going off the rails of democracy and the rule of law.⁵³ In Chapter 5, I will discuss how the case of Zimbabwe problematised this way of thinking, but for the present purposes it is enough to simply state that by the mid 1990s the Commonwealth, through the Harare Principles and CMAG, had, to employ John Major's phraseology, begun to ride the tidal wave of human rights rather than be swept along by the stream.⁵⁴

In the cosmopolitan doctrine, one practice in particular in the post-Cold war era has come to be seen as emblematic of the turn to cosmopolitanism; this is the promotion and protection of human rights.⁵⁵ The idea of obligations or responsibility often translate into duties of global distributive justice, which often pursue the protection of universal human rights or the reform of unjust international systems in order to bring them in-line with cosmopolitan moral principles.⁵⁶ Charles Jones has described distributive justice as: 'best conceived in

⁵¹ Anne Orford, *Reading Humanitarian: Human Rights and the Use of Force in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also, Ken Gude, 'Case studies in collective response', in *Protecting Democracy: International Responses*, eds. Morton Halperin and Mirna Galic (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 63-100.

⁵² The Commonwealth Secretary-General in the past has used his 'good offices' (senior Secretariat officials or envoys) to attempt quiet diplomacy with heads of state to deal with non-violent conflict or political difficulties within states. See The Commonwealth Network, 'Good offices for peace'. Available at: <http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/commonwealth-in-action/good-offices-for-peace/>.

⁵³ Colvile, 'A place to stand: The problems and potential of the Commonwealth ministerial action group'.

⁵⁴ 'John Major's Speech in Harare to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting', 17 October 1991. Available at: <http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page978.html>.

⁵⁵ Rosemary Foot has linked the ending of the Cold War to the impact of human rights ideas. See Rosemary Foot, 'The Cold War and human rights', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Vol 3, Endings*, eds. Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 445-65.

⁵⁶ Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, 'Editor's introduction', in *The Cosmopolitan Reader*, eds. Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 2, 10.

terms of human rights, from which it follows...that nation-state borders lack any fundamental ethical standing.⁵⁷ Following similar lines of thinking, Robert Plant has noted that the cosmopolitan character of the human rights approach is obvious, as he puts it: ‘the whole thrust of human rights theories is that boundaries of nations are not the boundaries of moral concern.’⁵⁸ This view has potential for a study of the Commonwealth’s cosmopolitanism in that it prompts us to remember that during the first decades of its official existence, the Commonwealth had a strict policy of non-interference in the domestic policies of each member state.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, on the back of the moral triumph against apartheid, it was possible to discern a concerted effort by Commonwealth states to sustain (at least to begin with) and reinforce the norms that would make the shift to cosmopolitanism possible - the human right to life, liberty, equality, and prosperity.⁶⁰

The attempt to transform the Commonwealth away from the messy squabbling family of the previous decades into a more progressive liberal forward-looking organisation in 1991, was exemplified, then, by a focus on human rights and democracy which were a reaction to the apartheid regime. This was one of the central themes in the Harare Declaration, which set a new agenda for the Commonwealth that included the commitment to work towards:

strengthen[ing] and enrich[ing] the value and importance of the Commonwealth as an institution which can and should strengthen and enrich the lives not only of its own members and their peoples but also the wider community of peoples which they are a part.⁶¹

On the back of post-Cold War sentiment and the collapse of apartheid in South Africa, the Harare Declaration ushered in a new-look Commonwealth that

⁵⁷ Jones, *Global Justice*, 2.

⁵⁸ Raymond Plant, *Modern Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 290.

⁵⁹ Krishnan Srinivasan, ‘Principles and practice: Human rights, the Harare Declaration and the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)’, in *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment, 1965-2009*, ed. James Mayall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 65-82.

⁶⁰ We can see this in the Commonwealth’s suspension of Nigeria and the Abacha regime following the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa. For an overview and analysis of the Abacha regime see Bamidele Ojo, ed., *Problems and Prospects of Sustaining Democracy in Nigeria* (New York: Nova, 2001); Maurice Nyamanga Amutabi and Shadrack Wanjala Nasong’o, eds., *Regime Change and Succession Politics in Africa: Five Decades of Misrule* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

⁶¹ The Commonwealth Secretariat, ‘The Harare Commonwealth Declaration 1991’. Available at: <http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/history-items/documents/Harare%20Commonwealth%20Declaration%201991.pdf>.

appeared to be loosening its bond with the shared history and messiness of the past and casting its gaze towards a more idealised future. Promoting human rights became a practice whereby the Commonwealth re-presented itself as an international organisation ready to evolve beyond what had previously been understood as a family of nations with an onus on non-interference. Notable in this respect is the description of the Commonwealth in 2008 by the former Secretary-General Don McKinnon who points out that key to the strength of Commonwealth values is the, 'Respect for human rights - indivisible and non-negotiable.'⁶²

But, to truly make the change from an association of states bound by shared history to a relevant international organisation, whose members adhered to the norms of liberalism and democratisation, the ideology of the Commonwealth family needed to undergo a change in definition. The issue of how the Commonwealth defines itself has important implications for the way we understand the concept of cosmopolitanism.⁶³ For Richard Bourne, what appears to some as a people's organisation, is for others, very much a state driven and dominated family.⁶⁴ As he writes, 'for many throughout the Commonwealth the individual and community come first, any government second, and the definition of democracy must be that of plural democracy with minority rights and individual freedom.'⁶⁵ This observation is particularly noteworthy because, as Paul Taylor points out: 'There has...been some controversy about whether the Commonwealth was concerned as much with the interests and rights of peoples as with those of states.'⁶⁶

This question was cleared up, at least conceptually, in 2007, when the Commonwealth Secretariat confirmed that the Commonwealth: 'is an association of peoples as well as states.'⁶⁷ Outlining the Commonwealth's cosmopolitan

⁶² Don McKinnon, 'A Commonwealth of Values; a Commonwealth of incomparable value: Reflections of a Secretary-General 2000-2008', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 97, no. 394 (2008): 24.

⁶³ This is because the cosmopolitan thesis 'favours individual rights.' See Stan Van Hooft, *Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophy for Global Ethics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

⁶⁴ Richard Bourne, 'The Commonwealth and civil society', *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment 1965-2009*, ed. James Mayall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 122-36.

⁶⁵ Bourne, 'The Commonwealth and civil society', 135.

⁶⁶ Paul Taylor, 'The Commonwealth and the European Union', in *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment, 1965-2009* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 141.

⁶⁷ Commonwealth Secretariat, *Membership of the Commonwealth: Report of the Committee on Commonwealth Membership* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2007),

outlook, McKinnon noted, 'Commonwealth societies are the people of the Commonwealth in villages, towns and cities. And therefore protecting and promoting fundamental human rights of individuals...is central to the Commonwealth's work.'⁶⁸ Taking on something of the Commonwealth's tendency for exaggeration, Karmallesh Sharma, the out-going Commonwealth Secretary-General, couched McKinnon's observation in more global terms when he noted:

the Commonwealth became global...immediately took into account that the human community, the global community has to consist equally in terms of rights...and then saw that the way of the future has to be a participatory one in which it has to be a people's Commonwealth.⁶⁹

For Sharma, the theme of globalisation and human rights helped the Commonwealth to evolve into a more universal world-wide global family.⁷⁰

The Commonwealth's attempts to redefine what was meant by the Commonwealth family appeared to be in-line with the change in definition, in late twentieth century international normative discourse, as Martha Finnemore points out, of 'who qualifies as human and therefore deserving of humanitarian protection by foreign governments.'⁷¹ But in addition to redefining its membership, the Commonwealth also took a more progressive move away from its shared history, with a new criteria for membership that effectively diluted the shared history requirement and opened up the family to a much more inclusive, and therefore potentially cosmopolitan, membership. This was the membership criteria that was produced after the accession to the organisation of Mozambique. Having been referred to as a Commonwealth 'cousin' for its assistance during the bush war in Rhodesia, Mozambique, at the insistence of Nelson Mandela, was admitted to the Commonwealth in 1995.⁷² Following Mozambique's membership, the Commonwealth produced, for the first time in its history, an official

presented to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Kampala, 23-25 November 2007.

⁶⁸ Don McKinnon, 'Commonwealth Human Rights Forum: Address by the Commonwealth Secretary General', 21 November 2005.

⁶⁹ Sharma, 'The global value of the Commonwealth'.

⁷⁰ The idea of family is not entirely alien to cosmopolitan theory, Martha Nussbaum draws on the Stoic idea of a world-wide family of human beings. See Martha Nussbaum, 'Patriotism and cosmopolitanism', in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 3-20.

⁷¹ Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs About the Use of Force* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 83.

⁷² For an in depth analysis on the accession of Mozambique see te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*.

membership criteria, which noted that states with some connection to other Commonwealth members, rather than a constitutional and historical connection to Britain, could seek Commonwealth membership.⁷³

This last point is telling, the question of who qualified as a member of the Commonwealth family had always been defined by the organisation's shared history of colonialism and their constitutional connections to Britain, but, with the organisation's attempted cosmopolitan outlook, the idea of who qualified underwent something of a radical change. This was a move away from the organisation's shared past which, in the eyes of the Commonwealth Secretariat and much of the Commonwealth literature, make it so unique. This change has given the Commonwealth scope for a much more inclusive future and, in a cosmopolitan sense, has opened up a space where inheritance, memory, and solidarity are no longer the binding forces which dictate the scope of ethical ties.⁷⁴ From this perspective, the cosmopolitan Commonwealth can be understood as cultivating more of a sense of global justice beyond the fifty-three Commonwealth member states, effectively helping the organisation to recognise the existential worth of individuals, beyond the binding forces of ethnicity, culture, and nationality that are bound up with inheritance.

But, as outlined at the beginning of this chapter, while it was possible to discern a concerted effort to promote a human rights agenda on the back of anti-apartheid sentiment in the 1990s, the presence of human rights norms across the Commonwealth has not dictated norm compliance.⁷⁵ This is largely because, Commonwealth heads of state and foreign ministers, who make up the collective body of CMAG, have shied away from intrusion into the internal affairs of their fellow Commonwealth family members and largely turned a blind eye to many human rights violations committed by Commonwealth states against their citizens.⁷⁶ The Harare Declaration and its monitoring mechanism contributed to the Commonwealth's cosmopolitan outlook, both by establishing codified

⁷³ Commonwealth Secretariat, *Membership of the Commonwealth*.

⁷⁴ Jeremy Waldron, 'What is cosmopolitan?' *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (2000): 231-36.

⁷⁵ Alison Duxbury, 'A fracture in the family: Zimbabwe and the Commonwealth', *Oxford University Commonwealth Law Journal* 4, no. 1 (2004): 103-19. Most observers of the Commonwealth's attempted cosmopolitanism acknowledge that where the organisation has failed in human rights protection, it has performed more capably with regard to promotion, standard-setting and norm-creation. See Srinivasan, 'Principles and practice', 80; Colvile, 'A place to stand'.

⁷⁶ See Howard, *Human Rights in Commonwealth Africa*.

requirements and actualising their enforcement. Nevertheless, the lack of real attention to human rights issues across Commonwealth states has effectively reduced the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism to little more than a signifier, empty or otherwise, which has no real analytical purchase or empirical content, and is restricted to descriptive value. It would not be an over-generalisation, then, to suggest that as far as human rights protection goes, the Commonwealth has failed to live up to its cosmopolitan aspirations based on the failure of norm compliance.⁷⁷

4.3 Conclusions: Looking forward/looking back

What I have attempted here and in the previous chapter is to open up to scrutiny two ways of looking at the Commonwealth. First, the communitarian view with a top-down, state-centred picture of a realm where the state as father administers the discipline and the organisation is held together through what Foucault calls backward-looking rituals of blood and birthright.⁷⁸ And second, the more horizontal idea of the distribution of rights and responsibilities where the family is transformed into an international organisation, the Secretariat acts as neutral arbitrator, and every citizen's rights are taken into account. The cosmopolitan Commonwealth, though not fully realised, is a sense of looking to the future, whereas the Commonwealth family, in the communitarian sense of the concept, is looking to the past. These two ways of looking at the organisation are essential to understanding the how we might view the Commonwealth as both cosmopolitan and communitarian.

From the exploration over the past two chapters, the Commonwealth appears to be both communitarian and cosmopolitan but can it really be both? Here, in the final paragraphs of this chapter, I want to sketch out how the chapters in the empirical part of the thesis are going to help flesh out the concept of the communitarian and cosmopolitan understandings of the Commonwealth in more detail. These ideas divide into two broad types, which we might understand, as I have outlined above, as backward-looking and forward-looking analogies. The backward-looking approach stems from the communitarian tradition that Chris Brown argues grows partially out of the realist tradition that he traces back to anti-Enlightenment thinkers, who maintained that human failings could not be

⁷⁷ Duxbury, 'A fracture in the family'; Srinivasan, 'Principles and practice'.

⁷⁸ Taylor, 'Foucault and familial power'.

overcome.⁷⁹ It is this view of the family, which administers the discipline but also offers us a home through our struggle for recognition. The backward-looking approach is the mother of communitarianism in that it carries assumptions about the social order. It is predicated on the notion that ethics are specific to communities with a shared history, shared values, and a sense of solidarity, and can be found in the case of Zimbabwe, which is the subject of Chapter 5.

The forward-looking approach, by contrast, is a far more idealistic way of looking at what the family is capable of doing and can achieve. This approach is pushing against forces seeking to write-off the Commonwealth, and attempts to recreate it as a potential force of utilitarianism. This approach was espoused, as I have outlined in this chapter, by Commonwealth heads of government at the beginning of the 1990s, and flavoured by the spirit of the united collective front that had fought against the dark forces of racism in Southern Africa. The forward-looking approach is the mother of cosmopolitanism and, as it pertains to the Commonwealth's understanding, is informed by two beliefs: first, that the adoption of the Harare Principles and CMAG on the back of post-Cold War optimism and the dismantling of apartheid would bring both moral and social improvement by advancing the rights and interests of each and every individual member; and second, that the later opening up of Commonwealth membership, which shifted the emphasis from shared history to shared values, would help to realise this. It is predicated on the assumption that Commonwealth member states will, at least in theory, allow a certain amount of intrusion in each other's internal affairs in the event of 'an unconstitutional overthrow of a democratically elected government' and 'serious or persistent violations of the principles' of human rights,⁸⁰ and can be found in the case of Rwanda, which I explore in Chapter 6.

It is no coincidence that the cases in the empirical chapters that follow take place in Africa. As I outlined in the introduction chapter of this thesis, Africa is the place where the Commonwealth's attempt to be cosmopolitan has faced the biggest challenges and witnessed the most inconsistencies. It is therefore only fitting that the cases I have selected to test my arguments both come from the Commonwealth in Africa. The cases in Chapters 5 and 6 are informed by interviews carried out in Zimbabwe and Rwanda, they give a much-needed voice

⁷⁹ Chris Brown, *International Relations Theory*, 39.

⁸⁰ Srinivasan, 'Principles and Practice', 73.

to the African side of the Commonwealth in a literature that is dominated by Western voices. The following two chapters should therefore be understood as an exercise in listening to family members with a view to further complicating theoretical understandings of the Commonwealth family by allowing praxis to speak back to theory.

It's a family because of the historical ties between these countries...family cannot be wished away you can't do without family. You can quarrel and say ok I don't want to see you for the next five years but that doesn't make you not a member of the family. Even if you say I don't want family, I'm not part of this family and, what-have-you, you are still part of this family.

- *Zimbabwean Academic* (3 March 2015)

The British colonisation of Africa was like consensual rape. It happens and you have a couple of children as a result and then you think, well I might as well make the most of this family situation now.

- *Zimbabwean Politician (Zanu-PF)* (11 March 2015)

Chapter 5

Zimbabwe and the family ties that bind

I discussed two ways in which we might understand the Commonwealth as a family in Chapters 3 and 4 - through shared history where ideas of inheritance, identity, and solidarity work together to create thicker ties - in Geertz sense of the word - between member states, or through shared values, where the individual rights of every single family member matter as the organisation fixes its eyes on the future in an attempt to find a purpose. Both ways of understanding the organisation have found expression in the Commonwealth's ambition to be a cosmopolitan organisation and its failure to fully realise this goal. These two ways of understanding the Commonwealth, I argue, constantly pull the organisation in two different directions and this has kept the Commonwealth in a threshold zone between its communitarian past and its cosmopolitan future. There are many ways in which we might substantiate this, but over the next two chapters I will explore what I believe are two very strong individual cases - Zimbabwe and Rwanda - that help to shed substantial light on this claim. I have already explained the rationale behind the choice of these cases in Chapter 1. By steering the discussion towards these individual cases, and away from the Commonwealth as a whole, I consider how states, which make up the collective Commonwealth family, have both contributed to, and also helped to problematise, the two different ways of viewing the organisation.

It should be evident by now that, when it comes to viewing the Commonwealth either through a communitarian or a cosmopolitan lens, I am interested in the dysfunction, dissonance, and disavowed relations which member states bring to the Commonwealth family. Perhaps no other case personifies the messiness of family, nor the conflict between shared history and shared values at the heart of the Commonwealth, better than the events surrounding the lead up to the withdrawal of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth in 2003.¹ While there is a vast

¹ While a case can be made around the Gambian withdrawal from the Commonwealth in 2013, this was much less controversial, in Commonwealth or comparative terms, as it came in the form of a surprise announcement from the Gambian President Yahya Jammeh, rather than the drawn out affair that Zimbabwe became. For information on Gambia's withdrawal, including Jammeh's speech to the United Nations only days before,

body of literature which analyses the dramatic upheavals and events that led Zimbabwe out of the Commonwealth,² little attention has been paid to how Zimbabweans themselves feel about leaving the Commonwealth. The aim of this chapter is therefore to explore how we might understand how the Commonwealth troubles the idea of family through the voices and opinions of Zimbabwean elites.

Zimbabwe is a particularly interesting case, because of the history between the Southern African state and the Commonwealth. During the 1960s until the late 1970s, Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, dominated the agenda of Commonwealth meetings as Ian Smith and his minority white government attempted to wrestle power from Westminster in a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI).³ Smith's regime came to an end with the assistance of the Commonwealth, which arbitrated the Lancaster House Conference, helped produce the Lancaster House Accords, the documents and agreement that facilitated Zimbabwe's independence,⁴ and elevated Robert Mugabe to the position of head of the Zimbabwean state. Twenty-two years after independence, Zimbabwe, once again, dominated the agenda of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings as Mugabe and the Zanu-PF ruling party, amidst what a host of scholars regard as a period of political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe, were seen to have abandoned the rule of law.⁵ Following a period of suspension in 2000, in October 2003,

see 'UK regrets the Gambia's withdrawal from the Commonwealth', BBC, 3 October 2013. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24376127>.

² The literature on the Zimbabwean crisis is enormous, and what follows is just a sample of it: Amanda Hammar, Brian Raftopolous and Stig Jensen, eds., *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crisis* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2003); Richard Bourne, *Catastrophe: What Went Wrong in Zimbabwe?* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2011); Primorac and Chan, eds., *Zimbabwe in Crisis*; Ian Phimister and Brian Raftopoulos, 'Mugabe, Mbeki and the politics of anti-imperialism', *Review of African Political Economy* 101 (2004): 127-43; Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger, *The Historical Dimensions of Democracy and Human Rights in Zimbabwe* (Harare: Zimbabwe University Publications, 2001); Sarah Chiumbu and Muchaparara Musemwa, *Crisis! What Crisis?: The Multiple Dimensions of the Zimbabwean Crisis* (Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 2012); A. S. Mlambo, *A History of Zimbabwe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

³ For an analysis of the history and policies of the Smith regime see Dickson Mungazi, *The Last Defenders of the Laager: Ian D. Smith and F. W. de Klerk* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1988); J. R. T. Wood, *So Far and No Further!: Rhodesia's Bid for Independence During Her Retreat from Empire* (Johannesburg: 30 South Publishers, 2005); David Moore, Norma J. Kriger and Brian Raftopoulos, *'Progress' in Zimbabwe?: The Past and Present of a Concept and a Country* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁴ For more on the Lancaster House Agreement and the transition to independence see: Stephen Chan, *The Commonwealth Observer Group in Zimbabwe: A Personal Memoir* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1985); Chan, *Robert Mugabe*; Jacob Chikuhwa, *A Crisis of Governance: Zimbabwe* (New York: Algora, 2004).

⁵ Brian Raftopolous, 'The crisis in Zimbabwe, 1998-2008', in *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-Colonial Period to 2008*, eds. Brian Raftopolous and A. S. Mlambo (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009), 201-32.

Mugabe withdrew the now troubled state from the Commonwealth. Today, Zimbabwe has been out of the Commonwealth for more than a decade, and yet there has been a steady stream of discourse from the Commonwealth Secretariat, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and in the corpus of Commonwealth literature, about bringing Zimbabwe back to the fold.⁶ In spite of these continued efforts from the Commonwealth Secretariat and the FCO, the Zimbabwe government has not appeared interested in returning and publically declared, in 2005, that Zimbabwe would never again belong to the ‘useless body which has treated Zimbabwe in a dishonourable manner.’⁷

Two things might be said in defence of the Zimbabwean government’s reaction here. First, the leader of the Zimbabwean political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T), Morgan Tsvangirai, has publically stated that he wishes Zimbabwe to return to the Commonwealth. Tsvangirai has been repeatedly attacked by the Zimbabwean president and the Zanu-PF as a puppet for the West to manipulate - even re-colonise - Zimbabwe, therefore, this rhetoric is in fitting with the government line to paint the opposition party as a Western sympathiser. Second, there is evidence, although the Commonwealth has played down this angle, that Pakistan, at the time of Zimbabwe’s suspension, should also have been dealt with in a harsher way, and that, because of the strategic need for allies in the ‘war on terror,’ Pakistan, and its domestic political issues, escaped the level of scrutiny that was applied to the Zimbabwean case.⁸

This last claim is significant, while the fact that Zimbabwe failed to adhere to Commonwealth values is not in dispute here, what is immediately noteworthy for the purposes of my enquiry is the fact that, amongst others, Sri Lanka, with accusations of war crimes,⁹ and Uganda, with its threatened Anti-Homosexuality

⁶ According to a report by the House of Commons, there are a number of Commonwealth Organisations that have come together in London to work with civil society organisations in Zimbabwe. See House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *The Role and Future of the Commonwealth: Fourth Report of Session 2012-13* (London: House of Commons, 2012).

⁷ Editorial, ‘Mugabe attacks Blair and turns back on ‘useless’ Commonwealth’, *The Scotsman*, 3 July 2005. Available at: <http://www.scotsman.com/news/uk/mugabe-attacks-blair-and-turns-back-on-useless-commonwealth-1-1391617>.

⁸ Don McKinnon gives a detailed account of his dealings with both President Musharraf and President Mugabe and the difference in treatment of both heads of state. See McKinnon, *In the Ring*.

⁹ In spite of the ongoing war crimes investigations, the Sri Lankan government were selected as hosts for the 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. While this was an issue that met with a number of boycotts from human rights groups and some Commonwealth leaders, the meeting, nevertheless, went ahead as scheduled. What is

act that threatens life imprisonment for homosexuals,¹⁰ remain in the Commonwealth without threat of suspension. Drawing attention to differences in treatment, it is observations like these which help tease out the complexity and messiness of the Commonwealth family. What is especially pertinent about the Zimbabwean case, and I will bring this out in more detail as I go along in later sections of the chapter, is the level of involvement by the British government in the loss of the troubled state.

But, these observations notwithstanding, the certainty of the statement that Zimbabwe will *never* return to the Commonwealth is intriguing. More than ten years after the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, the Zimbabwean government has slowly been showing signs of willingness to re-engage with the West, but, as far as the Zanu-PF are concerned, this does not include the Commonwealth.¹¹ What is curious about these observations is that, as I have discussed above, despite the Zimbabwean government's open hostility towards the organisation, the Commonwealth has kept a constant vigil over the return of Zimbabwe. Shridath Ramphal, former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth (1975-1990) who oversaw the independence of Zimbabwe, has put this in simple terms. As he sees it:

the people of Zimbabwe are basically what all this was about and I have a deep consciousness of the terrible plight of those people...I believe the Commonwealth has an ongoing responsibility to those people. Forget leaders and all that: it is a terrible human disaster in Zimbabwe. The Commonwealth cannot ever relinquish responsibility to those people. It was like Oliver Tambo telling me that black people

noteworthy is that the Commonwealth Secretariat barely, if at all, mentions any failure by Sri Lanka to adhere to Commonwealth values. For an overview of opinion and analysis of the Sri Lanka Heads of Government Meeting decision see, for example: Brian Senewirante, 'Sri Lanka hosting CHOGM2013: A serious problem', *Sri Lanka Guardian*, 4 November 2013. Available at: <http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2013/11/sri-lanka-hosting-chogm-2013-serious.html>.

¹⁰ For a thorough exploration of anti-homosexuality laws and across the Commonwealth see Corinne Lennox and Matthew Waites, *Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Commonwealth: Struggles for Decriminalisation* (London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2013).

¹¹ The Zimbabwean Foreign Minister said recently, 'it is difficult to see any such review taking place in the foreseeable future. Therefore, any parliamentarians who lobby foreign parliamentarians for Zimbabwe to be allowed to join the Commonwealth must know that their efforts are at variance with the Government of Zimbabwe.' Zvamaida Murwira, 'Zim to stay out of C'wealth', *The Herald*, 24 February 2016. Available at: <http://www.herald.co.zw/zim-to-stay-out-of-cwealth/>.

of South Africa never left the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth must take the position that it never left the people of Zimbabwe.¹²

What is especially pertinent about Ramphal's comment is that, on the one hand it enacts exactly with the scenario of inheritance, shared values, and solidarity put forward by the communitarian IR theorists I discussed in Chapter 3. Yet, on the other hand, it is precisely the complex history and shared inheritance of colonialism which complicate the Zimbabwean situation as the chapter will show.

Intrigued by both the Commonwealth's commitment and the Zimbabwean government's animosity towards the Commonwealth, in February 2015, I travelled to Harare to get a feel for whether this was a widespread sentiment: did other Zimbabweans in positions of influence share this view? I wanted to understand how Zimbabweans viewed the Commonwealth, how they understood the story behind Mugabe's withdrawal of Zimbabwe from the organisation, whether they had felt the effects of their government's withdrawal, and finally what they thought about the Commonwealth's obsession with bringing Zimbabwe back. I conducted approximately 20 semi-structured interviews with a range of elites mainly in the Zimbabwean capital city of Harare. These included journalists, civil society representatives from local and national Zimbabwean civil society organisations, politicians from both of the main political parties in Zimbabwe, and academics. Interviewees were mainly from similar ethnic Shona backgrounds and were politically aligned to one of the two main political parties in Zimbabwe. While some interviewees were young and had no real memory of Commonwealth history and its connection to Zimbabwean independence, others had firsthand experience of the transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe and the role that the Commonwealth played. The information the elites passed on to me gave me a deeper insight - both beyond the academic library and beyond British and Zimbabwean media's demonisation of Blair and Mugabe - into the political landscape in Zimbabwe, Zimbabwean reaction to leaving the Commonwealth, and any Zimbabwean relations with the Commonwealth since.¹³

¹² Shridath Ramphal interviewed in Moyo and Ashurst, 'Sleights of hand at Lancaster House', 163.

¹³ In spite of leaving the Commonwealth, Zimbabwe is still loosely connected to certain Commonwealth professional associations such as the Association of Commonwealth Universities of which five Zimbabwean universities remain affiliated. For information on this see: The Association of Commonwealth Universities. Available at: <https://www.acu.ac.uk/membership/acu-members/>.

While elite interviews were my main source of data collection, information was also gained from observation, by studying Zimbabwean newspaper articles related to Zimbabwean-Commonwealth relations, and by informal discussion with ordinary Zimbabweans that I met on a daily basis in and around the neighbourhood in which I stayed during my fieldwork.¹⁴ Some of these conversations proved to be instrumental to my access to elites, as on more than one occasion a conversation on a park bench in the gardens of the National Gallery, or a discussion at a neighbourhood barbecue, led me to the door of a political figure or activist that people were sure I should talk to. I was struck by the interest in the Commonwealth, and helpfulness on these occasions, on one level because of my own preconceptions about the reception I would receive as a British researcher in Zimbabwe, and on another level because it was in stark contrast to the reaction from the white Zimbabweans I had encountered in my first few days in the country. I will return to discuss this comment in more detail in the following section of the chapter, in which I address issues of positionality, suffice it to say that there was a general feeling from most white Zimbabweans, that I spoke to during my fieldwork, that the Commonwealth had no connection to their lives and was therefore not worth talking about.¹⁵

In a variety of ways, this observation itself problematises the communitarian notion of shared identity as white Zimbabweans are often singled out by the Zanu-PF as the kith and kin of the ‘British Anglo Saxon tribe.’¹⁶ This was a description that was used on more than one occasion in my interviews with Zimbabwean politicians. In this analogy, all white Zimbabweans are connected to the British through notions of shared inheritance, history, and identity. Given that these three elements also form the backbone of communitarianism, as we saw in Chapter 3, then theoretically, following Clifford Geertz, there ought to have been a ‘we-feeling’ or strong sense of solidarity across the ‘Anglo Saxon tribe.’ And yet, this did not seem to be the case with white Zimbabweans that I met in Zimbabwe. When theory met praxis, these so called kith and kin turned their backs on family ties.

¹⁴ While in Zimbabwe, I stayed in the suburb of Chisipite, north of Harare, and caught the local commuter buses into the city every day. The bus journeys provided a chance to talk to the local people and get something of an idea of how things were in the daily lives of Zimbabwean non-elites.

¹⁵ Personal correspondence with the author, Harare, 16 February 2015.

¹⁶ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 11 March 2015.

This observation is one of a number of ways in which the notion of family is problematised in the Zimbabwean case. In presenting my findings, I have tried to draw out the most significant examples to justify my argument that Zimbabwe troubles the normative landscape and while I draw on a variety of empirical evidence and observation, it is the interviews themselves which provided the most fruitful data. In each of my interviews, I began by asking my subjects two simple questions: why did Zimbabwe leave the Commonwealth? And, would it ever return? By asking these questions first, I had not necessarily yet indicated my interest in the topic of the Commonwealth as a family. And yet, one of the most striking things about the interviews was that, although I tended not to broach the subject of family right away, the discourse of family nevertheless permeated many of the answers given by my subjects.

It is telling that the Commonwealth has been so affected by the loss of Zimbabwe.¹⁷ Given the multiple parties, the behind the scenes manipulation, and the lingering sense of loss in the face of Zimbabwe's defiance, the Zimbabwean case resonates very closely with familial behaviour. A simple reading of the Zimbabwe situation does not adequately do justice to the complexity of characters and of family history between Britain, Zimbabwe, and the Commonwealth. By steering the discussion towards the ways in which we might envision the loss of Zimbabwe in familial terms, this chapter makes a unique contribution to both the literature on Zimbabwe and the literature on the Commonwealth, as well as grounding communitarianism by adding an empirical element with data derived from interviews. Rather than simply reiterate the story of Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the Commonwealth, the chapter attempts to provide an understanding of Zimbabwe's place in the Commonwealth's communitarian narrative, and in doing so attempts to shed light on the reasons why the loss of Zimbabwe has had such an effect on the Commonwealth's inability to get its cosmopolitanism off the ground.

In order to explore the Zimbabwean case, the chapter proceeds in four parts. The first section provides some context for the loss of Zimbabwe outlining briefly some factors which contributed to the suspension and later withdrawal of the troubled state. The second section discusses some issues around positionality that arose

¹⁷ For an interesting analysis of the Zimbabwean withdrawal from the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth's reaction, through the lens of international institutional law see Duxbury, 'A fracture in the family'.

during the interview process. The third section deals with the ways in which Zimbabwean officials view the Commonwealth, how they conceive their government's withdrawal from the organisation; and how they envision future Zimbabwean-Commonwealth relations. The final part of the chapter draws the points together and returns to the theoretical debate.

5.1 Background: Family history

I arrived in Zimbabwe to conduct interviews in February 2015, approximately a week before President Mugabe's ninety-first birthday party, which was attracting a lot of criticism from the British, as well as the international, media.¹⁸ One particularly vocal critic, whose comments had attracted the attention of a small number of Zimbabwean politicians, was the former Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. In an article in the British broadsheet, *The Telegraph*, entitled: 'Happy birthday, Mr Mugabe, with special love from Labour,' Johnson, after criticising the extravagance of the birthday celebrations, turned his criticism towards Britain and proceeded to outline what he saw as the many ways in which Tony Blair and the Labour party, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, could be held responsible for the level of poverty, political violence, and poor standard of living in Zimbabwe today.¹⁹

Johnson's letter offers a useful starting point for my overview of the background and events which led to the withdrawal of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth in 2003, as many of his comments echo the official Zimbabwean government line of anti-Blair and anti-British sentiment.²⁰ While British-Zimbabwean relations have

¹⁸ The President's birthday party had become an extravagant event over the past x years and attracted particular criticism for its openness to donations from Zimbabwean citizens. See, for example, Helen Nianias, 'Robert Mugabe eats a zoo for 'obscene' 91st birthday party', *The Independent*, 1 March, 2015. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/robert-mugabe-eats-a-zoo-for-obscene-91st-birthday-party-10077805.html>.

¹⁹ Boris Johnson, 'Happy birthday, Mr Mugabe, with special love from Labour', *The Telegraph*, 22 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/labour/11428364/Happy-birthday-Mr-Mugabe-with-special-love-from-Labour.html>. See also the response by one Zimbabwean politician: Vince Musewe, 'Educating Boris Johnson et al on Zimbabwe', *Nehanda Radio*, 2 March 2015. Available at: <http://nehandaradio.com/2015/03/02/educating-boris-johnson-et-al-on-zimbabwe/>.

²⁰ Terence Ranger, Blessing-Miles Tendi, and Brian Raftopoulos with Ian Phimister have all written on the Zanu-PF's attempts to fashion Zimbabwe's history into a patriarchal narrative of Zimbabweans against the neo-colonial desires of the British government. Terence Ranger, 'Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle over the past in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30,

a long history of turbulence that predates Zimbabwean independence, as I briefly mentioned above, it is the animosity, which was largely provoked by the Labour party with a letter from Clare Short to the late Zimbabwean Agriculture Minister, Kumbirai Kangai, in 1997, that is argued by the Zanu-PF, as Johnson pointed out, to be the root cause of the breakdown in relations between Britain and Zimbabwe, and ultimately Zimbabwe and the Commonwealth.²¹

The letter addressed the subject of British financial support for land reform, outlined in the Lancaster House Agreement,²² that would compensate white farmers who gave up their land on a 'willing-buyer-willing-seller' basis and thus, as Blessing-Miles Tendi observes, 'resolve a colonial legacy of racially biased land distribution in Zimbabwe.'²³ In the now infamous letter, Short wrote:

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting [October 1997], Tony Blair said that he looked forward to developing a new basis for relations with Commonwealth countries founded upon our government's policies, not on the past. We will set out our agenda for international development in a White Paper...The central thrust of this will be the development of partnerships with developing countries which are committed to eradicate poverty...I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish, and as you know, we were colonised, not colonisers...I am told Britain provided a package of assistance for resettlement in the period immediately following independence. This was, I gather, carefully planned and implemented, and met most of its targets. Again, I am told there were discussions in 1989 and 1996 to explore the possibility of further assistance. However, that is all in the past.²⁴

By drawing a line under the past, Short attempted to shift the focus away from the shackles of an unwritten financial commitment, made by the Conservative

no. 2 (2004): 215-34; Blessing-Miles Tendi, *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe: Politics, Intellectuals and the Media* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010); Phimister and Raftopoulos, 'Mugabe, Mbeki and the politics of anti-imperialism'. See also: Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and James Muzondidya, *Redemptive or Grotesque Nationalism?: Rethinking Contemporary Politics in Zimbabwe* (Oxford and New York: Peter Lang, 2011).

²¹ Blessing-Miles Tendi, 'The origins and functions of demonisation discourses in Britain-Zimbabwe relations (2000-)', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 6 (2014): 1255.

²² The Lancaster House Agreement was the political agreement that paved the way for Zimbabwean independence.

²³ Tendi, 'The origins and functions of demonisation discourses in Britain-Zimbabwe relations (2000-)': 1255.

²⁴ Clare Short, 'Letter to Minister Kangai', *The Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/foi/images/0,9069,1015120,00.html>.

government in 1979, towards the broader discourse of poverty reduction and good governance, that formed part of the newly elected Labour government's ethical foreign policy.²⁵

I begin with Short's letter, and the breakdown in relations between Britain and Zimbabwe, because most accounts in the literature on Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the Commonwealth, echoing the claims of the Zanu-PF, take this as their starting point. While the extent to which Short's letter was directly responsible is heavily debated by those who have done serious research on the subject,²⁶ a point that is rarely disputed, however, is the claim, argued broadly across the literature, that the issue of land sits at the heart of the Zimbabwean crisis. This claim arises in large measure from the understanding that fundamental land reform and redistribution have been part of Zimbabwean government policy since independence in 1980.²⁷ Up until Short's letter, Britain had provided financial support for the redistribution policy, but, as Short pointed out, that financial commitment was about to end. As far as the Zanu-PF was concerned, Short's letter laid the foundations for the violent seizure of white-owned commercial farms.²⁸ It was largely these farm invasions, which gave way to violations of property rights and the rule of law,²⁹ along with large scale political violence around the presidential elections in 2000 and 2002, as the Zanu-PF attempted to hold onto power, which soured British-Zimbabwean relations and marked the beginning of the end for Zimbabwe's relationship with the Commonwealth.³⁰

²⁵ Lloyd Sachikonye, *Zimbabwe's Lost Decade: Politics, Development and Society* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2011), 112.

²⁶ Stephen Chan and Hasu Patel, for example, disagree around the extent to which Short's letter is to blame for the ensuing problems in Zimbabwe. See Chan and Patel, 'Zimbabwe's foreign policy: A conversation'. For a thorough analysis of the farm seizure issue, see Charles Laurie, *The Land Reform Deception: Political Opportunism in Zimbabwe's Seizure Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Jocelyn Alexander, 'Squatters, veterans and the state in Zimbabwe', in *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business*, eds. Amanda Hammar, Brian Raftopoulos and Stig Jensen (Harare: Weaver Press, 2003), 83-118; Rory Pilosof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers' Voices from Zimbabwe* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2012); David Harold-Barry, *Zimbabwe: The Past is the Future: Rethinking Land, State, and Nation in the Context of Crisis* (Zimbabwe: Weaver Press, 2004); Chris Alden and Ward Anseeuw, *Land, Liberation and Compromise in Southern Africa* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Joseph Hanlon, J. M. Manjengwa and Teresa Smart, *Zimbabwe Takes Back Its Land* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2013).

²⁷ Heribert Weiland, 'EU sanctions against Zimbabwe: A predictable own goal?', in *Common Foreign and Security Policy: The First Ten Years*, ed. Martin Holland (London: Continuum, 2004), 127-43.

²⁸ Tendi, 'The origins and functions of demonisation discourses in Britain-Zimbabwe relations (2000-)': 1255.

²⁹ Phimister and Raftopoulos, 'Mugabe, Mbeki and the politics of anti-imperialism': 386.

³⁰ Stephen Chan has described the British reaction to the farm invasions as 'hysterical' as it 'obliterated all room for negotiation,' effectively set in motion the push for a sanctions

But, while farm invasions, election tampering, and political violence provide the political back drop to Zimbabwe's departure from the Commonwealth, it is the political figures who were involved in the suspension, and the various reactions by the Zimbabwean government, that are the real interest, as they suggest a more richly ambiguous picture of relationships in which Zimbabwe and the Commonwealth family are not so easily divisible.³¹ By this I mean that Zimbabwe's relationship with the Commonwealth, already an open sore by 2002, began to fester even more when, in addition to an Election Observer Group, the Commonwealth sent a Troika to Zimbabwe with the purpose of engaging with the government on 'political reconciliation, electoral reform and land reform.'³² The Troika comprising the leaders of Australia (Howard), South Africa (Mbeki), and Nigeria (Obasanjo), was tasked with the responsibility of making the final decision on whether Zimbabwe would be suspended from the Commonwealth.³³ But, while the Observer Group and the Troika found the results of the election to have been manipulated, the decision to suspend Zimbabwe became a political balancing act, largely because, as Heribert Weiland has pointed out, the observation delegations produced a number of assessments with differing conclusions before deciding that Zimbabwe ought to be suspended.³⁴

To problematise the situation further, Howard was accused by the Zanu-PF of working with the British government in a bid to re-colonise Zimbabwe,³⁵ while Obasanjo and Mbeki, who was accused by the West of not doing enough,³⁶ had to deal with domestic conflicts, as the decisions they made in favour of suspension

policy that 'caused tangible harm to the Zimbabwean economy and compounded...financial meltdown.' See Stephen Chan, 'Foreword', in Charles Laurie, *The Land Reform Deception: Political Opportunism in Zimbabwe's Land Seizure Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), vii.

³¹ Don McKinnon's memoir provides a thorough, and very personal account, of the personalities involved in the Zimbabwe case. See McKinnon, *In the Ring*, chapters 5 and 6.

³² John Howard, 'As relevant as ever before', in *Commonwealth Minister's Reference Book 2003*, ed. Cheryl Dorall (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2004), 7.

³³ Miriam Prys, *Redefining Regional Power in International Relations: Indian and South African Perspectives* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2012), 86.

³⁴ Weiland, 'EU sanctions against Zimbabwe: A predictable own goal?', 137.

³⁵ McKinnon, *In the Ring*.

³⁶ Mbeki, through his policy of quiet diplomacy, had been attempting to deal with the situation in Zimbabwe on a more regional scale. See Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatssheni, 'Politics behind politics: African Union, Southern African Development Community and the Global Political Agreement in Zimbabwe', in *The Hard Road to Reform: The Politics of Zimbabwe's Global Political Agreement*, ed. Brian Raftopoulos (Harare: Weaver Press, 2013), 142-70.

went against the wishes of some members of their own political establishments.³⁷ Additionally, both faced the pressure of supporting Mugabe in the spirit of brotherly solidarity. As Geoff Hill, describing Obasanjo's relationship with the Zanu-PF points out, 'the spirit of black solidarity that had marked African politics for forty years, Mugabe's supporters doubtless expected that the Nigerian would at least be gentle in his criticism.'³⁸

Mbeki and Obasanjo were tasked with the job of brokering peace talks between the two main political parties in Zimbabwe, but to no avail. One year after the 2002 suspension, when no agreement could be reached over what progress, if any, had been made, Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth was controversially extended,³⁹ an impasse, as Ian Phimister and Brian Raftopolous point out, that culminated in 'Harare's abrupt withdrawal from what it termed 'a white racist club,'⁴⁰ where it had been wrongly and unfairly treated by Nigeria, the 'white' Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Secretary-General.⁴¹ As he announced the withdrawal of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth, Mugabe compared it to *Animal Farm*, 'where some members are more equal than others.'⁴²

Although the narrative around Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the Commonwealth is largely interpreted as Mugabe withdrawing Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth, 'out of spite.'⁴³ An observation that is less frequently made, but pertinent to my aims of problematising the family, is that, as one Zimbabwean politician told me in an interview, the decision to leave the Commonwealth 'would not have been an easy decision for Mugabe to make.'⁴⁴ This is an observation which came up in numerous interviews during my fieldwork in Zimbabwe, as some interviewees saw it Mugabe had an attachment to the Commonwealth and an affinity with all things British:

³⁷ Jacob Zuma, for example, in his capacity as Vice President of South Africa announced the Zimbabwean elections 'free and fair'. Zuma cited in Gareth Van Onselen, 'Quiet diplomacy in so many words: How the ANC failed Zimbabwe', *Business Day*, 1 August 2013. Available at: <http://www.bdlive.co.za/opinion/columnists/2013/08/01/quiet-diplomacy-in-so-many-words-how-the-anc-failed-zimbabwe>.

³⁸ Geoff Hill, *The Battle for Zimbabwe: The Final Countdown* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2003), 179.

³⁹ Daniel Compagnon, *A Predictable Tragedy: Robert Mugabe and the Collapse of Zimbabwe* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 226.

⁴⁰ Phimister and Raftopoulos, 'Mugabe, Mbeki and the politics of anti-imperialism': 386.

⁴¹ Hasu Patel cited in Chan and Patel, 'Zimbabwe's foreign policy: A conversation', 9.

⁴² Robert Mugabe cited in McKinnon, *In the Ring*, 1.

⁴³ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 20 March 2015.

⁴⁴ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 26 February 2015.

Mugabe is the only one who has cucumber sandwiches. Mugabe is the only one who goes on a field-day on a farm in a pin-stripped suit and tie, and Mugabe is the only one who says, 'we love the Queen.' So, he has that emotional, sentimental attachment to the Commonwealth.⁴⁵

This last point is interesting. What is immediately noteworthy is that, if we think of Mugabe's past relationship with Britain and the Commonwealth, as well as his affection for the Queen, we see a complex figure who had received an honorary knighthood, and had been an active member of the Commonwealth family since joining the Commonwealth at independence.⁴⁶ Thus where the complexity of the Zimbabwean case becomes particularly interesting - in respect of the idea of the family - is the observation, reiterated by many interviewees, that President Mugabe is perhaps the most British of all. This ties in with the observation I made in Chapter 2 regarding the Queen and her relationship with a number of African leaders. As one older Zimbabwean academic pointed out, 'Even the outlook of the President is British, the way he speaks, the way he dresses, and that's why we have this problem.'⁴⁷ When I discussed the President's 'Britishness' in a later interview, the academic I was speaking with, a much younger interviewee who taught politics and journalism, widened the description to include all Zimbabweans. As he saw it:

if you look at our president and you look at Zimbabwean things, the way we dress and the way we do our things, the way our industry and the way we do everything is British. More British, Zimbabweans are more British than anyone else in the world...Education, dressing, whatever we do, it's really, even schools, people, uniform, British way of doing things. That is why the bond is so strong and cannot be washed away.⁴⁸

This discussion of the Britishness of Zimbabweans points to the ways in which relations between Commonwealth states can both reinforce the idea of family identity and trouble it. If Zimbabweans, as my interviewees pointed out, are the *most* British of all members of the Commonwealth family, and yet are no longer officially in the Commonwealth family, then where does this leave our

⁴⁵ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare 20 March 2015.

⁴⁶ Mugabe played a role in the Commonwealth's push for sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa, as well as playing host to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 1991 that saw the adoption of the Harare Principles. For an overview on Zimbabwe's role see Joseph Hanlon, *Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1986).

⁴⁷ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 23 February 2015.

⁴⁸ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 3 March 2015.

understanding of the communitarian thesis? Moreover, as I will show in the empirical section of the chapter, many Zimbabweans believe that only Mugabe left the Commonwealth - the rest of the country remains in the organisation. While in reality this is an impossible observation, the fact that certain key figures such as Shridath Ramphal support such thinking makes Zimbabwe's relationship with the Commonwealth all the more interesting. Observations such as these sit at the heart of the chapter. They take their place in the larger attempt by the thesis to trouble the normative dichotomy. Examining the case of Zimbabwe, which troubles the very idea of family, allows us to apprehend just how far the Commonwealth troubles the normative landscape and provide a more nuanced understanding of the thick, messy relations between post-colonial states.

Having presented something of an overview of the events which led to Zimbabwe's departure from the Commonwealth, along with some understanding of the more intriguing, fraught, and often unstable relationships that are complicated by the Zimbabwean case, I now want to begin my deeper engagement with the empirical part of the chapter. But before I do, I want to discuss some issues of positionality, which, as I will show, are important for the discussion and arguments that follow.

5.2 Positionality: British-Zimbabwean relations

The level of animosity between the British and Zimbabwean governments in recent years, raised a number of issues, during both the planning and the execution stages of my fieldwork, relating to questions of positionality. As Gustav Visser points out, the positionality and the manner in which the researcher is perceived during fieldwork and interviews inevitably influences the knowledge they produce.⁴⁹ Adding more depth to Visser's point, Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True have written that the more thoughtful approach to research is one where the researcher considers and acknowledges her positionality, with regards to the research process.⁵⁰ My interest in African politics, more specifically Zimbabwe, began, rather ironically, when I moved to Asia (Japan) in 2000. This coincided with an election and constitutional referendum in Zimbabwe which had yielded

⁴⁹ Gustav Visser, 'In other worlds: On the politics of research in a transforming South Africa', *Area* 32 (2000): 234.

⁵⁰ Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 37.

less than favourable results for the President.⁵¹ Seeing the situation in Zimbabwe from a international/Japanese perspective, beyond the historical and, at times, hysterical, perspective of the British media was intriguing, and I returned to London in 2008 to write a master's dissertation, which contrasted British-Zimbabwean with Sino-Zimbabwean relations.

Despite the fact that I have had a keen research interest in Zimbabwe for a number of years, the fieldwork for this research project was the first time that I had physically visited the country. Given my understanding of the track-record of British-Zimbabwe relations in recent decades, one of my key concerns was whether the fact that I was a British researcher asking questions about the Commonwealth could ever be separated from the larger political, historical, and social aspects that have informed British-Zimbabwean relations over the years. I was, also, acutely aware of the fact that, in a country whose government was hostile to the Commonwealth, there might be occasions when I too would be viewed as a representative of the Commonwealth, and therefore viewed with hostility.

These concerns manifested themselves almost immediately on the very first day of my fieldwork in Zimbabwe. While in Zimbabwe, I stayed with an ex-pat Dutch-Belgian surgeon and artist couple, who had made Zimbabwe their home for the past twenty-five years. As a friendly gesture, my hosts took me along to a small gathering of friends to welcome me to Zimbabwe, with the view of kick-starting my quest for interview contacts. The guests were mostly white Zimbabweans and a few European ex-pats who, when asked about my research, appeared interested in the description I gave and offered the names of potential interviewees. Only towards the end of the evening was I approached by a small group of guests, who were suspicious of what I was 'really' doing in Zimbabwe and questioned whether I was sent here by British intelligence agencies.⁵²

This observation was peculiar and rather unsettling, particularly as it happened on the first day of my fieldwork experience in Zimbabwe. I was unsure about the seriousness of the interrogation and unsettled by the possibility that people could,

⁵¹ For an overview of the referendum and the ensuing social and political turmoil, see Brian Kagoro, 'Constitutional reform as social movement: A critical narrative of the constitution-making debate in Zimbabwe, 1997-2000', in *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation*, eds. Brian Raftopolous and Tyrone Savage (Cape Town: The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2004), 236-56.

⁵² Personal communication with the author, Harare, 17 February 2015.

or would, view me this way. Even more unsettling was the fact that it was white Zimbabweans, the supposed kith and kin of the British, who all appeared to affiliate politically with the Zimbabwean opposition party, the MDC. These white Zimbabweans are repeatedly described by the Zanu-PF as the ‘Anglo-Saxon tribe’ and therefore family of the British, who provoked such unsettling feelings. Many IR researchers have written on the unsettling, disturbing experience of doing fieldwork and the ability of the encounters one has in the field to put the researcher off-balance. Jason Rancatore has conceptualised this as: ‘the strange is made familiar, and the familiar is recognised as strange.’⁵³ Rancatore’s observation resonated well with this situation. It was only when reflecting on this experience, and the feelings that came with it, much later in the research trip, did I come to understand the value of such interactions to my research project.⁵⁴ As I outlined in detail in Chapter 1, I selected Zimbabwe as a case study because I believe it is an exemplary case for problematising the shared history/shared values dichotomy at the heart of the Commonwealth. What is striking, then, about the significance of this strange/familiar encounter is that it problematises the communitarian argument that shared history and inheritance provide a much thicker ethical dimension to relations within families, communities, and so on.⁵⁵ The Commonwealth, as a family of nations and people, has clearly a much more complex make up than communitarian theorists have accommodated for in their arguments.

I had come to Zimbabwe with the intention of analysing the responses of Zimbabwean elites to questions regarding the Zimbabwean state’s relationship with the Commonwealth, and by proxy, Britain, and I had anticipated certain issues of positionality connected to the historical relationship between Britain and Zimbabwe. What I had failed to comprehend in its entirety in the planning stages

⁵³ Jason Rancatore, ‘It is strange’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39, no. 1 (2010): 75. See also Michael Agar, ‘An ethnography by any other name’, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research Sozialforschung* 7, no 4 (2006). Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/177>; Michael Jackson, ‘From anxiety to method in anthropological fieldwork: An appraisal of George Devereux’s enduring ideas’, in *Emotions in the Field: The Psychology and Anthropology of Fieldwork Experience*, eds. James Davies and Dimitrina Spencer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 35-54.

⁵⁴ James Davies, ‘Introduction: Emotions in the field’, in *Emotions in the Field: The Psychology and Anthropology of Fieldwork Experience*, eds. James Davies and Dimitrina Spencer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 1-34; Vincent Crapanzano, ‘At the heart of the discipline: Critical reflections on fieldwork’, in *Emotions in the Field: The Psychology and Anthropology of Fieldwork Experience*, eds. James Davies and Dimitrina Spencer (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 55-78.

⁵⁵ Walzer, *Thick and Thin*.

of my fieldwork, was the explicit connection between my own identity and the questions at the heart of my research project. The anticipation of further encounters like this raised a number of interesting questions: Would all Zimbabweans view me with the same 'suspicious' lens? Would these ways of viewing me have an effect on the answers that interviewees provided? And, moreover, would I be able to get deep under the surface of Zimbabwe-Commonwealth relations?

It would be disingenuous to say these questions were completely Zimbabwe related. My concerns, in part, were also based on my experience of conducting interviews in Rwanda (the subject of Chapter 6). As I outline in some depth later in the thesis, conducting interviews in Rwanda, where I spent six weeks before heading to Zimbabwe, threw up a series of methodological difficulties. The most significant example being that many of the answers that individual interviewees gave to questions about Rwandan-Commonwealth relations appeared to be very similar to answers given by other interviewees. This raised questions about whether interview subjects were merely repeating government lines; particularly in a political climate such as Rwanda where the government is reportedly suspicious of researchers.⁵⁶ While the Zimbabwean government has a very definitive line on why President Mugabe withdrew from the Commonwealth, the answers given by my interviewees did not seem to be simply reiterating government opinion.

My confidence in making this claim is borne out by the fact that the interview data that I collected from Zimbabwean elites was much more varied both in detail and, to a large extent, the depth of emotion that permeated responses. Had my interviews been conducted a few years earlier, perhaps closer to time of Zimbabwe's actual withdrawal from the Commonwealth, it is possible that I would have received different answers as the withdrawal coincided with the imposition of a Western sanctions regime. But, in the current political climate with the level of political in-fighting in the Zanu-PF reportedly escalating,⁵⁷ and political protest occurring on a much more frequent basis than had been the case in recent years, there seemed to be, as one academic I interviewed reiterated, small changes in the

⁵⁶ As I explain in more detail in Chapter 6, there is a culture of surveillance around anything that might show the Rwandan government in a poor light. See Begley, 'The RPF control everything! fear and rumour under Rwanda's genocide ideology legislation', 70-83.

⁵⁷ For an overview of the current Zanu-PF infighting: 'Analysts speak on ZANU-PF infighting', *The Financial Gazette*, 2 June 2016. Available at: <http://www.financialgazette.co.zw/analysts-speak-on-zanu-pf-infighting/>.

political atmosphere as people watched the President grow older and older: ‘it’s just a question of time before Zimbabwe came back to the Commonwealth.’⁵⁸

The issue of return, although evident in all interviews, became especially noteworthy when interviewing local civil society organisations in Zimbabwe. Whereas politicians, journalists, and academics, to some extent, as I will show in later sections of the chapter, imbued their discourse with familial metaphors and discussion of shared history, representatives from civil society organisations were less philosophical and more practical, as one might expect. When asked, during a conversation about sanctions,⁵⁹ whether she thought that Zimbabwe would return to the Commonwealth, one civil society interviewee, a young Shona woman, responded that, ‘the bigger issue is that we need to interrogate the mandate of the Commonwealth, why does Britain and the Commonwealth want Zimbabwe back in so badly when they are punishing Zimbabweans in other ways?’⁶⁰ This was an excellent question, and one which I had not given serious thought to in the research project until now. Why did Britain want Zimbabwe back in the Commonwealth so badly when the British government, along with the European Union and the American government, was inadvertently punishing Zimbabweans through sanctions against their government? My interviewee continued:

What are the benefits for Zimbabwe coming back? On an international scale, there is restoration of relations between states but... Commonwealth countries are not equal, it’s an alliance of unequal countries. The inequality is economical - there is a hierarchy because of the donor countries and the power relations between states. The memory of colonialism remains...Tying human rights to aid is good on paper, but this is against the Declaration of Human Rights. Withholding aid because of this is punishing the grass, not the elephant trampling on the grass.⁶¹

Being confronted by this question destabilised the interview somewhat and left me feeling rather helpless. I have already discussed the concept of disturbing and destabilising encounters in the field and how they cut to the heart of my research puzzle; this is another example of such an encounter. Julia Gallagher, writing on

⁵⁸ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 23 February 2015.

⁵⁹ At the time of Zimbabwe’s withdrawal from the Commonwealth, the EU and the USA had imposed what they referred to as ‘smart’ sanctions on Robert Mugabe, some Zanu-PF members, and a number of parastatals. For more information and analysis on these sanctions see Weiland, ‘EU sanctions against Zimbabwe: A predictable own goal?’.

⁶⁰ Interview with Zimbabwean Civil Society Operative, Harare, 12 March 2015a.

⁶¹ Interview with Zimbabwean Civil Society Operative, Harare, 12 March 2015a.

her own experiences on positionality, while conducting interviews in Zimbabwe, has referred to these experiences, using Julia Kristeva's notion of encounters with strangers, as 'violent, catastrophic' encounters.⁶² Gallagher notes, 'Coming face to face with...uncontrolled reality shakes not only our feeling of understanding the world, but of understanding ourselves.'⁶³ This last phrase is telling, not only did the response from my interviewee destabilise the flow of the interview, but, as Gallagher points out, it left me with a sense of powerlessness which, in turn, was coupled with a now deepening ambiguity around the dichotomy of inside/outside that Gallagher, among other researchers,⁶⁴ has pointed out is always present in the field. To use Gallagher's phraseology, my interviewee's questions made the encounter more painful as they forced me into the position both of fielding answers and of thinking about whether my answers would be viewed as my own opinion or British opinion. All of these things, in turn, raised questions about the power dynamic in interviews.

Debates regarding power relations between the positionalities of researchers and their subjects have tended to focus on the role of the interviewer as the one who holds the power,⁶⁵ often a reflection of fieldwork conducted in poverty stricken areas with subordinated informants. Few debates have examined the power relations in elite interviews.⁶⁶ The notion of power, which was firmly attached to relations of gender, weaved itself into my interviews in Zimbabwe. Most of the interviews I conducted, with the exception of the female civil society representative discussed above, were with male elites,⁶⁷ which problematised the so called power element of the interviewer/interviewee relationship. Like many African states, as I discussed in Chapter 2, Zimbabwe is a predominantly

⁶² Julia Gallagher, 'Interviews as catastrophic encounters: An object relations methodology for IR research', *International Studies Perspectives* (2015): 1-17.

⁶³ Gallagher, 'Interviews as catastrophic encounters': 2.

⁶⁴ Linda Archibald and Mary Crnkovich, 'Intimate outsiders: Feminist research in a cross-cultural environment', in *Changing Methods Feminist Transforming Practice*, eds. Sandra Burt and Lorraine Code (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1995), 105-26; Beverley Mullings, 'Insider or outsider, both or neither: Some dilemmas of interviewing in a cross-cultural setting', *Geoforum* 30 (1999): 337-50.

⁶⁵ Daphne Patai, 'U.S. academics and third world women: Is ethical research possible?', *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, eds. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (New York: Routledge, 1991), 137-54; James Sidaway, 'In other words on the politics of research by 'First World' geographers in the 'Third World'', *Area* 24 (1992): 403-408; Jayati Lal, 'Situating location: The politics of self identity and 'Other' in living and writing the text', in *Feminist dilemmas in Fieldwork*, ed. Diane Wolf (Oxford: Westview Press, 1996), 185-214.

⁶⁶ Mullings, 'Insider or outsider, both or neither'.

⁶⁷ This was not planned, as I noted in my methodology discussion in Chapter 1, interviews were largely arranged through a process of snowballing.

patriarchal society. In an article that probes the issue of gender relations in research interviews, Andrew Herod has pointed out, that the positionality of the interviewer can, and does, change depending on physical and social characteristics of the interviewer, in particular, gender.⁶⁸ In addition to the gender of the interviewer and interviewee influencing the research process, Herod points out, gendered assumptions may also influence the way we interpret interview data, which, in turn, has implications for the sort of information and insights that interviews produce.⁶⁹ What is of interest here, both for issues of positionality and for the concerns of troubling the idea of family at the heart of the thesis, is the difference in approach between female and male interviewees to answering my questions. While the female civil society representative, as I have discussed above, unsettled the interview process with her own counter questions, many of my male interviewees seemed to treat the interview as an opportunity to teach me about Zimbabwean politics. They seemed content to provide lengthy answers to my questions without hesitation, often contradicting themselves along the way.

In focusing on issues of gender and power here I am not suggesting that the data from interviews where I appeared to wield less power as the interviewer was any less significant to the research, on the contrary such encounters formed the seed-bed for the formulations of my deeper understanding of Zimbabwe's place in the Commonwealth family. This was a relatively short visit and, as I have already noted, I was aware that it might be difficult to get deep under the surface of Zimbabwe-Commonwealth relations. But, there were a number of things going on politically in Zimbabwe, besides the Johnson *Telegraph* article and the President's birthday that I discussed earlier in the section, that took the conversation in certain directions. One of these was the Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa's speech declaring it time for Zimbabwe to end more than a decade of isolation and re-engage with the West.⁷⁰ Another, and also pertinent to my research project, was the Minister for Water, Savior Kasukuwere, publically thanking the British government for aid.⁷¹ All these things added to the messiness of family as what looked on the surface to be a clear cut case of Zimbabwe cutting

⁶⁸ Andrew Herod, 'Reflections on interviewing foreign elites: praxis, positionality, validity, and the cult of the insider', *Geoforum* 30 (1999): 320.

⁶⁹ Andrew Herod, 'Gender issues in the use of interviewing as a research method', *Professional Geographer* 45 (1993): 305-17.

⁷⁰ Emmerson Mnangagwa cited in Bernard Chiketo, 'VP Mnangagwa contradicts Mugabe', *Daily News*, 27 February 2015. Available at:

<https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2015/02/27/vp-mnangagwa-contradicts-mugabe>.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

ties to the Commonwealth, turned out to be much more complex than it seemed. In order to illustrate this point, the following section turns to a discussion of how my interviewees see the Commonwealth and how they understand the decision, made by the Zimbabwean President, to take Zimbabwe out of the organisation.

5.3 Zimbabwe: In the family way

While academic studies devoted to understanding the Zimbabwean crisis have rarely allocated anything more than a few pages, or a chapter section, to Zimbabwe's rapidly declining relationship with the Commonwealth, very few, if any, have addressed the issue of how Zimbabweans view their country's departure from the organisation; whether they feel that not being in the Commonwealth has affected Zimbabwe; and whether, in the future, they see Zimbabwe coming back. As I pointed out earlier in the chapter, the Commonwealth keeps constant vigil over Zimbabwe's possible return to the organisation. One of the greatest advocates for this return is the former Commonwealth Secretary-General Shridath Ramphal, who noted in his recent memoirs that, 'One day Zimbabwe will return to the Commonwealth - when it is recognised on all sides that Zimbabwe did not leave...Mugabe did.'⁷² This observation has a legacy in the Oliver Tambo's statement, cited earlier in the chapter, that, during the apartheid era, many South Africans claimed that in spite of the decision of the South African government to withdraw from the Commonwealth, the South African people felt that they had never left the Commonwealth family.

Tambo's statement, at first glance, might be said to be merely a reflection on the Commonwealth's collective efforts, along with other anti-apartheid groups, to bring down the apartheid government. A closer reading, however, reveals a strong family element that suggests that, no matter how far you go away from your roots, you can never really leave your family. In light of this understanding, Ramphal's comment invites us to think about the status of Zimbabweans and how they viewed the Commonwealth; did they feel the same way too? Without explicitly mentioning Ramphal's quote directly, or raising the subject of the family at this early stage, I wanted to explore what leaving the Commonwealth looked like to Zimbabweans. Central to my rationale was the assumption, borne out in the academic literature, that the departure of Zimbabwe had been a snap decision, which had caught both

⁷² Shridath Ramphal, *Glimpses of a Global Life* (Hertford: Hansib, 2014), 392.

the Commonwealth and the Zimbabwean population off guard.⁷³ I therefore wanted to get a feel for how that decision had been received in wider political circles. I wanted to try to get deeper under the surface of Zimbabwean-Commonwealth relations in order to reflect back on how international relationships can be fraught and messy. With this in mind, I began my interviews with the simple, yet broad, question of why Zimbabwe had left the Commonwealth.

5.3.1 *'You can never really leave a family'*⁷⁴

Broadly, I found that many interviewees agreed with Ramphal. And while some couched this in humour, as one older academic put it: 'we often joke about this by saying: 'oh no, no, we are still in it. There's one person who left,'⁷⁵ others approached the question from more serious political and social angles. These were largely politicians, either from the MDC political party or former Zanu-PF foot soldiers who had since broken away from the ruling party, often in a bid to form their own, who drew particular attention to the lack of discussion or democratic process that went into the decision to withdraw Zimbabwe. Some stated this plainly and, rather dispassionately, noting, as one interviewee, a former supporter and senior advisor to key figures in the Zanu-PF did, that, 'Mugabe left the Commonwealth, there was no national canvassing of it,'⁷⁶ while others were more passionate and seemed unable to hold back the anger which leaked into their responses. This anger was largely rooted in a sense of powerlessness over the situation, which reverberated, not only around the issue of the Commonwealth, but also around all aspects of political life in Zimbabwe. All these things were evident in another senior and former Zanu-PF politician's particularly vexed response to my opening question:

No! I don't think that that statement is correct. I think that the Zimbabwean government left the Commonwealth, and even within the Zimbabwean government two people - Robert Mugabe and Stan Mudenge - said we left the Commonwealth. The people of Zimbabwe *never* were involved...If you go out into the street and ask the majority of Zimbabweans if it was their decision, would they leave the Commonwealth, I would bet 90 plus per cent of them would say 'no.' So, there was no popular process to determine that we leave. Why did

⁷³ McKinnon, *In the Ring*.

⁷⁴ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 23 February 2015.

⁷⁵ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 23 February 2015.

⁷⁶ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 12 March 2015.

we leave? Out of spite. But this is not the only important matter in which the people have not been involved.⁷⁷

That Mugabe, and the Foreign Minister, had made the decision alone, without consulting others, even in their own party, was a bone of contention which recurred in discussion many times with interviewees. This was a particularly prickly point with the older, more seasoned politicians, many of whom had once been affiliated with or were senior members of Zanu-PF, and at least one of whom had had a behind the scenes role at Lancaster House in 1979.⁷⁸

This last point is interesting, as not only did interviewees express anger at Mugabe and Mudenge for taking the Zimbabwean people out of the Commonwealth without consultation, and thus away from the opportunities that membership afforded,⁷⁹ but, for some, such as this interviewee, the anger came from a rawer, more intimate place. This intimacy of personal connection seemingly blurs the boundary between the personal and the political and makes the Commonwealth family label seem all the more pertinent. It is worth remembering that the Commonwealth Secretariat - with Ramphal at the helm - played a large role in Zimbabwean independence.⁸⁰ For this former Zanu-PF politician, who had likewise played a part in his behind the scenes role at Lancaster House, watching the Zimbabwean President simply walk away from the Commonwealth 'out of spite' was tantamount to 'abandoning the family that brought you into the world when times became difficult.'⁸¹ As one younger academic put it, 'even if you say, 'I don't want family, I'm not part of this family, and what have you,' you are still part of the family.'⁸²

The notion that you never really leave a family permeated the discourse of many interviewees. The frequency with which this observation appeared alongside humour seemed to disguise a deeper anxiety around ideas of abandonment and isolation. Often among younger interviewees, this tended to follow two themes: the idea that the Commonwealth should have done more to keep Zimbabwe in its

⁷⁷ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 20 March 2015.

⁷⁸ As I noted previously, the Lancaster House talks led to the Lancaster House Agreement, which was the political document that paved the way to Zimbabwean independence.

⁷⁹ Many interviewees pointed out that the loss of Commonwealth educational scholarships has been particularly hard on Zimbabweans.

⁸⁰ For a detailed overview of the Commonwealth's role in the Lancaster House Agreement see Henry Wiseman and Alastair Taylor, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: The Politics of Transition* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981).

⁸¹ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 20 March 2015.

⁸² Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 3 March 2015.

family; and the sense that Zimbabwe was missing out on many of the things its neighbours - who were all Commonwealth members - took for granted. Beginning with the former, in response to the question of whether the Commonwealth had done enough, one rather young journalist, two years into a career with what was claimed to be an independent newspaper, responded:

We shouldn't have been suspended. Probably these guys should have found a way of, you know, people always have families, you always have this naughty child but you don't chuck them out. You try and find a way of reforming him so that he is reformed. I think that if we had not been suspended we wouldn't be where we are today, I think we would have reformed.⁸³

The idea that a head of state, such as Mugabe could be put on a naughty step, the same leader who had variously been described by some interviewees as 'proud,' 'arrogant,' 'stubborn,' and a 'modern day dictator,' seemed impossible. When I put the issue of reform to politicians, some of whom, at one time or another, had known Mugabe reasonably well, I was told, without hesitation, that there had not been much hope. As the interviewee who had formerly been a special advisor to senior Zanu-PF politicians put it, 'I don't think anybody could have helped Mugabe, he just wanted to cement his position as king here; king forever.'⁸⁴ But even in the most seasonal of politician's responses some sense of abandonment seeped through. Turning the conversation from the Zimbabwean President to the plight of the Zimbabwean people, the same politician continued, 'the Secretariat made a big mistake, they should've kept contact with Zimbabweans instead of just cutting off everything.'⁸⁵ This sense of abandonment seemed to echo the pleas of the young journalist cited earlier. Although both interviewees were from different generations, had vastly different attachments to the Commonwealth (personal and professional), and were from different professional backgrounds, the feeling was the same: when dealing with even the most dysfunctional of family members, 'you don't chuck them out.'⁸⁶ Running adjacent to the idea that you can never really leave a family, then, was the notion that a family can not, or should not simply abandon its members.

⁸³ Interview with Zimbabwean Journalist, Harare, 27 February 2015b.

⁸⁴ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare 12 March 2015.

⁸⁵ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare 12 March 2015.

⁸⁶ Interview with Zimbabwean Journalist, Harare, 27 February 2015b.

Similar feelings of abandonment and helplessness appeared when interviewees discussed their anxiety over Zimbabwe's isolation in the area, and the fear that they might be missing out. For some interviewees, this sense of missing out took on a more literal, personal significance as one journalist, a young man in his early thirties with what appeared, from our conversation, to be political leanings towards the MDC, told me:

I applied to a Canadian university in 2005 and they accepted everything. I don't know who was administering my application but he *forgot* that he was processing a Zimbabwean scholarship - it was full cover, air ticket, to and return. Then after being granted the place came this bombshell, I think after about two months: 'We're very sorry, we made a big blunder, we forgot to tell you that the scholarships were Commonwealth scholarships and we have realised that Zimbabwe is not part of the Commonwealth.'...in terms of scholarships, in terms of health, the Commonwealth was a lifesaver of Zimbabwe, but now...⁸⁷

While for other interviewees, this manifested in negative feelings about Commonwealth expansion, as two older interviewees put it, new Commonwealth member states such as Rwanda, Mozambique, and Namibia, were, 'ruining the fabric of the organisation,'⁸⁸ and 'compromising its qualities.'⁸⁹

The rationale behind these observations was rooted firmly in communitarian discourse. As many interviewees saw it, if Zimbabweans, who had an inherent right to be in the Commonwealth, could not be there, then why should states with no constitutional connection to Britain take their place when they 'were not traditional members, you know?'⁹⁰ Interviewees who held these opinions were mainly those who had connections earlier in their careers to the Lancaster House talks or were former Zanu-PF politicians who had since left the party with plans for independent political careers. Such views resonate with David Miller's description of the link between shared identity and solidarity. As Miller aptly puts it, 'seeing myself as a member of a community, I see myself as participating in a *particular* way of life marked off from other communities by its distinctive characteristics.'⁹¹ But what was intriguing, and at times seemed to escape the

⁸⁷ Interview with Zimbabwean Journalist, Harare, 27 February 2015a.

⁸⁸ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 12 March 2015.

⁸⁹ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 23 February 2015.

⁹⁰ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 23 February 2015.

⁹¹ David Miller, 'In what sense must socialism be communitarian?', *Social Philosophy and Policy* 6 (1989): 67-68. My italics.

memories of these interviewees, was that Zimbabwe was no longer *officially* part of this community, yet my interviewees still felt they had a say in family decision-making. While interviewees had issues with new members joining the Commonwealth family because of the damage this might do to the ‘we-feeling’ among states and the shared history of the organisation, at times they failed to comprehend that, although through no fault on their part, their own government had seemingly launched a similar attack on the organisation therefore weakening both the ‘we-feeling’ among Commonwealth family members as well as the organisation’s attempts to become cosmopolitan.

For anyone left questioning how the departure of Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth helps to problematise communitarianism, it is factors such as these that expressly make the Zimbabwean case so complex and interesting. It may appear that the Zimbabwean government officially withdrew the troubled state from the Commonwealth, yet there are clear differences, as we have seen, between the way in which Zimbabweans, and the way in which their government, understand the idea of withdrawal. For some, withdrawal means the President only, and while, at first sight, this may appear to be suggesting that citizens of a state can be members of an international organisation when their government is not, on closer inspection, under scrutiny is the question of whether the notion of solidarity, and the ‘we-feeling’ that accompanies it, can remain when a member of a family walks away from its roots. For others, who have been more personally affected by the withdrawal from the Commonwealth, answers to this question are more forthcoming. Where family members might typically be expected to help each other out, in situations where, for example a scholarship has been granted for overseas’ study, what might once have been a sense of solidarity, a ‘we feeling’ between Zimbabweans and other Commonwealth member states, appears to have depleted. There is a sense, that comes through some interviewee answers, that where once there was a family atmosphere of taking care of each other, of providing support for Zimbabwe’s future generations, now Zimbabweans have been left to fend for themselves. This also conveys an ambivalence about the Commonwealth’s collective commitment to the Zimbabwean people. If, as communitarian theorists argue, shared history, shared values, and solidarity are the seed-bed of the family or community, then this section of the chapter has shown that the Zimbabwean case throws up more questions in praxis than the theory can answer.

One particularly pertinent question for the purposes of my enquiry concerns the more nuanced sense of relations between Commonwealth states. If Zimbabwe is no longer an official member of the Commonwealth family, yet continues to share the same history and, to some extent, elements of shared culture and shared identity, then can relationships between Zimbabwe and Commonwealth states still be described in familial terms? One way to find answers is to consider how Zimbabweans view their relationships with other Commonwealth members particularly those, such as Mbeki and Obasanjo, who played a key role in Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the organisation.

5.3.2 Brotherly betrayals...

While many of my interviewees directed their anger around the issue of Zimbabwe's withdrawal towards the Zimbabwean President, equally strong feelings of aggression shaped understanding of relationships between Zimbabwe and other members of the Commonwealth, who were understood to have played key roles in Zimbabwe's departure. The most noteworthy of these was, understandably, the British government. As one young journalist, from an independent newspaper critical of the Zimbabwean government, told me, while there were many factors which contributed to Zimbabwe's withdrawal, the most important, for him, was the fact that, 'the Labour party really let us down, they ganged up with the other guys, Nigeria, to suspend us. We were being unjustly treated by the Commonwealth and Blair.'⁹² While there was nothing particularly striking in this interviewee's response at what was, by now, a commonly directed anger at the British government, what did strike me rather forcibly, and prompted further exploration, was the fact that in this, and many other, interviewees' responses, the working mechanisms of the Commonwealth (that is, the Secretariat and the Ministerial Action Group - the disciplinary arm of the organisation) and the British government appeared to be interchangeable.

Evidence for this can be found in the way that interviewees found it impossible to talk about the Commonwealth as a family without permeating the discourse with terms such as 'hierarchy,' 'fathers,' or 'power.' When I questioned interviewees on the difference between the Commonwealth and Britain, one academic, a man in his late thirties with Zanu-PF leanings, noted that the two were deeply connected because:

⁹² Interview with Zimbabwean Journalist, Harare, 27 February 2015a.

[the Commonwealth], it's a family of former British colonies and Britain being the coloniser. We might not talk about the father officially, but everyone knows that in every family member's mind there is some sense of the father. And this father, naturally the name that will crop up is Britain. Because it was the coloniser and even, whatever they do, who is the biggest funder. Who gives more. If we say, 'no we have no father, there is no father here we are all equal now because we are independent states who have come together because we have this shared history and so forth and so forth,' then one person comes and says, 'how did we come to have this shared history?' We came to have this shared history because of this one who colonised all of us. And we are appearing like the same because of this one. And we can say, who is giving more to the others? So, the one who is giving more to the others becomes the bigger brother, or like the father. So, you can't talk about the Commonwealth without talking about Britain as the leader of the Commonwealth.⁹³

Answers such as these were often delivered to questions around aid and human rights. As some interviewees saw this, what a government did with its money was its business to decide; as one white MDC politician noted, 'I think that's very important. If you put aid *without* conditions, I think you're being stupid.'⁹⁴ For other interviewees, however, such as the young female civil society operative discussed earlier in the chapter, denying aid was 'against the declaration of human rights.'⁹⁵ At this point, in most interviews, the conversation often turned back to the land issue. When I asked interviewees whether they agreed with the young journalist cited earlier in this section, that the British government had 'ganged up on Zimbabwe,' some were conflicted. At the heart of this confliction was the issue of the British government's decision to cut off funding for land which was, as a much older, seasoned journalist, who was exiled in South Africa, told me, 'a crushing of their [Britain's] moral obligation.'⁹⁶ This last phrase is interesting as the idea of a moral obligation speaks to a thicker sense of ethics between states and underscores the idea of the Commonwealth as communitarian.

I raised the issue of moral obligations with the ex-senior Zanu-PF politician, who I interviewed on the final day before leaving Zimbabwe. Armed, by now, with what I believed was a better, deeper understanding of the messiness of

⁹³ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 3 March 2015.

⁹⁴ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 26 February 2015.

⁹⁵ Interview with Zimbabwean Civil Society Operative, Harare 12 March 2015a.

⁹⁶ Interview with Zimbabwean Journalist, Harare, 20 February 2015.

Zimbabwean politics, along with multiple viewpoints of how Zimbabweans viewed Zimbabwe's position in regional and international relations, I began with the usual probing around the issue of Zimbabwe's withdrawal. As the conversation headed in what had commonly, in other interviews at least, been the direction of the Labour government, the land issue, and obligations, the interviewee began talking of other factors. Slightly confused about why the conversation was going this way, I raised the subject of Clare Short and the infamous letter. I was surprised, and slightly taken aback, when my interviewee responded: 'I want you to educate me, where in the Lancaster House Agreement did the UK make a commitment?'⁹⁷ While, by now, I had become more accustomed to the frequency of 'catastrophic encounters' in interview situations, this was the first time an interviewee had defended the British government.

The inconsistencies in my interviewees' approach to the British role in Zimbabwe's departure could be viewed as confusion around the separation of Britain and the workings of the Commonwealth Secretariat and its accompanying mechanisms. In the eyes of some interviewees, Britain is the father who, in the words of the academic interviewee cited above, suddenly stops 'giving more to others,'⁹⁸ while for others, Britain was merely a scapegoat for the Zimbabwean government's problems. Opinions were mixed on the role of Britain, where some blamed the British, other interviewees were just as keen to detail the ways in which other members of the Commonwealth had betrayed Zimbabwe and, in some renditions of the story, even turned on each other. The two main figures in most interviewee responses, as in the academic literature, were Mbeki and Obasanjo. On Zimbabwe's betrayal by Mbeki, the former senior advisor to Zanu-PF politicians explained:

National agendas came first, especially Mbeki, looking back now, Mbeki has been a disaster for Zimbabwe because he had a very curious, the idea of South African civil power is what drove his foreign policy, you know? In which case all others became secondary. And this is why he clashed with Obasanjo. who had the same idea. And, of course, the International Community, the Western countries in particular, tended to play one against the other.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 20 March 2015.

⁹⁸ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 3 March 2015.

⁹⁹ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 12 March 2015.

Views such as these seemed to betray a sense of loss, which related to the perception that a short time ago it was Zimbabwe that was in the position of strength, Zimbabwe that had the capacity, the power, and the political autonomy to assist South Africa which had been, as another former Zanu-PF politician described it, ‘completely wild.’¹⁰⁰ Now Mbeki had been given the chance to repay South Africa’s neighbours, for this interviewee, his efforts were seen more as efforts to help South Africa.

More overtly aggressive feelings are expressed towards Obasanjo, who, as the former Zanu-PF advisor explained, ‘put the knife in.’¹⁰¹ As he saw it Mbeki had tried to help Zimbabwe, it was Obasanjo who had ‘let down Zimbabwe.’¹⁰² When I probed for more detail to get a better insight into the idea that Obasanjo had betrayed his Zimbabwean ‘brothers,’ the young academic with MDC leanings told me:

For Zimbabwean now, to be suspended then the interpretation was that Nigeria-Obasanjo is a traitor because he sided with Howard, because Mbeki could not do that to Zimbabwe. So, the gossip was that some African countries needed to be decolonised because they are siding with whites to fight other African countries. If you put two African countries and one country with white people and then they are supposed to preside over an African country and they suspend an African country it means it’s two votes and that vote I think it was for Obasanjo and Obasanjo became...was never liked, was demonised.¹⁰³

This was not the first time the idea of white member states ‘taking sides’ had come up in interviews. Both in my interviewee responses, and in the academic literature, the notion that white Commonwealth states stick together, is frequently noted.¹⁰⁴ By siding with the decision to suspend Zimbabwe, Obasanjo was effectively couched under the umbrella of the white states.

When I put the issue of Obasanjo and Mbeki as traitors to the same former Zanu-PF politician who had effectively let the British off the hook for the land compensation issue, he put what seemed to be his usual diplomatic spin on the issue when he explained, ‘I don’t see things that way, I certainly don’t believe they

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 20 March 2015.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 12 March 2015.

¹⁰² Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 12 March 2015.

¹⁰³ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 4 March 2015.

¹⁰⁴ This is typically explained in terms of the ‘A, B, C’ or Western states (Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand).

were betraying Zimbabwe.¹⁰⁵ This answer was in stark contrast to the previous descriptions by other interviewees of Obasanjo and Mbeki as back-stabbing traitors to the Zimbabwean cause. However, when I pointed out this contrast to the former Zanu-PF interviewee, I was surprised by the change in tone when he told me, ‘in a sense, I think it was because of their softly-softly approach to Mugabe that we ended up where we are.’¹⁰⁶ This was an intriguing answer, while exonerating Obasanjo and Mbeki from the yoke of betrayal on the one hand, the interviewee then re-attached blame to the Nigerian and South African leaders for their inaction on the other. As he saw it, rather than take sides or put their own state’s interest first, the two African leaders had followed the tradition of respecting their elders actions, which had effectively let Mugabe off the hook.

This discussion of Zimbabweans’ understanding of their treatment by other members of the Commonwealth gives a picture of relations between states that is far from formulaic. The sense of erraticism that permeated my interviewee answers around their opinion of who were the traitors and who were the good siblings is an integral part of what makes the Commonwealth intriguing. What is striking, especially in relation to both positive and negative views of the different political actors and governments involved in the suspension of Zimbabwe, is the extent to which my interviewees’ explanations and responses to questions about Zimbabwean-Commonwealth relations were grounded in analogies drawn from familial context. Such analogies, which have their roots in colonialism, as we saw in Chapter 2, as well as notions of pan-Africanism, provide interesting glimpses into how the Commonwealth as a family is seen from a non-Western angle.

It is difficult to say with certainty whether the perceived betrayal of Zimbabwe by Britain, Nigeria, and South Africa has tarnished or diluted what I argue is a thicker sense of relations between international/Commonwealth post-colonial states. But the seemingly raw sense of betrayal that was conveyed through many of my interviewees’ responses speaks to a continued sense of thickness. Such a finding challenges the main tenets of communitarianism by providing a much messier and more nuanced understanding of international relations. It was with this messiness in mind, that I put the question of Zimbabwe’s return to the Commonwealth to my interviewees.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 20 March 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 20 March 2015.

5.3.3 Returning to the fold?

On the subject of Zimbabwe's return to the family, with the exception of one Zanu-PF politician and prominent member of the War Veteran's Association in Zimbabwe, responses seemed to support return. Nevertheless, all interviewees recognised that Zimbabwe could not return under Mugabe's rule. The young journalist whose aspirations to study in Canada had fell through because of Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the Commonwealth, described how he saw the situation clearly: 'When the President goes off into the sun-set, the Commonwealth is going to be one of the first doors that we knock at.'¹⁰⁷ When I delicately raised the subject of Mugabe's replacement, and what I had understood from the media to be past Zanu-PF animosity towards the Commonwealth, the former Zanu-PF politician told me:

The people of Zimbabwe, including some high up people in the Zanu-PF are aware of these benefits of the Commonwealth. I would bet my last dollar. At the earliest, Zimbabwe will rejoin the Commonwealth. If I am still around, that is one of the things I would agitate for quite strongly.¹⁰⁸

In support of this line of thinking and, likewise, weighing up the choices of Mugabe's replacement, the white MDC politician noted, with confidence, that: 'If Mnangagwa were to become president tomorrow, I'm almost certain he would take us back to the Commonwealth.'¹⁰⁹ That both politicians could speak with such certainty went some way to addressing my confusion around the issue of why certain members of the Zanu-PF were taking tentative steps to reconnect with the West, but not the Commonwealth.¹¹⁰ The Commonwealth remained an open sore for the 'proud,' 'stubborn' Mugabe, who, as the same MDC politician put it, 'would like to go back into the Commonwealth, but I think he understands that it's simply not possible...there's no chance while he's alive of us joining the Commonwealth.'¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Zimbabwean Journalist, Harare, 27 February 2015a.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 20 March 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 26 February 2015.

¹¹⁰ This was the contrast between reports that claimed Zimbabwe would never re-join the Commonwealth and reports that the Vice President and other members of the government had thanked the British for their financial assistance.

¹¹¹ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 26 February 2015.

In spite of the desire of many interviewees for Zimbabwe's return, the notion of returning to the family was not a concept to which *all* interviewees gave happy assent. One notable interviewee, a war veteran and politician in the Zimbabwean Foreign Office, noted in response to my question, 'the schism between Zimbabwe and the British is a reflection of those who want to go back to the past.'¹¹² The same interviewee provided the 'marital rape' epigraph at the beginning of this chapter. His technique in making this statement essentially follows what Blessing-Miles Tendi, following Terence Ranger, calls 'patriotic history.'¹¹³ This is the way in which Robert Mugabe has manipulated the historical narrative in Zimbabwe to cast Britain in the role of the neo-colonial aggressor attempting to re-colonise the Southern African state. As Mugabe frequently reiterates in his speeches and in the media, the British government wants to reclaim Zimbabwe as a British colony. A return to the Commonwealth, then, as my interviewee saw it, would be a return to the past of servitude when, 'Zimbabwe is aspiring to a new future.'¹¹⁴

But, if for some interviewees, such as the war veteran, returning to the past was a return to the dark side of colonial history, others had a much different understanding. It is difficult to do justice to the richness and difference in interviewee responses to what they perceived as the reasons behind Zimbabwe's return, yet, when it came to specific details about why they thought Zimbabwe would return to the Commonwealth answers largely followed two lines of thinking. First, there were the responses which viewed a return to the Commonwealth as essential to Zimbabwe's recovery. These were largely focused around economic recovery, cooperation, and interdependence, as one academic of international politics and journalism put it, 'technical assistance is crucial because we lost a lot of experience through death and lack of continuity as people moved away.'¹¹⁵ Responses, such as these, were also accompanied by a discussion of shared values, as the journalist with aspirations to study in Canada pointed out, 'with the Harare Declarations, Zimbabwe was supposed to be the anchor of human rights,'¹¹⁶ by returning to the Commonwealth interviewees believed that the organisation could provide the 'checks and balances'¹¹⁷ needed to put

¹¹² Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 11 March 2015.

¹¹³ Tendi, *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe*; Ranger, 'Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation'.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 11 March 2015.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 3 March 2015.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Zimbabwean Journalist, Harare, 27 February 2015a.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Zimbabwean Civil Society Operative, Harare, 12 March 2015b.

Zimbabwe back on track. But if my interviewees' first line of thinking was practical, then all other answers largely fell into a more sentimental category. Time and again, interviewees described the return in terms of practical recovery, but what is intriguing was the discursive pattern these answers generally appeared to follow. What often began as a discussion of economic recovery and technical expertise quite often, in the case of many interviewees, ended with a discussion of shared history. The international relations and journalism academic from Harare Polytechnic, summed up the ideas of many, when he noted:

In the Commonwealth we are talking about years and years of working together, linked together, education together, and whether it was exploitative on other people's part or whether one was benefitting and one wasn't benefitting, that experience is very important and cannot be washed away.¹¹⁸

Common to many interviewee responses was the underlying assumption that whatever had happened to take Zimbabwe out of the Commonwealth, shared history was important. Through the eyes of these interviewees, returning to the Commonwealth would be a return to the family they knew, the family they grew up with, and, as one politician put it, these things provided 'continuity and stability' to a state which had largely lost its way.¹¹⁹

5.4 Conclusions: The *trouble* with family

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I drew upon three common strands, which run through the writing of most communitarian theorists: inheritance, shared values, and solidarity. These three elements, I argued, are understood to be the backbone of the communitarian thesis, which posits that answers to ethical questions about our identities and responsibilities are tied very much to questions of who we are and where we come from. From an IR perspective, communitarian theorists typically argue that our identities and responsibilities sit within the borders of the state. Nevertheless, as I have argued, the Commonwealth blurs the lines of communitarian understanding, firstly, with its discursive application of the family label, which, as we saw in Chapter 2, left the confines of the domestic in the middle of the nineteenth century and took on a more international perspective,

¹¹⁸ Interview with Zimbabwean Academic, Harare, 3 March 2015.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Zimbabwean Politician (MDC), Harare, 26 February 2015.

thus presenting a thicker understanding of relations between states on an international level. And, secondly, by showing a messier, more troubled, and therefore more realistic, view of the family and the community than is typically put forward by many communitarian theorists, who often equate inheritance, shared values, and solidarity with harmony and homogeneity.

In its examination of the case of Zimbabwe, this chapter has offered an amplified understanding of this messiness by showing how the different views of Zimbabwean elites, around questions of Zimbabwe-Commonwealth relations, help trouble the idea of family. What is immediately noteworthy, in this respect, is the somewhat schizophrenic way in which Zimbabweans describe themselves as both on the inside and on the outside of the Commonwealth family. The idea that you can never *really* leave a family, the positioning of Obasanjo and Mbeki simultaneously as brothers and traitors, and the claims that Zimbabweans are ‘the most British-like of all Africans,’ all go some way to explaining why Zimbabwe is an exemplary case for problematising the communitarian thesis. This is because Zimbabwe’s relationship with the Commonwealth illustrates the malleability of the family as a dense and unstable entity. Family, by this account, does not conform to the ‘haven in a heartless world’ as described by some communitarians,¹²⁰ but is more closely connected to something raw and emotional. Families can nurture, love, and protect, but they can also abuse, damage, and betray. This supports my argument that the Commonwealth problematises communitarian theory, and also opens up new ways of thinking about how the notion of the Commonwealth as a family is viewed from different regional perspectives across the family itself.

Zimbabwe offers a picture of a contradiction that would no doubt be understood as troublesome to communitarian theorists. And yet, as I have shown here, Zimbabwe’s much thicker, messier, and complex relationship with the Commonwealth family is in fact much more typical of behaviour in inherited relationships. Families fight, they get angry with each other, do not speak for years, sometimes come back together, sometimes not. The Commonwealth has perhaps been brought through the case of Zimbabwe to a sharper intimation of the true nature of family than ever before.

¹²⁰ Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York and London: Norton and Company, 1995).

I think the Commonwealth is a family where there are many failings, and failings do not come from only one part of that family. Each family has its own failings, but when they come together then they share good practices to overcome those failings and that is why Rwanda sees it as very important to be part of the Commonwealth. There is a lot we are going to gain from it, there is also a lot we are going to contribute to the wellbeing of the Commonwealth.

- *Paul Kagame* (Commonwealth Day Speech, 2010)

Rwanda is starting afresh, like from zero...Rwanda is, I might say, now 20 years old because everything is starting to catch up...molding Rwanda will be easier than molding Zimbabwe.

- *Rwandan Civil Society Operative* (23 January 2015)

Rwanda and the cosmopolitan Commonwealth

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how the views and opinions of Zimbabwean elites who, despite Zimbabwe's withdrawal, continue to see themselves as members of the Commonwealth family, make Zimbabwe an exemplar case for problematising communitarianism and its tendency to package communities/the domestic arena as neat spaces where shared history, memory, language, and identity all point towards solidarity and a 'we-feeling.' In this chapter, I'm going to demonstrate why Rwanda is an exemplary case for problematising the Commonwealth's attempts to rebrand itself as cosmopolitan by drawing on the views and opinions of Rwandan elites who see the Commonwealth as an attempt to leave behind their country's own troubled francophone communitarian past. This, in itself, is potentially problematic as the Rwandan government has ushered in a number of laws regarding identity, as well as making English the official second language in Rwanda. All these things point to the fact that many francophone Rwandans are being left behind. With this in mind, we might question the extent to which Rwanda can *actually* help the Commonwealth to realise its cosmopolitanism. Is Rwanda the ideal member state that will rescue the Commonwealth's cosmopolitan aspirations, or is it simply another addition to the family 'jamboree'?¹

It has become something of a cliché for Commonwealth officials to respond to questions about the continued relevance of the organisation with the observation that a number of countries with no previous connection to the former colonial power,² such as Burundi and Madagascar, are evincing an interest in membership.³ Each of these states has, in recent years, been accused by international human rights organisations of having more than questionable approaches to human rights promotion and protection, particularly in the areas of speech freedoms, freedom of association, unlawful killings, and the arbitrary

¹ This refers to the Tom Porteous quote I have cited a number of times in the thesis, that the Commonwealth is a 'jamboree of repression.'

² This also supports the claim that I have been making throughout the thesis that the Commonwealth has a tendency to exaggerate its uniqueness.

³ Mayall, 'Introduction', 1; te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*.

arrest of opposition party members, civil society workers, and journalists.⁴ Although these states have yet to initiate any serious moves in the direction of official admission processes, there have been, in the past two decades, two successful membership bids from African states with no previous colonial links to Britain; these are Mozambique and Rwanda.⁵ While the inclusion of both states has had an effect on the identity of the Commonwealth, it is Rwanda's membership that has had both the greatest effect on and the greatest repercussions for the future of the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism.⁶

The aim of the chapter is to interrogate the claim that Rwanda is the poster-child for the Commonwealth's continued attempts to realise its cosmopolitanism. It looks at the ways in which Rwandans view their status as the newest member of the Commonwealth, whether they think that joining the Commonwealth has had an effect on Rwanda, and conversely whether they think Rwanda's membership has had an effect on the Commonwealth. To date, little attention has been paid to Rwanda in the corpus of Commonwealth literature,⁷ for a state which potentially has had a profound effect on the future direction of the Commonwealth's membership and expansion, the lack of attention is puzzling.⁸

This chapter makes an important corrective to this lack of attention, notably by the inclusion of empirical data, for the first time in the literature derived from

⁴ Human Rights Watch has produced a number of reports on the human rights failings of both of these states. The recent political turbulence in Burundi and the ensuing civil war along with the President's threats to the African Union have, at least for the moment, sealed Burundi's fate as a perpetual Commonwealth member-in-waiting. For the latest analysis of the situation in Burundi see: Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2016*. Available at:

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/wr2016_web.pdf.

⁵ Cameroon also joined the organisation in 1995 but was considered a member of the family as it had been administered by Britain and France under a League of Nations, and then UN, mandate from 1922. For background on the relationship between Mozambique and the Commonwealth see: Olusola Akinrinade, 'Mozambique and the Commonwealth: The anatomy of a relationship', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 38, no. 1 (1992): 62-82. For an analysis on Mozambique's accession to the Commonwealth see: te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*.

⁶ As I outlined in Chapter 4, one of the greatest norm changes was the new membership criteria. Rwanda became the first country to join the organisation under the new rules.

⁷ Jones, 'Rwanda: The way forward'; Georgina Holmes, 'Rwanda and the Commonwealth: The evolution of the BBC's institutional narrative on the Rwandan genocide', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 200, no. 416 (2011): 519-530 and te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*, although all short pieces, have produced the only works to date which address Rwandan-Commonwealth issues.

⁸ It is possible that Rwanda's membership is simply too new for the usual Commonwealth observers to write about, or that the vast body of literature on Rwanda in the aftermath of genocide is large enough to accommodate or overlap with some concerns held by Commonwealth observers.

interviews with elites that I carried out in Rwanda in January and February 2015. I conducted approximately 10 semi-structured interviews with a range of elites mainly in the capital city of Kigali. These included civil society representatives from national and international organisations, political activists, trade unionists, youth leaders, and academics. While most interviewees were Rwandan, one of these interviews was with the French Programme coordinator of an INGO, which was affiliated with the Commonwealth. Additional information was gathered through a meeting with the British High Commissioner in Kigali as well as through the connections of a German contact, who acted as gatekeeper to my gaining access to local Rwandan civil society organisations. The information gathered from elites enabled me to get a deeper insight into the political landscape in Rwanda, to understand Rwandan opinions on the government's decision to join the Commonwealth, and to get a feel for any effects Commonwealth membership had ushered in.

The decision to focus on elites was based on several elements. First, Rwanda's decision to join the Commonwealth was entirely a top-down governmental decision and, as a result, to date, it is largely only the elites in Rwanda that know that the Commonwealth exists. A second benefit of interviewing elites was that many had been involved in, or had attended the few Commonwealth meetings that were set up by the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit in Kigali to give Rwandans a better understanding of the Commonwealth.⁹ Therefore, as I outlined above, my group of respondents included mostly actors who belonged to various circles of interest and involvement. Some of my interviewees had a loose connection to the Commonwealth through working for large INGOs with Commonwealth observer status or as Commonwealth youth leaders, while others simply engaged in or observed Rwandan politics. Finally, my decision was also based on the nature of my research and the conditions on the ground. During my first week in Rwanda, I undertook a meeting with a contact from a Western INGO who agreed to act as gatekeeper to my contact with local Rwandan civil society organisations. Following a small focus group, in which we discovered that many

⁹ The Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit - now the Commonwealth Advisory Bureau - is an independent think-tank and advisory service for the Commonwealth. One of the services provided by the Bureau is to offer 'confidential and impartial advice to countries interested in applying to join the Commonwealth.' For an overview from the point of view of the Rwandan English speaking state media of the Bureau's pre-membership meeting in Kigali see Eddie Mukaaya, 'Rwanda to be a trusted Commonwealth partner - Museminali', *The New Times*, 6 August, 2008. Available at: <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2008-08-06/44928/>.

local civil society organisations knew next-to-nothing about the Commonwealth, I decided to rely primarily on elite interviews in Kigali. Given the fact that the Commonwealth is attempting to be cosmopolitan which means reaching each and every Commonwealth citizen in its so-called family, this discovery in itself was particularly noteworthy. That most local civil society organisations had never heard of the Commonwealth, in spite of the organisation's civil society networks and technical assistance programmes, suggests that the organisation's desire to be cosmopolitanism has rather a long way to go.

While elite interviews were my main source of data collection, they were set against information I gained from reading INGO and Commonwealth reports, by studying local Rwandan media related to Rwanda's application and accession to the Commonwealth, and by informal discussion with ordinary Rwandans that I met on a daily basis in and around the neighbourhood in which I stayed during my fieldwork. During my time in Kigali, I stayed at a hostel in the central government and business district of Kigali that was owned by the Aegis Trust, a British NGO which also helped to fund the Rwandan Genocide Memorial Museum. The hostel was a popular lunch venue for many of the businesses - banks, universities, embassies - in the area and provided a rich source of information and conversation around issues relating to my research. Additionally, I was able to gain insight into some of the more practical issues my interviewees conveyed to me, simply from close observation, as I moved in and around the capital city. Particularly interesting in this regard was the large amount of English in and around the capital city - on billboards which often gave important health information, and on road signs and street markings, in spite of the fact that few taxi or moto drivers spoke English. From these observations, it was clear that English was being quite aggressively pushed as the official second language.¹⁰

As I had only limited time in Rwanda, I wanted to target Anglophone elites, which would cut out the need for a translator, as well as stay faithful to the idea of the Commonwealth as an Anglophone 'family of nations.' As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the change from French to English as the official second language is potentially problematic and has become a divisive issue in Rwanda. English is the language of the President and his Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)

¹⁰ For a report and analysis on the change to English in Rwandan advertising see Tove Rosendal, 'Linguistic markets in Rwanda: Language use in advertisements and on signs', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 30 (2009): 19-39.

government as well as the language of many returnees to Rwanda from neighbouring East African states, while French is regarded largely as the language of the perpetrators of the genocide in 1994. I will return to this idea of language and division at later stages in chapter. What is significant about this observation is that, had I selected Francophone interviewees to answer questions about the Commonwealth, it is likely that I would have received rather different answers to the questions that I asked. In interviewing Anglophone elites, then, I wanted to get a sense of how joining the Commonwealth had been received in a state that was still very fragile, and how Rwandans thought their experience and skills of reparation were beneficial to the Commonwealth. My discussions aimed to get answers to three main questions. First, what did they think drew Rwanda to the Commonwealth when it was already a part of the Francophonie? Second, what effect did they think Commonwealth membership had had on Rwanda? (What gains had the country received to date?) Third, how did they think that the Commonwealth had benefitted from Rwanda's membership?¹¹

Spending time in Rwanda, and gaining some sense of how the change from French to English had been an attempt by the Rwandan government to 're-imagine national identity' and draw clear lines between victims and perpetrators in the wake of the 1994 genocide,¹² I wanted to test two potential sources of disjuncture that had the potential to frustrate the Commonwealth's understanding of Rwanda's position as the poster-child of the ideal-utopian cosmopolitan Commonwealth. First, was Rwanda's application anything more than one in a series of maneuvers to cut ties with the Francophonie and push the French-as-perpetrators agenda?¹³ Was it a mutually beneficial point-scoring exercise by both

¹¹ As I noted earlier in the chapter, I have supplemented interview data with quotes from political figures in Rwanda around the time of Rwanda's application for membership. These are all from Anglophone sources.

¹² This is David Kiwuka's phrase. Since the genocide, the Rwandan government has passed a series of thought and speech crimes designed to outlaw divisionism. For further analysis on the laws and their affects on the Rwandan nation see: David Kiwuka, *Ethnic Politics and Democratic Transition in Rwanda* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012); Andrea Purdeková, 'Building a nation in Rwanda? De-ethnicisation and its discontents', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 8, no. 3 (2008): 502-23; Susanne Buckley-Zistel 'Remembering to forget: Chosen amnesia as a strategy for local coexistence in post-genocidal Rwanda', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 76, no. 2 (2006): 131-50.

¹³ Rwanda has retained its ties with the French organisation despite the animosity. See Ruadhan Maccormaic, 'Sarkozy visit to Rwanda a milestone in relations', *The Irish Times*, 25 February 2010. Available at: www.irishtimes.com/opinion/sarkozy-visit-to-rwanda-a-milestone-in-relations-1.627505.

Rwanda and Britain against old rivalries with the French government?¹⁴ And second, did this have any connection to the reasons why the Rwandan government's increasingly draconian approach to human rights promotion and protection had been overlooked by Commonwealth heads of state during the application process; despite widespread opposition by NGOs? In effect, I wanted to interrogate a claim made by Will Jones, one of a very small number of critics to devote attention to Rwanda's Commonwealth membership since its admission, that Rwanda was, 'an important test case for the Commonwealth's attempted transformation into a relevant international organisation animated by adherence to principles of liberalism and democracy.'¹⁵ My own suspicions were that Rwanda's accession to the Commonwealth was more of a case of the continuation of the Rwandan government's attempts to unite Rwandans behind the idea of one national identity, while also maintaining what had by now become President Kagame's savvy dealings with the international donor community.¹⁶

The chapter proceeds in four parts. In the first section, I provide some background to Rwanda's application for Commonwealth membership. This was a process that took approximately fifteen years. I discuss the general consensus among Commonwealth Heads of Government around Rwanda joining the organisation in contrast with strict opposition by human rights groups that culminated in a eighty-one page document, outlining reasons against Rwanda's membership, produced by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI).¹⁷ In the second section, I examine the Rwandan government's motivations for

¹⁴ Discussing the issue of Rwanda's accession to the Commonwealth and the potential anti-French agenda, one Zimbabwean Politician informed me that he believed that when the Southern African Development Community (SADC) had first been set up there was an attempt, as he saw it, a suggestion by the British, to keep out Francophone states. Interview with Zimbabwean Politician, Harare, 12 March 2015.

¹⁵ Jones, 'Rwanda: The way forward': 347.

¹⁶ It is widely understood that Kagame is the darling of the international donor community. As I discuss briefly later in the chapter, Jonathan Fisher has suggested that Rwanda has proactively sought to emphasise the view of itself as a 'development success story.' See Jonathan Fisher, 'Image management' in East Africa: Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and their donors', in *Images of Africa: Creation, Negation and Subversion*, eds. Julia Gallagher and V. Y. Mudimbe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 63-85. See also: Rachel Hayman, 'Rwanda: Milking the cow: Creating policy in spite of aid dependence', in *The Politics of Aid: African Strategies for Dealing with Donors*, ed. Lindsay Whitfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 156-84; Patricia Crisafulli and Andrea Redmond, *Rwanda, Inc.: How a Devastated Nation Became an Economic Model for the Developing World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁷ The CHRI is an independent, non-partisan, international non-governmental organisation, mandated to ensure the practical realisation of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth. See Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, *Rwanda's Application for Membership of the Commonwealth: Report and Recommendations* (London, New Delhi, and Accra: Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2009).

joining the Commonwealth and discuss how interviewees describe the reasons for Rwanda's accession, and the extent to which they believe that Commonwealth membership has had an effect on Rwanda. In the third section, I turn the question around and discuss the ways in which interviewees conceive the Commonwealth, in the context of what Rwanda's membership brings to the Commonwealth. I examine their sense of Rwanda's position as the newest member of the Commonwealth, and member with no historical connections to the rest of the group, and the ways in which they believe Rwanda's experience of major loss and recovery can help heal the rifts in the Commonwealth family. In the concluding section, I return to the idea of the ideal, forward-looking, cosmopolitan organisation from Chapter 4, and discuss the ways in which Rwanda's membership has been used as a tool for the Commonwealth to remain relevant, and the repercussions this might have on the organisation's future.

6.1. Background: Rwanda's accession

Rwanda joined the Commonwealth in 2009, following an official review of the organisation's membership criteria, which had been formalised in 1997 after the accession of Mozambique.¹⁸ While Mozambique's application had been unanimously endorsed as a 'unique and special case,' given the country's role in supporting anti-apartheid efforts and its unofficial status as a 'cousin' of the Commonwealth,¹⁹ Rwanda's application, was potentially a more divisive matter. As a state with no constitutional connection to Britain and no connection of historical or familial worth, Rwanda's application presented the Commonwealth with something of a dilemma: change the rules and allow a more open and inclusive Commonwealth, thus risking the dilution of one of the Commonwealth's essential features - its unique family atmosphere; or, turn Rwanda away and relinquish the chance to grow its ailing cosmopolitanism by becoming a more

¹⁸ Until the application of Mozambique, the Commonwealth had no official written application procedure or criteria. Since Mozambique was a special case it was reviewed without criteria, but following interest in the Commonwealth by a number of states, the organisation officially adopted membership criteria at the Heads of Government Meeting in Kampala in 2007. See Commonwealth Secretariat, *Membership of the Commonwealth: Report of the Committee on Commonwealth Membership*. For further discussion on expansion and membership criteria, see W. David McIntyre, 'The expansion of the Commonwealth and the criteria for membership', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 97, no. 395 (2008): 273-85.

¹⁹ te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*, 96.

universal organisation that could, for the first time, claim to put shared values above the uniqueness of shared history.²⁰

For many of the Commonwealth's keenest observers, the state of Rwanda's fragile recovery, following the 1994 genocide, made the decision to admit the troubled state risky.²¹ While on the one hand, evidence showed that Rwandans were more prosperous and safer, as far as health issues were concerned, than ever before, as Frederick Golooba-Mutebo and Valerie Chambers have pointed out, Rwandan women were less likely to die in childbirth, more children were in school, and there was a substantial decrease in malaria;²² on the other hand, the RPF-led government in Rwanda practices a deft authoritarianism which it claims is a necessary measure to ensure that ethnic violence does not return to Rwanda.²³ The Rwandan government had initiated a number of policies which fit the contours of social engineering around a 'uniform vision' which outlawed ethnicity as a form of identity.²⁴ For the CHRI, the decision to admit Rwanda would set a precedent for future applications, it was therefore critical that it was made with care and consideration for human rights and democracy.²⁵ Under the new Commonwealth membership criteria, states needed to be willing to commit themselves to support for peace, liberty, and international cooperation and stand out against racial discrimination, colonial domination, and wide disparities of wealth.²⁶ They needed also to demonstrate a commitment to democracy and

²⁰ I have shown in the previous chapter how some states - even those that are no longer officially Commonwealth members, such as Zimbabwe - think that new members of the Commonwealth, without the constitutional connection to Britain, are ruining the fabric of the organisation.

²¹ Academics from the Institute for Commonwealth Studies in London and civil society organisations attached to the Commonwealth opposed Rwanda's membership. There is an enormous literature on Rwanda post-genocide. See, for instance, Filip Reyntjens, 'Rwanda, Ten years on: From genocide to dictatorship', *African Affairs* 103, no. 411 (2004): 177-210; Timothy Longman and Theoneste Rutagengwa, 'Memory, identity, and community in Rwanda', in *My Neighbour, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity*, eds. Eric Stover and Harvey Weinstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 162-82.

²² Frederick Golooba-Mutebi and Valerie Chambers, *Is the Bride too Beautiful?: Safe Motherhood in Rural Rwanda* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2012).

²³ Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf, 'Introduction: Seeing like a post-conflict state', in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, eds. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 4.

²⁴ Kiwuwa, *Ethnic Politics and Democratic Transition in Rwanda*.

²⁵ Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, *Rwanda's Application for Membership of the Commonwealth*.

²⁶ John Collinge, 'Criteria for Commonwealth membership', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 85, no. 339 (2008): 279-86.

democratic processes, good governance, and protection of human rights.²⁷ While Rwanda could demonstrate a democratic process, its commitment to other civil and political rights, such as freedom of expression and association, was a different matter, and this posed serious problems for the CHRI.

For heads of state in support of Rwanda's application,²⁸ there were at least two issues with Rwanda's human rights problems that worked in Rwanda's favour: first, the British government saw Rwanda's accession to the Commonwealth as a way to 'consolidate a post-genocide democracy with development,'²⁹ but it also viewed it through the lens of ancient francophobe prejudice; and second, the loss of Zimbabwe six years before had left the Commonwealth with an open wound that had damaged its attempts to rebrand itself as an international organisation with a cosmopolitan outlook. What was needed was a new moral project around which the Commonwealth could repair itself and, for this reason, Rwanda was an attractive prospect. Recovering from genocide, Rwanda had shown remarkable speed of recovery and progress.³⁰ With none of the heavy weight of familial baggage, Rwanda was a blank canvass onto which the Commonwealth could project its values.³¹ It was a purer space into which the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth heads of state, and some of the organisation's keenest observers, could pour their utopian aspirations for the organisation's cosmopolitanism. With strong support from the African Commonwealth, as well as from Britain, Rwanda's efforts to meet the conditions of the Harare Principles were considered to be just enough to satisfy the conditions of entry. The Report of the Committee on Commonwealth Membership found in favour of what they

²⁷ Commonwealth Secretariat *Report of the Committee on Commonwealth Membership 2007*. See also McIntyre, 'The expansion of the Commonwealth and the criteria for membership'.

²⁸ The strongest support came from Britain and Uganda, this was no surprise as Kagame's government has many Ugandan-Rwandan returnees.

²⁹ Richard Bourne, 'The Commonwealth of Nations: Intergovernmental and nongovernmental strategies for the protection of human rights in a post-colonial association', *Conectas Human Rights* 7, no. 12 (2010). Available at: <http://www.conectas.org/en/actions/sur-journal/issue/12/1000365-commonwealth-of-nations-estrategias-intergovernamentais-e-nao-governamentais-para-a-protecao-dos-direitos-humanos-em-uma-instituicao-pos-colonia>.

³⁰ Tony Blair, an advisor to Kagame on governance, described Rwanda as 'one of Africa's most remarkable success stories.' Blair cited in Xan Rice, 'Rwanda's Commonwealth hopes dented by human rights criticism', *The Guardian*, 19 July 2009. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/19/rwanda-commonwealth-human-rights-criticism>.

³¹ This is taken from Achille Mbembe's description of Africa, as discussed in the introduction chapter, through the lens of the West as an 'absence,' 'lack,' and 'non-being' of identity and difference, of negativeness - in short, of nothingness.' See Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 4.

referred to as cautious expansion, providing no compromise was made on the fundamental values enshrined in the Harare Principles.³² They argued that Rwanda's accession would be in the 'interest of the Commonwealth's strategic engagement with the wider world.'³³

The difference between the hostile approach by Commonwealth civil society groups, such as the CHRI, and the welcoming approach by Commonwealth member states to Rwanda's application, mirrors a divide which runs through much of the academic literature on post-genocide Rwanda. Filip Reyntjens highlights this divide when he observes that there are, 'two radically opposed perceptions of Rwanda.'³⁴ The first of these perceptions focuses on progress in education, health, women's empowerment, agriculture, and the economy. For Reyntjens, this view of progress, with an emphasis on the positive side of reconstruction since the genocide, is held largely by those he labels 'friends of the new Rwanda.'³⁵ These 'friends' include aid agencies, former political leaders, such as Tony Blair and Bill Clinton, and religious or cultural personalities, such as Bono. They share a view, first put forward by President Clinton, that Rwanda is a 'strong, unified and growing nation with the potential to become a model for the rest of Africa and the World.'³⁶ According to Reyntjens, many of the views held by these 'friends' are clouded by 'international feelings of guilt,' which obscure 'both the historical background and the perception of current political and social dynamics.'³⁷ Clinton's claims have been echoed by a number of academics and writers who agree that the Rwandan government has achieved great things, particularly in the field of bureaucratic governance. Patricia Crisafulli and Andrea Redmond are among such writers. They have written positively about progress in Rwanda under the governance of Paul Kagame. As they see it, a new narrative is unfolding in Rwanda, 'one of self-determination and increasing self-reliance, and of a country in a hurry to get where it wants to be.'³⁸

³² Commonwealth Secretariat, *Report of the Committee on Commonwealth Membership 2007*.

³³ Commonwealth Secretariat, *Report of the Committee on Commonwealth Membership 2007*: vi.

³⁴ Filip Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xiii.

³⁵ Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, xiii.

³⁶ Bill Clinton cited in Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, xiii.

³⁷ Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, xv.

³⁸ Crisafulli and Redmond, *Rwanda, Inc.*, 1-3.

Observers generally agree with Crisafulli and Redmond that the Rwandan government has successfully implemented a policy of economic development and modernisation, but for many this progress is flawed. Where those on the opposite side of Reyntjens' dichotomisation of the literature part company with the 'friends' of Rwanda, outlined above, is in their criticism that economic development and modernisation in Rwanda has come at the expense of human rights, instability, and possible future conflict. Much of this criticism is centred around what Scott Strauss and Lars Waldorf point out are a 'series of dramatic political, economic, and social projects' undertaken by the RPF.³⁹ These include 'forced villagisation, a de facto ban on ethnic identity, re-education of the population, and the systemic redrawing and renaming of Rwanda's territory.'⁴⁰ All of these projects, critics argue, might, on the surface, make Rwanda appear stable, but are based on a short-term goal of keeping the RPF government in power, which may be detrimental to long-term peace.⁴¹ Omar McDoom sums this up when he notes, 'post-conflict stability premised on economic growth and strong leadership - but without political liberalisation in the longer term - may have a finite duration and a possibly dramatic ending.'⁴²

One of the fiercest critics of the Rwandan regime to date has been Reyntjens who notes that he, himself, has been banned from conducting research in Rwanda; this, he states, was the result of a 1995 memo to the Rwandan government concerning the RPF's running of the country.⁴³ Reyntjens is not alone in his experience of attempted censorship by the Rwandan regime, other researchers have recorded experiences of suspicion held by the Rwandan state towards their research. One particularly noteworthy example is Susan Thomson's account of her encounters with the Ethics Board and Ministry of Local Government in Kigali as she was carrying out research on state power and its connection to the life experiences of peasant Rwandans.⁴⁴ Having convinced the Rwandan Ethics Board that her research would paint the RPF in a favourable light, Thomson was granted permission to carry out research for her project. Yet, on a number of occasions,

³⁹ Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf, 'Introduction: Seeing like a post-conflict state', in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights After Mass Violence*, eds. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 4.

⁴⁰ Strauss and Waldorf, 'Introduction: Seeing like a post-conflict state', 4.

⁴¹ Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*.

⁴² Omar McDoom, *Rwanda's Exit Pathway from Violence: A Strategic Assessment* (World Development Report, April 2011), 6.

⁴³ Filip Reyntjens, 'Subjects of concern: Rwanda, October 1994', *Issue 23*, no. 2 (1995): 39-43.

⁴⁴ Thomson, *Whispering Truth to Power*.

and before her research permit was eventually revoked by the government, Thomson notes that she was required to undergo 're-education' about the 'real' Rwanda.⁴⁵ This was because, as Thomson writes, the Rwandan government believed that her peasant subjects had filled her head with 'negative ideas' about the genocide, about reconciliation, and about life under the RPF regime.⁴⁶

Both Reyntjens and Thomson's experiences speak to a surveillance culture in post-genocide Rwanda, that is suspicious of anyone who might potentially upset the so-called 'unity' and peace brought about by the RPF.⁴⁷ In spite of this, Reyntjens notes that the quality of modern-day scholarship on Rwanda is high despite the difficult circumstances of, as he puts it, 'working under an oppressive and autocratic regime exercising a high degree of control...for both the scholars and their Rwandan interpreters.'⁴⁸ But, while there are researchers who share experiences similar to Reyntjens and Thompson, there are, of course, other researchers who view the experience of conducting research under the RPF regime differently. Crisafulli and Redmond, for example, are quick to emphasise that their experience of conducting research in Rwanda was cooperative and transparent.⁴⁹

Yet, while these different voices and experiences further emphasise the stark divide between the two radically opposed views of Rwanda, there have been some clear attempts to bring these divided voices together to discuss, debate, and analyse the nuances that permeate the different sides and opinions. Phil Clark and Zachary Kaufman have played a key role in this process producing a volume of essays (the product of three conferences) which have an interdisciplinary focus and bring together academics, politicians, and survivors, among others. Writing

⁴⁵ Thomson, *Whispering Truth to Power*, xvii. See also, Susan Thomson, 'That is not what we authorised you to do...': Access and government interference in highly politicised research environments', in *Surviving Research: Doing Fieldwork in Difficult and Violent Situations*, eds. Chandra Lekha Sriram, John C. King, Julie A. Mertus, Olga Martin-Ortega, Johanna Herman (London: Routledge, 2009); An Ansoms, 'Dislodging power structures in rural Rwanda: From 'disaster tourist' to 'transfer gate'', in *Emotional and Ethical Challenges for Field Research in Africa: The Story Behind the Findings*, eds. Susan M. Thomson, An Ansoms and Judith Murison (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 42-56.

⁴⁶ Thomson, *Whispering Truth to Power*, xvii.

⁴⁷ For discussion on surveillance and the Rwandan state see: Purdeková, 'Even if I am not here, there are so many eyes'; Paul Gready, 'Beyond 'You're with us or against us: Civil society and policymaking in post-genocide Rwanda'', in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, eds. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 87-100.

⁴⁸ Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, xv.

⁴⁹ Crisafulli and Redmond, *Rwanda Inc.*, 2.

on ideas of reconstruction and reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda, the authors rightly point out that there is a vast amount of debate, both academic and otherwise, around concepts such as ‘justice’ particularly, ‘what it is, what it should achieve and who should administer it.’⁵⁰ They argue clearly, both in their own work and in their efforts to bring together diverse scholarship on post-genocide Rwanda, for the need for a range of opinion from scholars and practitioners in which to provide a ‘multi-faceted examination’ of the genocide and its aftermath.⁵¹

Although my experience of conducting research in Rwanda went without incident, I was, nevertheless, aware of the surveillance culture and the level of suspicion around researchers as I planned my fieldwork in Kigali. This was heightened by an incident involving the British television media, which had the potential to sour British-Rwandan relations. The incident involved the airing of a documentary - *Rwanda’s Untold Story* - by the BBC in October 2014. The point of the documentary was to give an ‘alternative story,’ to the official narrative, that went against the established understanding of who had orchestrated the 1994 genocide.⁵² When I arrived in Rwanda to conduct interviews in January 2015, the Rwandan government had banned the BBC from the country and was now threatening to hold an official investigation calling for the documentary-makers to be charged with genocide denial.⁵³

Although I understood the seriousness of the Rwandan government’s reaction, the possibility that this might affect my ability to carry out research on the Commonwealth - something that seemed quite far removed from genocide and the BBC - was not immediately obvious until a German contact, a civil society

⁵⁰ Phil Clark and Zachary Kaufman, ‘After Genocide’, in *After Genocide: Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond*, eds. Phil Clark and Zachary Kaufman (London: Hurst and Company, 2008), 3-4.

⁵¹ Clark and Kaufman, ‘After Genocide’, 2.

⁵² The documentary highlighted the growing criticism of president Paul Kagame and claimed that the RPF was also responsible for war crimes and more deaths than previously acknowledged. In response to the documentary airing, the Rwandan parliament called for the BBC to be banned from the country, students marched through Kigali in an anti-BBC demonstration, and a number of high-profile academics, writers, diplomats, and politicians signed a letter of complaint to the BBC’s director-general Tony Hall. For further detail see David Smith, ‘Rwanda calls for BBC to be banned over controversial documentary’, *The Guardian*, 23 October 2014. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/23/rwanda-calls-bbc-banned-over-controversial-documentary>.

⁵³ Dugald Baird, ‘Rwanda places indefinite ban on BBC broadcasts over genocide documentary’, *The Guardian*, 1 June 2015. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/jun/01/rwanda-places-indefinite-ban-on-bbc-broadcasts-over-genocide-documentary>.

operative and gatekeeper to my contact with local Rwandan civil society organisations, noted her surprise at the Rwandan border security ‘allowing me in.’⁵⁴ As a result of the BBC fallout, and of my German contact’s observation, I became acutely aware that being British might have an effect on interviews (although none of my questions were directly related to the genocide). I was aware that the government line on language and identity would most-likely be heightened in the responses of interviewees, and that I might not get to the personal opinions of my interviewees, but rather a more standardised view of how the Rwandan government believed things ought to be. As it happened, I found that most interviewees, as well as other people I spoke to informally, generally, saw Rwanda’s relationship with Britain in a positive light. But this observation raised an additional set of questions about the interview data that I collected, and the way that interviewees saw and responded to my Britishness in the interviews. I have already discussed this issue in Chapter 1, and in Chapter 5 in relation to Zimbabwe. I want now to briefly illustrate and extend these ideas to my experiences in Rwanda.

My discussion of perspective in Chapter 5 of the thesis drew on a wealth of academic literature related to issues of positionality. While discussing ideas of power, gender, and identity, and the way that these are always present in interviews, I briefly touched on the dichotomy of the insider and outsider. Much of the literature on the process of conducting interviews in the field has begun to dispute the existence of a discernible dichotomy between the researcher and the interviewee as insider and outsider.⁵⁵ Before I had conducted interviews with Rwandan elites, I had assumed I would be clearly in the position of ‘outsider,’ in that I was not Rwandan, nor a member of any elites that I was interviewing in Rwanda. Yet, as I began the interview process, I started to realise that what I had assumed would be an unproblematic positioning of me as outsider and my interviewees as insiders was rather messier in praxis. Writing on the idea of problematising the insider/outsider dichotomy, Herod has aptly pointed out, ‘the positionality of the researcher can shift depending upon a number of

⁵⁴ Interview with German NGO Operative, Kigali, 8 January, 2015.

⁵⁵ Lauren Breen, ‘The researcher ‘in the middle’: Negotiating the insider/outsider dichotomy’, *The Australian Community Psychologist* 19, no. 1 (2007): 163-74; Christina Chavez, ‘Conceptualising from the inside: Advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality’, *The Qualitative Report* 13, no. 3 (2008): 474-94; Sonia Corbin Dwyer and Jennifer Buckle, ‘The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8, no. 1 (2009): 54-63.

considerations, in the interview process.’⁵⁶ One particular consideration, regarding my insider/outsider status, which also relates to my concerns over the BBC documentary fallout outlined above, is the fact that, although I was neither Rwandan nor a member of the elites with whom I was conducting interviews, I was, nevertheless, an Anglophone, rather than a Francophone, speaker. For some interviewees, who generally began the interview process by giving a brief history on Rwanda and highlighting the brutality of the ‘French colonial masters,’⁵⁷ a point I will reiterate and expand on later in the chapter, the fact that I was British, not French, appeared to situate me as an insider.

Where I was, perhaps, more in the position of outsider was in my knowledge and understanding of the history and politics of Rwanda. Harking back to Ackerly and True’s injunction, outlined in the previous chapter, that a thoughtful researcher acknowledges and is attentive to their own ‘social, political, and economical relationships’ with their interview subjects,⁵⁸ beyond academic research, I knew relatively little about Rwanda before carrying out fieldwork in the country. What I did know about the history and politics of the area, about the genocide, and the theories about who had brought down Habyarimana’s plane,⁵⁹ all appeared to have no connection to my own research on the Commonwealth. Since carrying out fieldwork and understanding from Rwandans themselves more about the Rwandan government’s decision to join the Commonwealth, it has become easier to draw a tentative line between Rwanda’s recent history and Rwanda’s Commonwealth membership. But when I travelled to Rwanda in January 2015, this line was still relatively unclear. I was particularly interested, therefore, to discover why Rwanda had joined the Commonwealth and how Commonwealth membership had been received in Rwanda: did Rwandans understand what the Commonwealth was and how their membership had potentially changed it? Did they put different interpretations on why Rwanda had joined the organisation?

6.2 The Commonwealth effect on Rwanda

To discuss the possible effects that the Commonwealth has had on Rwanda, it is helpful first to appreciate the political climate at the time of Rwanda’s accession.

⁵⁶ Herod, ‘Reflections on interviewing foreign elites’: 320.

⁵⁷ Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 21 January 2015.

⁵⁸ Ackerly and True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*, 37.

⁵⁹ There is a vast literature on Habyarimana and the plane crash that triggered the Rwandan genocide, for a detailed overview see Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (London and New York: Verso, 2004); Linda Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (London: Zed Books, 2009).

Much like the Commonwealth's own apparent limbo, Rwanda, stands in a kind of threshold zone between malignant communitarianism and ideal cosmopolitanism as a result of the genocide that took place in 1994. For the past twenty-two years, the Rwandan government led by the President, Paul Kagame, and the RPF, have initiated a number of seemingly draconian measures, which they claim are necessary for Rwanda to have a peaceful future. The main instruments in the Rwandan government's search for unity and reconciliation have meant heavy restrictions on political parties, civil society, and the media. These have all been censored as part of the government plan to recreate the idea of Rwandan identity around the theme of unity.⁶⁰ This has led to a number of measures, outlined briefly in the previous section of the chapter, that can be viewed as attempts to cut the civil liberties of the Rwandan population.

For INGOs such as Human Rights Watch, 'the Rwandan government has created a veneer of stability by suppressing dissent and limiting the exercise of civil and political rights. It often cites the need to avoid another genocide as the purported justification for such repressive measures.'⁶¹ The decision by the RPF, in 2009, to join the Commonwealth might be said to be a part of the government's plan. Through the lens of the RPF-government policies it is relatively easy to understand how the Commonwealth fits into this programme of unity being carried out in Rwanda. But what I wanted to get a deeper understanding of in my fieldwork was whether this message translated into the public perception of the Commonwealth, if indeed there was such a thing? And if so, was the Commonwealth looked on favourably by Rwandans, or as a tool for furthering the government's agenda?

The first thing to point out when attempting to answer these questions is that Rwanda's decision to join the Commonwealth had been made at the highest governmental level, without discussion or debate.⁶² As a result, most ordinary Rwandans have very little knowledge of what the Commonwealth is, what it does,

⁶⁰ Kiwuwa, *Ethnic Politics and Democratic Transition in Rwanda*.

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2005*. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k5/wr2005.pdf>.

⁶² For a discussion on elite ambition in contrast with the realities in rural Rwanda see An Ansoms, 'Rwanda's post-genocide economic reconstruction: The mismatch between elite ambitions and rural realities', in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights After Mass Violence*, eds. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 240-51.

or that, since 2009, they have belonged to its family.⁶³ One could argue that this is a Commonwealth-wide epidemic, as few Commonwealth citizens have any real concept of the organisation, beyond the Commonwealth Games, or the Queen.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, when viewed from a different angle, it is possible to discern at least three ways that Commonwealth membership has had an effect, either directly or indirectly, on Rwanda; even if these are not immediately apparent to ordinary Rwandans, or indeed to the casual observer. All three contain elements that came up over and over again in discussions with interviewees around the question of whether, or how, Commonwealth membership had made a difference to Rwandan lives. Though later sub-sections will flesh out the elements sketched here, I want, briefly, to suggest the contours of each, in order to provide some background for the discussion that follows.

First, as interviewees saw it, the Commonwealth has brought more opportunities for Rwandans to develop their English language skills. In 2008, English replaced French as the official second language in Rwanda.⁶⁵ The Rwandan government claims that because English is the language of science and commerce, the switch to English will bring prosperity and contribute to national reconciliation by improving the living standards of Rwandans.⁶⁶ As the argument goes, English, not French, is the language of progress, of technocratic development, a way to propel the Rwandan state into the future. French, by contrast, was the language of colonial repression. One interviewee captured this contrast clearly when he told me:

on one side, we see a power that invests in the people, and that is the British...who can cooperate with us. On the other hand, we have

⁶³ The British High Commissioner in Kigali suggested I walk in the street and ask ordinary Rwandans what they knew about the Commonwealth. It became quickly apparent that at the grassroots level, the Commonwealth had no real impact. Indigenous civil society organisations approached for interviews were fearful that they would disappoint the interviewer, as they had no knowledge of the Commonwealth beyond the vague idea that Rwanda had joined.

⁶⁴ This is an argument that has been made repeatedly by W. David McIntyre and more recently backed up with empirical evidence gathered by the Royal Commonwealth Society. See *An Uncommon Association A Wealth of Potential: Final Report of the Commonwealth Conversation* (London: The Royal Commonwealth Society, 2010). Available at: <https://www.thercs.org/assets/Research-/Commonwealth-Conversation-Final-Report.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Rwanda first introduced English to be taught alongside French in 1996, but in 2008 the government announced that French was to be dropped as the official second language. S. McCrummen, 'Rwandans say adieu to Francais: Leaders promote English as the language of learning, governance and trade', *The Washington Post*, 28 October 2008.

⁶⁶ Beth Lewis Samuelson and Sarah Warshauer Freedman, 'Language policy, multilingual education, and power in Rwanda', *Language Policy* 9 (2010): 192.

someone who is always a master. And this idea is even in the language...it appears in the language, you find a lot of words in French...colonial attitudes in French that we don't see in English.⁶⁷

While Rwanda's application for Commonwealth membership appears to have no direct connection to the switch to English as the official second language in Rwanda, joining the Commonwealth has nevertheless brought the British Council, which has been working with Rwandan teachers and businesses to help improve language skills.⁶⁸ In addition, as most interviewees were keen to point out, Commonwealth membership allows Rwandans to apply for scholarships through the 'Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan,' which offers scholarships for Commonwealth citizens to attend overseas institutions and gain access to higher learning, which potentially leads to more employment opportunities.⁶⁹ One academic seemed to sum up the cosmopolitan potential here when he noted, 'their sons one day might find themselves in a Commonwealth university, something which has *never* happened before.'⁷⁰ There is a sense that if Rwandans are exposed to educational opportunities overseas they will bring back new ideas, 'learn about other cultures' and 'have opportunities to talk to people they would never meet.'⁷¹ By joining the Commonwealth, Rwandans now had opportunities to access ideas and cultures on a global scale, thus opening up the previously insular culture to more of a universal, global outlook. With the idea of a more global, cosmopolitan outlook in mind, I particularly wanted to explore how deep this sense of English leading to prosperity went. How far was it rhetorical - a device for the Rwandan government to push their unity agenda? Was there a consciousness that the country was becoming more prosperous? What about those being left behind?

Second, the Commonwealth has opened up new trade and investment opportunities for Rwanda. In 2014, the organisation launched the 'Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council' - 'with a mandate to facilitate increased trade and investment across the Commonwealth...by helping

⁶⁷ Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 21 January 2015.

⁶⁸ The British Council opened its office in Kigali in 2008. Ironically, the British Council, unlike its French and German counterparts, does very little to promote British culture, besides language classes.

⁶⁹ For a detailed overview on the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan see 'Commonwealth Scholarships'. Available at: <http://cscuk.dfid.gov.uk/apply/scholarships-developing-cw/>.

⁷⁰ Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 12 February 2015.

⁷¹ Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 12 February 2015.

Commonwealth governments attract investment, promote enterprise and improve the business environment.⁷² It was very important to my interviewees to know that Rwanda was part of this network of large established and small emerging markets, to know that they were in charge of their own investment decisions, and not heavily reliant on partnerships with residual attachments to the old colonial regime. When I discussed this with a civil society operative he told me:

After the genocide, Rwanda was a closed community...to them [the RPF] it was very important that we are part of the East African Community (EAC) and the Commonwealth...because we needed them to open windows for our businesses, the education opportunities, but, above all, the investment opportunities because the Commonwealth is connected to the EAC and it's a big community.⁷³

This last point is interesting, it is widely acknowledged in the literature on development that Rwanda views Anglophone states as far more reliable sources for investment and development aid.⁷⁴ But it is equally well known that the Rwandan president uses extraversion tactics to shore up what might be described as one of the most successful development success stories in contemporary Africa.⁷⁵ I wanted to explore how far the discussion around the Commonwealth and investment opportunities stretched to aid and development. What was the Rwandan view of this; did they feel that Rwanda had agency?

Finally, the Commonwealth requires member states to abide by its human rights principles.⁷⁶ With this in mind, there is a sense, among some Commonwealth observers, that Commonwealth membership will help Rwanda foster adherence to these principles.⁷⁷ This is an argument that human rights groups have dismissed as 'extremely unconvincing.'⁷⁸ Given the extensive report compiled by the CHRI against Rwanda's accession to the Commonwealth, as well as the defensive

⁷² The Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council. <http://www.cweic.org>.

⁷³ Interview with Rwandan Civil Society Operative, Kigali, 23 January 2015.

⁷⁴ Samuelson and Freedman, 'Language policy, multilingual education, and power in Rwanda'.

⁷⁵ Bayart argues that African governments have not been passive objects in the process of aid dependency but instead have used the discourse of democracy to extract resources from Western donors. See Jean Françoise Bayart, 'Africa in the world: A history of extraversion', *African Affairs* 99, no. 395 (2000): 217-267.

⁷⁶ This is a stipulation in the *Report on Commonwealth Membership*.

⁷⁷ David Howell, 'Support for democratic principles', *Global: The International Briefing* (2012). Available at: <http://www.global-briefing.org/2012/01/the-message-to-all-governments-is-let-there-be-stronger-support-for-upholding-democratic-principles/>; Jones, 'Rwanda: The way forward': 349.

⁷⁸ Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, *Rwanda's Application for Membership of the Commonwealth*.

reaction from some Rwandan elites, I wanted to get deeper under the surface of this potentially problematic issue. Were interviewees aware of the Commonwealth's human rights agenda? Did they think that the Commonwealth could help Rwanda? In what ways did they envisage this could be done?

When I put these questions to one prominent youth leader, he seemed surprised that the answer was not obvious to me. Reflecting on the past two decades of Rwandan history, the youth leader pointed out 'it would be easier to learn the Commonwealth goals, like what they want to achieve in Rwanda, the reason being because Rwanda is starting afresh - like from zero.'⁷⁹ This idea resonates exactly with my suggestion earlier in the chapter, which drew on Mbembe's observation about Africa as an exemplar of nothingness. For this interviewee, Rwanda was a blank canvas onto which the Commonwealth could project its values.

This was a powerful image, and yet, what was especially pertinent about my interviewee's response was that it was not the first time that I had heard it. The fact that Rwanda had to 'start from zero in 1994'⁸⁰ was a frequent expression used by Paul Kagame and it came up time and again in speeches and in the media.⁸¹ The need to start again, to create a common narrative around the genocide has become so much a part of RPF and 'official' Rwandan thinking that it appeared to structure interviewees' interpretation of many of my questions about the Commonwealth. A strong, common theme that ran through most interviews was the way in which the Commonwealth was a mirage of perfection, a means by which a flawed state could leave behind its dark history and find a calmer realm in a universal order.⁸² This is an idea that resonates with the Commonwealth's attempt to be more cosmopolitan. But was Rwanda, as one interviewee described it, the 'baby that could hold the Commonwealth family together,'⁸³ or was this simply another example - in the Commonwealth's attempts to be cosmopolitan - of the ideal versus the real?

⁷⁹ Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 15 January 2015.

⁸⁰ Helen Hintjens argues that, 'Rwanda's present rulers see themselves as steering the country towards an enlightened, progressive future free of colonial and racial mental maps.' Hintjens, 'Post-genocide identity politics in Rwanda': 10.

⁸¹ Colin Waugh, *Paul Kagame and Rwanda: Power, Genocide and the Rwandan Patriotic Front* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co, 2004), 168; Francois Soudan, *Kagame: Conversations with the President of Rwanda* (New York: Enigma Books, 2015).

⁸² Charles Fourier wrote that utopia allows us to plug into a higher order. See Charles Fourier, *Design for Utopia: Selected Writing* (New York: Schocken, 1971).

⁸³ Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 15 January 2015.

6.2.1 'Starting from zero'

Without exception, as I mentioned in earlier sections of the chapter, all answers to the question of why Rwanda joined the Commonwealth were delivered by my interviewees in the form of a short lecture on the history of colonialism in Rwanda. This was almost always imbued with resentment towards the French government for what was officially considered to be French involvement in the Rwandan genocide.⁸⁴ Since the genocide, acrimony between France and Rwanda had grown fierce.⁸⁵ Rwanda's accession to the Commonwealth was described in terms of a new beginning. It was a way in which to escape an abusive family. This was echoed in the media as well as in interviews. As the *Kigali Today* journalist Magnus Mazimpaka saw it, the decision to join the Commonwealth was seen as a way to 'end the humiliation,' it provided a means to 'dislodge the Frenchman and set themselves free from the Francophonie 'children.'"⁸⁶ Mazimpaka's was typical of the responses I was given. As most interviewees saw it, by joining the Anglophone group of Commonwealth states, Rwanda could unravel its tangled webs of communitarianism. But whether it had managed to completely sever these ties was not always clear to my interviewees.

When questioned as to whether Rwanda was still a member of the Francophonie, interviewees were hazy on the details: 'We're here, we're there. We don't know where we stand, but one thing we know, we are English...French is taught here as a language, but the first official language is English.'⁸⁷ This was a powerful statement, as interviewees described it, despite the uncertainty of whether Rwanda still retained its old ties to the French family, English seemed to have a stabilising effect on identity, an idea that resonated with Charles Taylor's understanding of language discussed in Chapter 3. Whether Rwanda was still a part of the Francophonie was an irrelevant detail, for most interviewees, the only political family that mattered was the Anglophone family. As one academic put

⁸⁴ For discussion and analysis on the French connection to the Rwandan genocide see: Andrew Wallis, *Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France's Role in the Rwandan Genocide* (London and New York: I. B. Taurus, 2013); Krosiak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide*.

⁸⁵ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁸⁶ Magnus Mazimpaka, 'Francophonie vs Commonwealth: How Rwanda bagged \$3 billion when it said 'au revoir'', *KT Press*, 29 November 2015. Available at: <http://ktpress.rw/2015/11/fr>.

⁸⁷ Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 15 January 2015.

this, ‘everyone was happy when we came to the Commonwealth.’⁸⁸ This was in line with the official government rhetoric on ethnicity, but also seemed to line up with ideal-utopian aspirations. As Fanon might have put this, joining the Commonwealth and turning their backs on the Francophonie was a utopian wish to close the chapter on colonial violence with the hope of heralding a new humanism.⁸⁹

Language also assumed particular importance when asked about the effect Commonwealth membership had had on Rwanda’s economic prosperity. One Rwandan academic attempted to explain this through a Kinyarwandan analogy, as he put this, ‘when faced with a situation where you are forced to choose between having to eat a dog and starving, try to ensure that the dog that you eat is white’.⁹⁰ Britain and the Commonwealth were the white dog in this analogy. Put slightly differently, in comparison to the French and the Francophonie, the Commonwealth was the lesser of two evils. As with many examples provided by my interviewees, this was largely the argument of the Rwandan government, who had justified the switch from French to English by flaunting English as the language of globalisation.⁹¹ As I have already pointed out earlier in this section, for Kagame and his RPF administration, English brought greater prosperity and an improvement in living standards, both of which contributed to national reconciliation.⁹² This seemed to be a much more technical, rational approach to thinking about the introduction of English, and its effects on Rwanda, than the utopian family notion outlined above. It was also an approach that had a darker side, as one potentially tragic consequence of the switch to English was that a generation of Francophone youth were being left behind.⁹³

When I put the question of English, and its links to prosperity, to the French Programme Coordinator of a large INGO that had played a role in developing English curriculum in Rwanda, she described the changes that had taken place

⁸⁸ Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 12 February 2015.

⁸⁹ This is Mamdani’s paraphrasing of Fanon in Mamdani, *When Victims become Killers*.

⁹⁰ Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 21 January 2015.

⁹¹ Hintjens, ‘Post-genocide identity politics in Rwanda’.

⁹² Samuelson and Freedman, ‘Language policy, multilingual education, and power in Rwanda’: 192.

⁹³ Recent statistics reveal that 3.9 per cent of the Rwandan populations speaks French, while only 1.9 per cent is fluent in English. See Joseph Assan and Lawrence Walker, ‘The political economy of contemporary education and the challenges of switching formal language to English in Rwanda’, in *Rwanda Fast Forward: Social, Economic, Military and Reconciliation Prospects*, eds. Maddalena Campioni and Patrick Noack (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 176-91.

over the past few years of her experience living in and around Kigali. As she put it, 'when I came to Rwanda, French was a requirement on most job applications, but now that has gone, and most of the well paid jobs are demanding English.'⁹⁴ This meant that many Francophone Rwandans were losing out as these jobs were largely being 'snapped up by returnees from Tanzania and Uganda.'⁹⁵ It is worth pausing over these observations, if only to point out that, if, as the RPF saw it, there was (artificially) no such thing as ethnicity in Rwanda,⁹⁶ then there did seem to be a growing class divide, and this was once more wrapped up in the idea of language. This was evident in the observations of the German INGO operative who had helped me gain access to local civil society organisations. As she observed, it was 'fashionable to switch to English if you were in a restaurant with friends and everyone was speaking in Kinyarwanda or French. English showed you had education and money.'⁹⁷ For all of the RPF's attempts to create unity around the idea that Rwandans were 'Rwandan,' rather than Tutsi, Hutu, or Twa, language had now replaced ethnicity as a proxy for identity.⁹⁸

The negative effects of the switch to English on some members of the population is at the extreme end of the story of the Commonwealth effect on Rwanda, but it contains elements that came up over and over again in discussions with elites and in observations. For most of the Anglophone elites I interviewed this was often mentioned and then glossed over or treated as an educational opportunity. This is evident in one interviewee's response to my question about Francophone Rwandans:

I think when Rwanda changed or added English...at the beginning it was very hard for so many people who used only French. But, I think, the nation were sensitised and now they see an opportunity - that to know both French and English is an advantage for a citizen, not a problem.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Interview with French INGO Programme Coordinator, Kigali, 3 February 2015.

⁹⁵ Interview with French INGO Programme Coordinator, Kigali, 3 February 2015.

⁹⁶ Rwanda does not take an identity perspective on ethnicity, Rwandan law insists that ethnicity does not exist within Rwandan borders. For a full discussion on the identity-ethnicity issue see Nigel Eltringham, *Accounting for Horror: Genocide Debates in Rwanda* (London: Pluto Press, 2004); John Rutayisire, John Kabano, and Jolly Rubagiza, 'Redefining Rwanda's future: The role of curriculum in social reconstruction', in *Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion*, eds. Sobhi Tawil and Alexandra Harley (New York: UNESCO Publishing, 2004), 315-73.

⁹⁷ Interview with German INGO Programme Officer, Kigali, January 2015.

⁹⁸ Hintjens, 'Post-genocide identity politics in Rwanda'.

⁹⁹ Interview with Trade Unionist, Kigali, 19 January 2015.

The use of the word 'sensitised' by my interviewee here is particularly telling, as it draws on, and helps to construct, a particularly idealised picture of the way in which both the RPF and the Commonwealth are attempting to reach for a cosmopolitan image. One potential way of creating the ideal cosmopolitanism is to get rid of the roots of the old communitarian family. For the RPF, these roots were in the French language. Therefore, by joining the Anglophone Commonwealth, the RPF had effectively cut off the growth of the old roots and replaced them with a new, more ideal, family tree.

6.2.2 *Interests and opportunities*

Broadly, as I pointed out earlier in the chapter, for many interviewees the Commonwealth brought educational opportunities in the form of Commonwealth scholarships, as well as cultural exchanges through the British Council. Common to many interviewee responses was the underlying notion that this was a way to look to the ideal future and leave the violence of the past behind. This was clearly evident in one youth leader's observation when he pointed out that, 'education - it's very positive, it's not aggressive, it's not oppressive. It's helping people to extend their minds.'¹⁰⁰ Others followed this line of thinking, pointing out that the Commonwealth, and the British Council, were going to 'educate Rwandans for the future.'¹⁰¹ This last comment is striking as evidence of the way in which Rwandans viewed the Commonwealth as something of an ideal cosmopolitan exemplar. When I raised the notion of cosmopolitanism with the same interviewee who informed me that he had studied at the British Council, he responded, 'English helped me to be cosmopolitan...opportunities started happening immediately.'¹⁰² When I tentatively suggested that French was considered a cosmopolitan language also, the interviewee disagreed, for Rwandans, he informed me, the Francophonie, with its sole focus on preserving French language and culture, had left them 'ignorant in the past.'¹⁰³

This evocative account of how some Rwandans viewed the Francophonie, in contrast with how they viewed the Commonwealth, simultaneously draws on and helps to construct an understanding of Rwanda's place in the normative dichotomy at the heart of this thesis. This is because, as I noted earlier in the

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 21 January 2015.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 12 February 2015.

¹⁰² Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 12 February 2015.

¹⁰³ Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 12 February 2015

chapter, Rwanda appears to be suspended between the malignant communitarianism of its past shared history with the Francophonie, and the idealistic cosmopolitanism of the Commonwealth. Rwandan interviewees point out the problems of the past and contrast them with the idealisation that accompanies being adopted by an organisation with no ties to its communitarian roots. But what fails to come through clearly in their understanding is the fact that, as I have shown in previous chapters of the thesis, the Commonwealth has its own dark, problematic past and continuing family problems.

Rwanda offers a picture of a contradictory process that might be seen as simply giving way to the dominance of one colonial family over another. Yet, there is a sense that, since the genocide, and since shaking off the influence of the French in Rwandan culture, what had once been understood as manipulation and interference from the West, was now handled on Rwandan terms. One particularly noteworthy observation during my fieldwork in Rwanda, that helps give credence to this claim, was a media frenzy, in the week I arrived in Kigali, around a report that the Belgian government was thought to be scrapping a grant of approximately \$50 million in aid to Rwanda. As the media reported, the Belgians were unhappy with what the Belgian embassy in Kigali had supposedly described as Rwanda's 'failure to meet media freedom and governance targets.'¹⁰⁴ In response to this accusation, the Rwandan Foreign Minister Louise Mushikiwabo was reported in *The New Times* to have noted:

Belgium has every right to determine whether, when and how to disburse its aid money and that the decision solely fell within Belgium's sovereign rights and had nothing to do with how Rwanda relates with the former.¹⁰⁵

As I arrived in Kigali, the story was winding down. In response to the Rwandan Foreign Minister's suggestion that Belgium could do what it wanted with its aid, the Belgian government appeared to change tack noting that they had not suspended but merely 'postponed' the payment 'to allow Kigali to make progress

¹⁰⁴ Clement Uwiringiyimana, 'Belgium scraps \$50 million in aid as Rwanda fails to meet democracy target', *Reuters*, 22 December 2014. Available at:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-belgium-rwanda-aid-idUSKBN0K01G020141222>.

¹⁰⁵ Louise Mushikiwabo cited in Edwin Musoni, 'We did not suspend aid, says Belgian minister', *The New Times*, 7 January 2015. Available at:

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2015-01-07/184711/>.

in different fields.¹⁰⁶ There was a sense here that when juxtaposed with its past memberships and relationships, Rwanda was now in control of its own destiny. That the Belgians, and former colonisers, had backed down when confronted with the Rwandan government's supposed apathy, as far as my interviewees were concerned, was a victory for Rwandan autonomy. This was a particularly pertinent point with the more politically active interviewees. As the youth leader I interviewed, who had pointed me in the direction of the news story, pointed out:

we don't want to be pushed around. We decide that even if you give us aid, you don't tell us what to do with it. We decide what to do with the money because we choose our own priorities. But when you look around Africa, it's that, if I can use the word 'kiss-ass,' you know, most African countries kiss-ass and since they kiss-ass you find that it creates a difference between us and them.¹⁰⁷

The youth leader's statement, at first glance, might seem to be a simple assertion of Rwandan autonomy. A closer reading, however, reveals a singling out of Rwanda as an exemplary model of independence and assertiveness among African states. There is a sense here that post-genocide Rwanda occupies a purer thinner space, away from the density and roots of its colonial family. Other African states - even those in Rwanda's newly adopted Commonwealth family - do not occupy the same space, tied as they still are to the baggage of family. This sense of independence and autonomy was echoed in the Rwandan media. As one journalist and human rights activist pointed out:

Although I don't believe that we should de-link ourselves from the north, as much as we need them (the capitalist north), they equally need us. We need their money, they need our materials. So it is quid pro quo.¹⁰⁸

When I raised the issue of this journalist's comments with the youth leader he told me, 'Rwanda...exploits all available markets. And the Commonwealth, being a family of very many nations, provides that market.'¹⁰⁹ There seemed to be a sense here that, in as far as Rwanda's relationship with the Commonwealth family was

¹⁰⁶ Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders cited in Musoni, 'We did not suspend aid, says Belgian minister'.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 15 January 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Vincent Nuwagaba, 'Rwandan leadership is an embodiment of genuine democracy', *The New Times*, 26 November 2009. Available at:

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2009-11-26/13906/>.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 15 January 2015.

concerned, Rwanda's membership was conditional - the child would only stay as long as it was convenient and worth their while.

6.2.3 Shared values

While interests and opportunities were clearly important for the still fragile state, as many interviewees saw it, shared values were too. Many Rwandans I spoke to were attracted to what they called the 'moral authority' of the Commonwealth.¹¹⁰ As one journalist in the *New Times* put it, the Commonwealth 'may have emerged as a reminder or representation of British imperialism but can now be harnessed for the benefit of all its members.'¹¹¹ This stood in stark contrast to the neo-colonial rhetoric espoused by Robert Mugabe and Yahya Jammeh, as they withdrew their states from the Commonwealth. The more savvy Rwandans I spoke to were aware of the Zimbabwe situation and used this as a tool with which to juxtapose Rwanda. In reaction to Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the Commonwealth, one interviewee noted, 'If you realise something is wrong, you don't solve it from without, you solve it from within.'¹¹² In a similar vein, and likewise reflecting on the Commonwealth and Zimbabwe, another interviewee observed, 'if you are in a big family and you share orders or you are facing the same problems, you will create a kind of internal sub-network to overcome some problems.'¹¹³

What is especially pertinent about these observations is that many interviewees failed to realise that, in dealing with its own problems with the family it had left behind, Rwanda had not attempted to solve the problems 'from within,' but had withdrawn from the family and was continuing to take measures, which included the alienation of some of its own French speaking citizens, to maintain something of a distance. In this respect, interviewees failed to see the similarity with the Zimbabwe situation and picked up instead on Zimbabwe's problems with human rights.

This discussion of Rwandans' understanding of human rights issues in the Commonwealth points to the ways in which Rwanda's accession to the

¹¹⁰ Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 15 January 2015.

¹¹¹ Frank Kagabo, 'Commonwealth meeting should be more than just a ceremony', *The New Times*, 24 November 2007. Available at: <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/article/2007-11-24/78328/>.

¹¹² Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 15 January 2015.

¹¹³ Interview with Rwandan Trade Unionist, Kigali, 23 January 2015.

Commonwealth can both challenge the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism and reify it. A powerful image of this reification filtered through when Rwandans talked about the Commonwealth in the language of family. As one academic pointed out, 'You find that in the Commonwealth, this idea of family-ship. You want people to be together, you want people to live in harmony.'¹¹⁴ Harmony was a theme that appeared to recur throughout the interviews I carried out with Rwandans. Reflecting on the Commonwealth family in its entirety, a youth leader drew on a similar theme, for him the Anglophone grouping represented:

A group of people irrespective of their different backgrounds, irrespective of different cultures, aspiring to the same goals - free and fair, a free community, a healthy community, a democratic community, a human rights respecting community, a peaceful community, that's what I see.¹¹⁵

For Rwandans, who had a recent history entwined in a family that was far from harmonious, the Commonwealth presented an opportunity to leave behind the thick, messy, nastiness of family, and inhabit a much thinner space as the newest member, with no roots attached, of an organisation which was striving to be cosmopolitan.

6.2.4 Forced idealisation?

I have attempted in this section to explain how Rwandans describe the changes that they perceive to have taken place since joining the Commonwealth in 2009. But, lest this chapter conveys too inflated a sense of the ethical credentials, prospects for harmonious relationship, or representativeness for the Commonwealth's true realisation of cosmopolitanism, two caveats are in order. First, harking back to my discussion earlier in the chapter around critical literature on Rwanda, the Rwandan government continues to be the focus of numerous reports, which show that not everyone is benefitting equally from Rwanda's economic and political progress.¹¹⁶ This was echoed by the CHRI in their bid to get heads of state to understand the gravity of the decision to admit Rwanda into the Commonwealth. In this context, it is important to ask whether Commonwealth membership has helped Rwanda clean up its human rights record

¹¹⁴ Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 21 January 2015.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 15 January 2015.

¹¹⁶ Hintjens, 'Post-genocide identity politics': 10.

in the years since its entry to the organisation.¹¹⁷ A measurement of such things is beyond the scope of this thesis, however, without wishing to generalise about the human rights situation in Rwanda, there continue to be reports on the Rwandan government clamp down on civil and political rights and of arrests over crimes of ‘divisionism,’ ‘ethnic ideology,’ and ‘genocide mentality.’¹¹⁸ During my fieldwork in Rwanda, I observed that a number of articles in the state sponsored media reacted rather aggressively to any suggestion that the Rwandan government were failing to protect the civil and political rights of Rwandans.

A second caveat that should be borne in mind is that Rwanda’s decision to join the Commonwealth, as I have mentioned, was a top-down political decision. As one of my interviewees put this, ‘Rwanda coming in, it was mostly political but fortunately the decision came to meet the needs of the people whether they asked for it or not.’¹¹⁹ This seemed to be an unwitting repetition of what Samuelson and Freedman have described as the Rwandan government’s policy of heavy-handed rule making, in which the people are just supposed to play along and dutifully make the shift.¹²⁰ While this might not conform to what those who opposed Rwanda’s Commonwealth application see as the preferred behaviour of states in the cosmopolitan Commonwealth, it does, nevertheless, present Kagame in the role as the good father rescuing Rwanda from a troubled past by making decisions for the good of the future.

This discussion of caveats both point to the ways in which Rwanda’s accession to the Commonwealth can both enhance the organisation’s cosmopolitanism and trouble it. And yet, this understanding of the different ways in which becoming a member of the Commonwealth has affected Rwanda only tells half the story of the Rwanda’s role in helping the organisation to realise its cosmopolitanism. What about the other half? Having set out and elaborated on three possible ways in which Commonwealth membership has had an effect on Rwanda, I now want to reverse the direction of the argument and explore the extent to which Rwanda’s membership has affected the Commonwealth.

¹¹⁷ Jones, ‘Rwanda: The way forward’: 349.

¹¹⁸ Human Rights Watch Report 2014. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/rwanda>.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Rwandan Academic, Kigali, 21 January 2015.

¹²⁰ Samuelson and Freedman, ‘Language policy, multilingual education, and power in Rwanda’: 192.

6.3 Rwanda's effect on the Commonwealth

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, there are a number of Commonwealth officials who have a tendency to justify the Commonwealth's continued relevance with the observation that states are lining up to join the organisation. Therefore, as they see it, membership must be of some value. While this may be the case, most of the states that have evinced an interest in joining the Commonwealth have not pursued their application much further than the enquiry stage.¹²¹ Rwanda's accession, as the first country to join the Commonwealth under its new membership criteria, therefore, has been an important test case for a more inclusive, cosmopolitan Commonwealth.¹²² But, almost seven years after the controversy around Rwanda's application to join the Commonwealth, I argue that Rwanda's membership has not lived up to the hype. Up until this point, interviewees largely confirmed the view that membership had been a positive experience for Rwanda but, what did they think Rwanda brought to the Commonwealth? Did they believe that Rwanda's Commonwealth membership made a difference to other Commonwealth members? Did they see the Rwanda's experience as a positive model for other states to follow? There were two main approaches to the way that interviewees answered these questions. The first was an uncomplicated view of the practical side of Rwanda's conflict management skills. The second approach was a much more idealised way of describing how Rwanda could contribute to helping and healing the Commonwealth.

In this section, I want to describe the ways in which this idealisation manifests in the ways in which interviewees see Rwanda's role in the Commonwealth going forward. The Rwandan government rhetoric, and policy on unity, lend themselves well to this idealisation, but I also got the sense that this was something that interviewees, in their various roles as youth leaders, trade unionists, civil society representatives, were proud of doing themselves. This bestowed a sense of agency to Rwandans: with Rwanda's help, things could be improved for everyone. The many youth leaders I spoke to, both in official interviews and in everyday conversation, were clear in their vision of sharing the lessons of the Rwandan genocide with others. Rwanda's membership in the EAC and the Commonwealth was helping to facilitate this. As one interviewee put it, 'Rwandans have a story to

¹²¹ For a comprehensive list see te Velde, *The Commonwealth Brand*.

¹²² Jones, 'Rwanda: The way forward': 347.

tell about what happens when people choose divisions.’¹²³ One youth leader - who had been working directly with Commonwealth youth initiatives as one of the ‘Queen’s Young Leaders’ - was clear about the ways in which Rwanda’s membership in the Commonwealth would make a difference to the organisation:

When you look at the passion and our interests in the Commonwealth are different from other countries, from other young people which represent from other countries. Most of them are: ‘I, I, I, I, I want this,’ and here in Rwanda it’s all about ‘we, we, we, we,’ because we are chasing a common vision. So, I think that creates a very big difference.¹²⁴

There is a sense here that Rwandans are searching for a ‘we-feeling,’ where there is less of a feeling of selfishness, than of understanding how hardline communitarianism can get out of control, and how to prevent this from happening. Rwanda was a success story, but whatever lay behind the official government rhetoric, whatever draconian measures the Rwandan government had taken to unite the country, and however much other Commonwealth heads of state had ignored on-going issues of human rights protection to allow the accession of Rwanda, interviewees seemed to look beyond this to a more universal reparation which would lead to something better for everyone, not only Rwandans. This was a familiar theme in most interviews, a concern for the ‘moral equality’ of all human beings: ‘states have a moral obligation to help their neighbours. We need to think about Ebola, peace-building. We have a moral obligation.’¹²⁵

This idealisation feeds into the way in which the Commonwealth has seen its role in the world since 1991. But there is a difference between the way Rwandans describe this, and the way in which Secretary-Generals and some British politicians talk about the Commonwealth. From the Secretariat comes highly idealised descriptions of what the Commonwealth is capable of, tethered to utopian dreams of making the organisation strong again.¹²⁶ For Rwandans, rhetoric is accompanied by more practical solutions to Commonwealth problems.¹²⁷ This is at its most graphic when it evokes the powerful image of what

¹²³ Interview with Rwandan Human Rights NGO Operative, Kigali, 23 January 2015.

¹²⁴ Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 15 January 2015.

¹²⁵ Interview with Rwandan Human Rights NGO worker in Kigali, 23 January 2015.

¹²⁶ See Ramphal, ‘The Commonwealth in the global neighbourhood’.

¹²⁷ This feeds into Richard Bourne’s idea that the Commonwealth is strongest when it supports civil society. See Richard Bourne, ‘The Commonwealth: Problem solving in our

Rwandans have been through, how the dark forces of particularism destroyed their sense of humanity, how Rwandans have learned to repair themselves, and how they want to share these ideas and experiences with others. As one interviewee put it, 'home-grown solutions to solve your own problems, that's what Rwanda provides. Rwanda offers training days for people to go back to their states as peace builders.'¹²⁸

For interviewees, this sense of reparation went in two directions, 'what we want to do is to share Rwandan experience, but also to listen to the Kenyans...So Rwanda brings preventative measures but it also brings the spirit of resilience.'¹²⁹ Most interviewees linked this multidirectional reparation to their Commonwealth neighbours in Africa, and the problems that spilled across borders, such as Ebola, terrorism, and civil war. As one interviewee put it, 'Boko Haram...it's a tragedy that is yet to erupt, but what such things do, they divide nations. If they are rooted, they divide nations and then people rise up against each other. So, I think, that is something people can learn from Rwanda.'¹³⁰ Behind this reasoning lay the experience of what could happen if these things *did* become 'rooted.' When I raised the issue of controversy surrounding Rwanda's supposed 'meddling' in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the answer always came quickly, Rwanda had a moral obligation to be in the DRC, it was simply helping its neighbours in a cosmopolitan sense: 'You don't have to go very far, you just need to first help solve the problems of those around you...At the end of the day, caring for neighbours in the Commonwealth will actually make it stronger.'¹³¹

These arguments might resonate with the Commonwealth idea that it is a family, and families take care of each other as well as their neighbours. But, while the language of family did appear in interviews, what my interviewees gave me was much less of a sense of family and much more of a sense of egalitarianism among members of an organisation. Gone was the sense of familial obligation for the sake of history that we saw in the case of Zimbabwe in the previous chapter, replaced by the idea of shared values, opportunities, and give and take. As one interviewee noted:

globalised era', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 96, no. 388 (2007): 29-36.

¹²⁸ Interview with Rwandan Youth Leader, Kigali, 15 January 2015.

¹²⁹ Interview with Rwandan Civil Society Operative, Kigali, 23 January 2015.

¹³⁰ Interview with Rwandan Human Rights NGO Operative, Kigali, 23 January 2015.

¹³¹ Interview with Rwandan Civil Society Operative, Kigali, 23 January 2015.

opportunities for others for investment, exchange in policy, in country management, in conflict resolution, in genocide prevention. All of this, I think Rwanda is participating actively and is a space for other countries, other members of the Commonwealth to come and invest, to work.¹³²

It is this sense of enlightenment Rwandans appear to have achieved which interested me, and the way in which interviewees believed that this was something they could share with the rest of the Commonwealth. But was this really something Rwanda could transfer to other members of the Commonwealth?

6.4 Conclusions: Rwanda as cosmopolitan exemplar?

At the beginning of this chapter, and as a follow on from my discussion of methodology in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5, I discussed some of the problems of doing research in Rwanda as a result of the RPF government's attempts to control the image of the Rwandan post-genocide state. In this climate of surveillance, where any questioning of the so-called state of unity created by the government's ethnicity law might be considered a crime, it becomes difficult, as I have discussed, when conducting interviews, to separate interviewee's personal opinion from that of the standard government line.

In comparison to interviews carried out in Zimbabwe, where each interview produced rather different answers than the one before, my interviews in Rwanda produced seemingly similar results. This leads me to wonder whether the interviewees were, for all intents and purposes, painting the RPF's version of Commonwealth-Rwanda relations that it wished the rest of the world to see. This is not to say that my interviewee's responses to my questions about the Commonwealth's effect on Rwanda were not significant to my research. The very fact that interviewees appeared at times to be towing the government line told me very important things about Rwanda's contribution to the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism. If Rwanda was curtailing freedom of speech as well as clamping down on Rwandans discussing ethnicity, then this was going against the main tenets of cosmopolitan theory, which are individualism, egalitarianism, and equal rights.

¹³² Interview with Rwandan Trade Unionist, Kigali, 19 January 2015.

In this chapter, then, I have been discussing the effect of Rwanda's membership on the Commonwealth, as well as the effect of the Commonwealth on Rwanda. But there is a darker story, that I have only briefly alluded to in the discussion so far. This is the idea that Rwanda is still a very violent state, where the government, through the aid of draconian measures, that have attempted to redefine Rwandan identity and curtail freedom of speech, has tight control of what people are allowed to say, do, and think.¹³³ Since the genocide ended, the RPF have been accused of a long list of human rights violations and intimidation tactics which include: mass killings, uprooting the rural poor, the arbitrary arrest of journalists, the attempt to discredit International Criminal Tribunal judges, and the intimidation of aid agencies.¹³⁴ The fall out and banishment of the BBC, that I discussed earlier in the chapter, was, it seems, one of the latest, in a long line of people, or organisations, that has criticised what appears to be a very volatile government that does not take criticism lightly.¹³⁵

The story of Rwanda's accession to the Commonwealth is set against the backdrop of this government repression. Although justified to a large extent as being necessary to improve Rwandan ties with the East African Community, the decision to apply for Commonwealth membership is widely interpreted (particularly by the Western media) as an insidious ploy, by both the Rwandan government and the British, to castigate the French. For the British, this is part of an ongoing Francophobe rivalry, but, for the Rwandans, it is a much more serious castigation that is connected to France's role in the 1994 genocide.¹³⁶ The turn to English as the official second language of Rwanda plays a large role in this. Kagame and many of Rwanda's highest ranking politicians are returnees from exile in neighbouring Anglophone states - particularly Uganda - and have largely succeeded in pushing out any Francophone influence, which they see as being connected to the French government. But the switch to English has also had a detrimental effect on the education and employment opportunities of many Francophone Rwandans, as I discussed in the main body of this chapter.¹³⁷ None of the aforementioned intimidation tactics or human rights violations suggest that

¹³³ Filip Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹³⁴ Alex Bellamy, *Massacres and Morality: Mass Atrocities in an Age of Civilian Immunity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 345.

¹³⁵ Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, 124-62.

¹³⁶ See Kroslak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide*.

¹³⁷ Hintjens, 'Post-genocide identity politics in Rwanda'; Samuelson and Freedman, 'Language policy, multilingual education, and power in Rwanda'.

Rwanda could be the poster-child for an international organisation's attempts to be cosmopolitan. Where, then, does this get us in as far as the main point of the chapter, which has been to understand how Rwanda might be an exemplar case for the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism?

I have suggested - based on commentary from my interviewees - that there are ways in which both Rwanda and the Commonwealth have been mutually beneficial to each other. Rwanda has opened up the Commonwealth to more inclusivity and diversity, has brought with it expertise on conflict resolution, and is an exemplar state for gender equality. Conversely, the Commonwealth has provided Rwanda with access to a wider economic community, through which it can boost its economy and the wellbeing of Rwandans, as well as bringing Rwanda more in line with its fellow East African Community member states. Additionally, Rwandans can now benefit from access to Commonwealth educational scholarships; although, nothing here suggests that these are particularly or exclusively cosmopolitan endeavours. But is this enough to claim that Rwanda as an ideal model for Commonwealth cosmopolitanism?

If the criteria for cosmopolitan exemplar were simply expansion and inclusivity, then the answer would be yes. But it would be simplistic to suggest that inclusivity and acceptance of the 'Other' were the only cosmopolitan criteria under investigation. What about human rights, democracy, and the rule of law? Having weighed up my interviewee testimony alongside the actions of the Rwandan state, it is not clear, in practical terms, how Rwanda could ever be an *exemplar* for the Commonwealth's turn to cosmopolitanism. My conclusion then is that, *theoretically*, as a blank canvas on which to build a cleaner platform for cosmopolitanism, without the family baggage that accompanies other Commonwealth Anglophone states, Rwanda, for the Commonwealth, was an exemplary choice, which brought with it concrete lessons about the dark side of malignant communitarianism. However, on a more practical scale, it is difficult to reconcile the idea that Rwanda is an exemplary model of equality, universality, and egalitarianism when the Rwandan government is exercising what we might call anti-cosmopolitan tactics against its own population.

If there is a relevance for the United Nations then we must say there is a relevance for the Commonwealth, because these are all building blocks of the one big global family. When we came into independence, Mugabe said we would like to build one united nation and there is a place for all of us under the Zimbabwe sun. There must be a place for all of us under the African sun, and there must be a place for all of us under the global sun. So, on that basis, quite clearly any constellation of like-minded must remain relevant.

- *Zimbabwean Politician*, 20 March 2015

Conclusion

I began this thesis with the observation that relations between post-colonial states in the African Commonwealth, and their former coloniser Britain, appear to offer a more nuanced understanding of relations between states in the international arena than is typically theorised by communitarian IR theorists. Communitarian IR theory implies and depends upon assumptions about the homogeneity of families and communities and the way we are tied to the communities into which we are 'to begin with.'¹ This means that who we are, where we were born, and the cultural practices we inherit, form the basis of our identities and relationships and, communitarians argue, control the boundaries of our relationships and ethical responsibilities. In the conventional communitarian thesis, the most meaningful cultural and ethical ties are those between people, families, communities in the domestic arena, nevertheless, as I have shown in the preceding chapters, relations between Commonwealth states often appear to take on these communitarian traits.

My ambition in this work has been twofold. Firstly, to investigate the idea put forward by Commonwealth Secretary Generals and some British policymakers that the Commonwealth is a family of nations by looking at African understandings of the Commonwealth and the idea that it is a family, while at the same time injecting some long overdue critical and theoretical analysis into what is a very stale and prosaic Commonwealth literature. And, secondly, to explore ideas and identity among Commonwealth member states through the lens of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism in normative IR theory. Viewing the Commonwealth through the twin lenses of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism is a risk that I have been encouraged to take by Rahul Rao's study of the language of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism in subaltern protest.² Equally frustrated with the neat polarisation of cosmopolitanism and

¹ Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*.

² Rahul Rao, *Third World Protest: Between Home and the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Brett Bowden presents a similar criterion but opts for a different solution/conclusion. For Bowden, the more plausible or desirable option would be reconciliation between the two opposing concepts. See Brett Bowden, 'Nationalism and

communitarianism by authors such as Chris Brown and Janna Thompson, Rao maintains that one is faced with at least three ways of drawing conclusions when confronted with such polarities. These are: (1) to come down firmly on one side and defend your chosen position; (2) to reconcile the two with a third way or middle path; or (3) to hold the polarities in tension with one another 'using each to provide critical perspective on the other but recognising the kernel of truth in both.'³ I confess, at times during this research project I have not known *exactly* where the Commonwealth sits in Rao's typology. This is because, the Commonwealth appears to be both communitarian and cosmopolitan, giving it the appearance of being suspended between both theories, as I have argued, in a kind of threshold zone. This is not a third way or a reconciliation, rather, the organisation often appears to be in limbo between looking to the communitarian past and looking towards the cosmopolitan future.

The most important observation for this argument has been the view of the Commonwealth through the communitarian lens. This began in Chapter 3, with my attempt to bring together many of the elements that run through communitarian theory which serve to underscore what communitarian theorists mean when they invoke the notion of community. A comprehensive view of what communitarians mean when they talk about community is lacking in the literature. Nevertheless if we read the work of communitarians alongside one another, then we begin to see a pattern emerge of inheritance, shared history and values, and solidarity (a 'we-feeling'). The Commonwealth fits this pattern rather well as I have shown. The shared history and values between Commonwealth states - which include shared language, shared legal and administrative systems, and, to some extent, culture - all work together to underscore the fact that when we view the organisation through a communitarian lens, the Commonwealth family appears to be communitarian. But rather than conform to a neatly packaged, over-simplified culturally homogenous community, the Commonwealth is a much messier and more ambiguous family/community than the one put forward by communitarians.

All of these things point towards the many ways in which the Commonwealth troubles the communitarian thesis. But while the Commonwealth appears to be

Cosmopolitanism: Irreconcilable Difference or Possible Bedfellows?' *National Identities* 5, no. 3 (2003): 237.

³ Rao, *Third World Protest*, 201.

communitarian, as I have shown, it has also attempted to be cosmopolitan with a turn towards a more individual-rights-for-individual-family-members approach. This was based largely on the search for a new focus, after the dismantling of the apartheid regime in South Africa effectively brought the Commonwealth's mission to facilitate the process of decolonisation to an end. When the problems in Zimbabwe challenged the Commonwealth's attempts to protect the rights of ordinary Zimbabweans, the organisation turned its gaze towards new membership criteria and expansion as a way of maintaining a cosmopolitan focus. Having been damaged by the withdrawal of Zimbabwe and the loss of one of its most prolific family members, the Commonwealth needed something different, something less steeped in the messiness of family and the grubby infighting between family members. Rwanda provided that 'something.' As a fragile state attempting to leave behind its own problematic and malignant communitarianism, Rwanda provided a blank canvas onto which the Commonwealth family could project its ideal cosmopolitan aspirations. But with the Rwandan government attempting, rather brutally, to control the way in which Rwandans talk about themselves and their identity, in a bid to not repeat the violence of the recent past, could Rwanda's accession really help project the Commonwealth from a messy family where members fight into a cosmopolitan organisation?

The empirical side of the thesis explored this question in relation to the thoughts and views of a number of Rwandan elites as they reflected on what being a member of the Commonwealth family meant to the Rwandan people. The language they used expressed strongly cosmopolitan themes: they idealised the Anglophone organisation and the ability of the Commonwealth to look towards the future, and they appeared to see their own membership as a way to help fellow Commonwealth members to heal the wounds of the past and cast their gaze towards the future too. But the ways in which they talked about the Commonwealth, particularly the ways in which most interviewees appeared to provide uniform answers, seemed to suggest that the image of Commonwealth-Rwandan relations was something that the Rwandan government were very much concerned with portraying as ideal. Perhaps this is not surprising. It seems unlikely that these elites would want to go against the government line, especially since Rwanda's membership in the Commonwealth is still relatively new and relationships are developing. But with the reality of the Rwandan government's steadfast grip on the civil and political rights of Rwandans, in time this might mean that as far as the Commonwealth's communitarian aspirations are

concerned, the accession of Rwanda might prove to be more of a stillborn child than the saviour of the ideal cosmopolitan organisation.

When I raised the issue of Rwanda's Commonwealth membership with Zimbabweans, some elites, as I discussed in Chapter 5, expressed annoyance that the Commonwealth had allowed Rwanda in. For Zimbabweans, currently on the outside of the Commonwealth family looking in, states such as Rwanda, which did not share the history or values of the Commonwealth family were ruining the fabric of the organisation. This was one of the many ways in which Zimbabwe proved to be an exemplary case for problematising the idea of the family. Zimbabwe, a member of the Commonwealth through its shared history, withdrew from the Commonwealth when the family criticism became too much for the Zimbabwean president to handle. But, while the Zimbabwean head of state withdrew Zimbabwe from the organisation, many Zimbabweans themselves argue that they are still a part of the Commonwealth family. This dichotomy between inside and outside grew messier in the language that Zimbabweans used to reflect on their troubled state's withdrawal from the Commonwealth which, in a reversal of the Rwandan cosmopolitan approach to Commonwealth membership, reflected strongly communitarian themes. The search for ways to comprehend what some Zimbabweans thought was a betrayal or abandonment of the Zimbabwean people by the rest of the Commonwealth family, coupled with the belief that Zimbabwe would return to the Commonwealth because of its shared history with the group, gave a real insight into the messiness of the Commonwealth family.

Memory theorist Gavriel Rosenfeld has suggested that we look back to the past only when times are easy and we have the luxury to do so.⁴ But this overlooks how the difficult present is more likely to encourage an interest in the past, as historian Dan Stone observes - the more uncertain the present and future is, the more important memory becomes to people.⁵ This appears to be the case with Zimbabwe. As the Zimbabwean state sinks further into disarray and the markers of Zimbabwean sovereignty begin to erode,⁶ Zimbabwean interviewees reflect their anxiety and despair with their current situation by casting their gaze back to a different time in a family that is credited as helping to bring Zimbabwe to

⁴ Gavriel Rosenfeld, 'A looming crash or a soft landing? Forecasting the future of the memory 'industry'', *Journal of Modern History* 81 (2009): 12-58.

⁵ Dan Stone, 'Memory wars in the 'New Europe'', in *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History*, ed. Dan Stone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 730.

⁶ Julia Gallagher, 'Creating a state: A Kleinian reading of recognition in Zimbabwe's regional relationships', *European Journal of International Relations* (2015): 7.

independence. The Zimbabwean case proved that even though families are messy, dark, and often cruel places, no matter what happens within a family, the ties between members will always be thicker. While, on the one hand, this appears to confirm the communitarian idea of thick ties between family, community, tribe, and nation, on the other hand, it shows how and why the Zimbabwean case is exemplary in troubling the idea that these ties are confined to the domestic arena.

What I have attempted to do in this thesis then is both to pin down, and open up to scrutiny, the way communitarian theorists theorise and understand communities. I have sought to complicate existing communitarian theory by reaching further back than such theories usually do, and by concentrating pre-eminently on the Commonwealth family in Africa. The discussion of the Commonwealth's communitarianism highlights a pattern in how the past is related to ongoing identity. The shared history of Commonwealth states appears to be important for the states themselves and not simply for the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth literature, which frequently refers to the Commonwealth as a unique and special family. What this means for communitarian IR theory is that, in as far as historical relations go, when we adjust the lens to take in the historical relationships between states in these metaphorical families of nations, relationships appear much more nuanced.

Harking back to Rao's typology earlier in the chapter then, these findings situate the Commonwealth - although perhaps slightly more nuanced - within the third category. While the case of Zimbabwe points towards family-like ties between states, the case of Rwanda shows that there is room for accommodation and inclusiveness in spite of the critical baggage that accompanies such a move. The Commonwealth's attempts to be both cosmopolitan and communitarian provides a tension that while shaking up the organisation's communitarianism by opening membership up to more states, has not done any serious damage. This may open the Commonwealth up to a more critical perspective and bring Commonwealth literature itself out of its current lethargic impasse and into the much brighter light of tension, analysis, and critical perspective. But, is this enough to seal the fate of the Commonwealth's endurance?

Moving beyond the theoretical focus, I noted at the beginning of the thesis that one of the aims of the thesis was also to reflect on the family as the key to Commonwealth endurance. It was tempting to argue at the outset that the potency

of the family label was merely a metaphor employed by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Queen. Nevertheless, the familial language employed by Zimbabwean elites, coupled with the curious attachment to the Queen, displayed through the years by a number of African heads of state, has proven to be more than mere rhetoric. Even when rogue family members and their demonised leaders, such as Zimbabwe and Robert Mugabe, truly problematise the idea of family by withdrawing from the Commonwealth altogether, there remains a sense of affection towards the Queen. With the passing of the big independence leaders such as Nehru and Nkrumah, feelings of Commonwealth loyalty have begun to fade and the ties of kith and kin dissolved. One need only look towards Barbados and Jamaica,⁷ as well as Australia, New Zealand and Tuvalu, that have all attempted to become republics thus loosening the familial bonds between themselves and the British motherland.

So far in the chapter, I have tried to bring together the main points and threads running throughout the thesis that reflect on and help to provide answers to the puzzle that I outlined in the introduction to the thesis. But one of the other issues raised, and one of the reasons behind the genesis of this project, was my frustration with the lack of any critical or theoretical analysis on the Commonwealth. In the introduction chapter, I explained that this thesis is one of a minority of studies that takes a critical and theoretical approach to the Commonwealth, as well as adding a further original element in the inclusion of African voices, for the first time in the literature. As Rwanda is still a relatively new member of the Commonwealth - only joining in 2009 - there is still a dearth of information on the state's accession, integration, and effect on the Commonwealth. This thesis is the first in-depth study of Rwanda-Commonwealth relations, and has made an original contribution to Commonwealth literature both by including empirical evidence in the form of interviews with Rwandan elites and by laying down the foundations for future theoretical and critical research and analysis on both the Commonwealth itself and on Rwanda. But, while a more in-depth analysis of the history, relations, and possible future of the Commonwealth family label has offered a much broader focus and opened up the Commonwealth to scrutiny, there are many more issues around Commonwealth state relations, questions about expansion, and skeletons in the Commonwealth family closet that are ripe for critical and theoretical excavation.

⁷ Mortimer, 'Jamaica's Prime Minister says they want to ditch the Queen but keep the Commonwealth'.

Beginning with the question of relevance, for example. I observed in Chapter 6 that it has become a cliché for Commonwealth officials, and in the Commonwealth literature, to observe that the organisation must still be relevant because there are a number of states evincing an interest in joining. The question that arises from this observation is whether Rwanda was really considered, from the beginning, to be a test case for the organisation's cosmopolitanism; or did the East African state's accession to the Commonwealth simply help the British and Rwandan governments advance a francophobe agenda? The answer, I believe, is both. The question of which came first is now irrelevant, as Rwanda is now firmly a part of the Commonwealth, but how Rwandans view the Commonwealth and its usefulness and relevance to the Rwandan state may have repercussions for the Commonwealth's future. This is because, as I observed in Chapter 6, there were certain points in the discussion with Rwandan interviewees where I got the impression that Rwanda would only remain in the Commonwealth as long as it was convenient to the Rwandan government's agenda. Rwanda's role in the Commonwealth resonates keenly with the organisation's attempts to be cosmopolitan in the way in which it projects and positions itself as an egalitarian member of an organisation, come to lend its expertise in conflict management and reconciliation. But what happens to the Commonwealth's cosmopolitanism, or indeed the organisation's relevance, if, or when, the exemplar state leaves?

Second, there is the question of memory. I referred, throughout the thesis, to the fact that the Commonwealth rarely delves deeper into its past beyond the simple platitudes to its shared history. Although the idea of memory threatened to take a more active role at many points throughout this thesis, a detailed analysis of why the Commonwealth does not address its memory problem, how far this ties into the British view of the Empire as benevolent, and the effects this has had on Britain's relations with certain Commonwealth states, has been beyond this study. There has never been a sustained discussion of memory among Britain and members of the Commonwealth family, even when the opportunity has presented itself quite clearly in the form of an ongoing lawsuit between the survivors of concentration camps in Kenya and the British government. The lawsuit has exposed the British concealment of documentation of the systemic torture carried out by the British colonial administration in Kenya during the Mau Mau

rebellion.⁸ The former Foreign Secretary, William Hague, in 2013, issued a statement in the House of Commons that the British were not responsible for the sins of their fathers;⁹ this is a very different approach to how other Commonwealth member states have dealt with their own family histories.¹⁰ Hague's statement, and the discovery of more incriminating evidence of the systemic violence carried out by the British colonial administrations across the Empire, raises an interesting question: how have other Commonwealth member states responded to the ongoing Mau Mau lawsuits? What do Commonwealth member states, beyond Kenya, think about the subject of colonial compensation and reparation? And, moreover, will further claims, from other parts of the Commonwealth, affect the so called unity and uniqueness of the Commonwealth?

Moving beyond memory, a third important question that I have been unable to develop is how far the approach of this study can be complicated further by different approaches to, and cultural understandings of, what is meant by family and the different members in it. At the beginning of the thesis I outlined the definition of the family, for the purposes of the thesis, was based on a British notion of family, this, I noted, was because of the British usage of the language of family to refer to the wider Empire, and the ongoing use of familial language, to describe the Commonwealth, by the Queen. Additionally, for example, in Chapter 2, I highlighted issues which I noted seemed to demand a more psychoanalytical approach to questions around the Queen's historical relationship with some Commonwealth heads of state - such as Kwame Nkrumah. Would a psychoanalytical - perhaps feminist - analysis of these often seemingly erotic relationships give a much different platform from which to launch a study on the Commonwealth family? I argue that it would. The effects to which a

⁸ Caroline Elkins, 'Britain has said sorry to the Mau Mau. The rest of the empire is still waiting', *The Guardian*, 7 June 2013. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/06/britain-maumu-empire-waiting>. For a discussion of the aftermath of the lawsuit and memory in Kenya see also, Mwanzia Koster, Mickie, 'Recasting the Mau Mau uprising: Reparations, narration, and memory', in *Kenya after 50: Reconfiguring Historical, Political, and Policy Milestones*, eds. Michael Mwenda Kithinji, Mickie Mwanzia Koster and Jerono P. Rotich (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 49-63.

⁹ William Hague, 'Statement to Parliament on settlement of Mau Mau claims', 2013. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-to-parliament-on-settlement-of-mau-mau-claims>.

¹⁰ I refer here to the different truth and reconciliation commissions that have taken place in recent Commonwealth history, the most recent of which - the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission - came to an end in December 2015 when the Commission released its final report. For the full report see: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 'Findings'. Available at: <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>.

psychoanalytical approach to the Queen's role as mother, and the different approaches and reactions to this, is fascinating and could help to further complicate the messiness of the Commonwealth family label.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I discussed the ways in which Zimbabweans understand their government's withdrawal from the Commonwealth and the ways in which many of the Zimbabweans, who I interviewed, claimed that although their state is officially no longer a member of the Commonwealth, only the President left, the rest of Zimbabwe is still in it. But Zimbabwe is not the only African state that has withdrawn from the Commonwealth in recent years. In 2013, on the eve of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Sri Lanka, the Gambian President Yahya Jammeh made a surprise announcement to the Gambian people that their state was withdrawing from the Commonwealth declaring that Gambia would, 'never be a member of any neo-colonial institution and will never be a party to any institution that represents an extension of colonialism.'¹¹

Although the Commonwealth Secretariat and the British Government expressed regret over Gambia's withdrawal, the difference in the reaction to Zimbabwe's withdrawal and the reaction to Gambia's withdrawal is striking. Where the Commonwealth has been concerned with the return of Zimbabwe, almost to the point of obsession, nothing much has been said about Gambia's return. The degree to which the reaction to the Zimbabwean and Gambian cases differ is fascinating in itself, but an empirical study of Gambian opinion on the situation, and whether Gambians feel that Gambia will return to the Commonwealth in the future might help to further complicate the communitarian view of the Commonwealth family through a comparison of two African states that have withdrawn from the Commonwealth - one of which talks about return to the family, and another which has possibly turned its back on Commonwealth membership altogether.

Objections will undoubtedly be raised that the excavation I have carried out in this study is focused too heavily on the African Commonwealth and thereby excludes important Asian or Caribbean representations that may have provided much different views of the Commonwealth and the family, particularly from the point of race. I plead guilty to this and believe that my reasons for focusing on the African Commonwealth - because the cases of Zimbabwe and Rwanda are

¹¹ BBC, 'UK regrets the Gambia's withdrawal from the Commonwealth'.

exemplars of the cosmopolitan and communitarian debate - has been justified. Nevertheless, my brief discussion of the pivotal role of Nehru and India in the theoretical chapters of the thesis raises the question of India's role in the Commonwealth today. Is India's membership as important to Commonwealth endurance as it was almost seventy years ago? How does India view its relationship with the organisation today? And finally, if India withdrew, would other states follow? These are all questions for another thesis.

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