



# ‘The Wind of Change’: a rhetorical political analysis of Harold Macmillan’s 1960 ‘decolonization’ speech

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Accepted: 20 May 2023  
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## Abstract

This article contributes to the literature on Conservative Party politics through an exploration of the political rhetoric of former Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader, Harold Macmillan in relation to decolonization and the end of empire. Macmillan’s *Wind of Change* speech has been analysed in the existing literature as purely a historical moment in relation to imperial decline. This article contends that Macmillan’s arguments for and defence of decolonisation in fact remain relevant for modern understandings of contemporary Conservative Party politics because residual affections for imperialism remain within some conservative audiences, as well as the ongoing processes of decolonisation. He sought to address such sentiments at the time of delivery, yet they remain today amongst similar audiences who remain committed to imperial notions. As such, simply considering the speech as a historic moment is inadequate given its value as an enduring argument relevant to contemporary conservative debates. Because of the language and justification used, I re-evaluate the speech through the process of ‘Rhetorical Political Analysis’ (*ethos, pathos, logos*). By doing so, I will demonstrate how Macmillan’s historical speech remains relevant as a living argument for scholars and practitioners of Conservative Party politics, which is a perspective presently absent in the scholarship. This methodological approach is also augmented by an analysis of archival materials helping to shed light on the embeddedness of the speech within the broader context of the tumultuous South African politics of the time, and by doing so show why a speech delivered in the 1960s remains relevant to UK domestic policy, foreign policy, and conservative studies in the 2020s.

**Keywords** Conservative party · Harold Macmillan · Rhetoric · Wind of Change · Africa · Decolonization

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## Introduction

Harold Macmillan's *Wind of Change* speech has been the focus of substantial historical research that focused on decolonisation as a 'postcolonial moment' (Irwin 2009); or as a response to 'Cold War politics and the need to prevent Soviet penetration in Africa' (Ovendale 1995); or simply as part of Macmillan's personal 'intervention in South African politics' (Dubow 2011). Each of these contextualise the speech as a singular moment, noting its importance as a speech signifying the process of the end of Empire at the start of the 1960s or as a response to immediate global pressures, but with little consideration of rhetorical significance and wider legacy of the speech.

I contend that there is more to be said given the language and overarching messages of the speech have enduring significance in the longer-term processes of decolonisation that go beyond the point of delivery in 1960, transcending subsequent decades over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. It is not simply a fixed historical moment, especially given decolonisation today continues as an ongoing process. Because of this, Macmillan's anti-imperialist message goes beyond the immediate point of delivery, thereby demonstrating contemporary significance for scholars of conservatism today.

The overarching significance of the speech was that it told supporters of imperialism that there was no future in such ventures. Needless to say, this was met with imperialist resistance (for example immediately following delivery, Apartheid Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd put 'an impromptu defence of his policies "for justice for the white man"' to a vote in Parliament (Macmillan 1972, p. 159). But such reactions did not subvert the fact the age of empires was over. The significance of the speech at the time of deliver was to confront imperialists with this reality. Decolonisation today faces a similar need because there is deeper and contemporary meaning to the speech, particularly given the longevity of romanticised imperial sympathies within aspects of the wider conservative up to present day. I would therefore contend that through a rhetorical analysis of the speech, such contemporary significances can be identified.

In terms of the value of rhetorical analyses, it is important to remember how RPA has proven to be a methodologically robust and tested approach to linguistic analysis in prior scholarship (Crines et al. 2015; Crines and Heppell 2016; Finlayson and Martin 2008; Roe-Crines and Heppell 2019). Here, it produced original insights on historically delivered speeches by Enoch Powell (Rivers of Blood), Margaret Thatcher (Bruges Speech) (Thatcher 2004), and Nigel Farage (conference speeches). These analyses deconstructed the speechmaker's tropes, multi-layered meanings of identity, ideology, sovereignty by emphasizing how an orator uses them to produce memorable speeches. In the case of Macmillan, he particularly relies on his character as a senior figure within British Politics to advance evidence-based arguments thereby hindering critical retorts from those seeking to disregard or ignore the message of imperial decline. This shows how RPA can highlight why a speech resonates, particularly as it travels beyond the immediate audience in a way positivist discourse analyses are unable to do. This is in



contrast to the discursive approaches formulated by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe that restrict analyses to macro articulations, antagonisms, and state hegemony which removes the speechmaker from the analytical process (Machado 2014).

Thus at its most fundamental the intellectual agenda of this article is to examine the contemporary value of ancient theories of political communication upon a key set-piece Prime Ministerial speech. As argued by Bitzer (1968) rhetorical discourse analysis requires a specific response to a specific problem. Indeed, he argued that 'it is the situation which calls the rhetorical discourse into existence' (Bitzer 1968). This can be broken down as an 'imperfection marked by urgency'; an audience needed to resolve the issue; and the power/authority to resolve the situation through narratology and storytelling (Bitzer 1968). For Macmillan, the urgency was 'in approaching the final stages of the evolution of the remaining colonial territories into independent states' (Macmillan 1972, p. 117). He went on to argue that 'many parts of Africa... suffered from the careless, some might even say criminal, methods by which the different portions of the newly discovered parts of Africa were divided during the grab for colonies by the rival European powers' (Macmillan 1972, p. 125). The speech was a response to 'the emergence of nationalisms in the African continent' and the regime seeking 'the impossibility of [nations] living in isolation' (Macmillan 1972, p. 158). By conducting a rhetorical political analysis of the speech, we can contextualize the language used at the point of delivery to uncover the response, linking in the consequences for historic imperialism and its contemporary relevance to debates over decolonization. Furthermore, noting the significance of the speech, Macmillan also argued the aim was to 'steer a steady and consistent course and, without shirking the controversial issues, to concentrate on large issues of public policy in my main speeches. Of these the two most important were made at Salisbury and Cape Town. In private discussions with the various leaders I adopted the plan of treating them as partners in a joint enterprise' (Macmillan 1972).

A further aim of the article is to evaluate the impact of the speech on domestic attitudes towards accepting already ongoing processes of imperial decline at the time of delivery, and how these impacted upon the direction of conservatism in British Politics. This is an issue because despite the initiation of the processes of decolonization after the Second World War, many remained sympathetic to the notion of a British Empire and resisted the idea it was in a state of decay. Macmillan's keynote speech was delivered at a time when 'the people of British descent' in South Africa remained 'determined to demonstrate their loyalties' to a bygone era (Macmillan 1972, p. 160). Those with such residual loyalties were the audiences Macmillan sought to address, thereby demonstrating the importance of the moment and its historical significance with the aim of challenging this imperialist legacy (Simpson 2020).

Therefore, I will conduct an Aristotelian Rhetorical Political Analysis of Macmillan's speech as a way of presenting fresh insights into his speech to the South African Parliament in Cape Town, 1960 (Myers 2000). RPA is one of the main methodological approaches to the study of rhetoric because it provides a robust and tested typology that emphasizes various qualities of the linguistic tones of the speaker, desirable calls to action in the political message, and distinctive conclusions other



approaches such as conventional critical discourse analysis is unable to (Gaffney & Atkins 2017, p. 3). Reflecting on classical rhetorical theory, John Gaffney argues ‘rhetoric tends to use ethos as a preface to logos and pathos’ because of the importance of character and persona which enables us to see how ‘argument and emotion interact with one another to consequential reaction’ (Gaffney & Atkins 2017, p. 3). It is the discovery of what is said, how, and what reaction flows from the audience which makes the typology valuable as a means of deconstructing political speech. Thus, their application here is predicated upon deconstructing each of these key areas of rhetorical analysis.

Before proceeding further, I should like to contextualize the speech in the wider process of British decolonization in the postwar period and its role in the normalization and acceptance of anti-imperialist sentiments within the arguments of leading British conservatives.

## The Wind of Change speech

Macmillan’s speech is remembered as key moment in the acceleration in the incomplete process of British decolonization. The significance of the speech is that it would seek to convince Macmillan’s targeted domestic audience to concede that the British Empire was in the process of irreversible decline; that independence of colonial countries would be granted to indigenous-majority countries that demanded it; and that the changes on the world stage were revolving towards power-blocs of countries (such as in Europe) rather than the old Empires (Myers 2000; Horne 1989). Despite these extensive aims, the speech is remembered mostly for the famous single line ‘the wind of change is blowing through this [African] continent. Whether [the British] like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact’ (Macmillan 1960). This memorable line shows to the domestic audience that the realities of change that necessitated decolonization were already underway (Babou 2010), and that the choice of the imperial powers was to either accept the inevitable, or deal with the consequences of decolonization when they occurred regardless (Riley 2017). This was a choice of destinies from which domestic audiences had retreated over the preceding years, preferring instead to romanticise imperial significance where the power of the colonial masters overrode those of majority indigenous populations (Marshall 1979). Indeed, a ‘common view was that the *empire* always *had* allies’ (Edgerton 2021). Thus, the significance of the speech was such that it represented an acceptance that there was no place in the modern world for the old European Empires. Indeed, ‘the emergence of the Cold War in the period after World War II sowed the seeds for structural changes’ which transformed the UK ‘from an imperial power into a European player’ given ‘the British Empire declined as a global power’ (Luthi 2020). This was especially significant given the Cold War shifted geopolitics towards the two global power blocs of the United States and the Soviet Union. It was those ‘wider geo-political considerations [which] underpinned Macmillan and Macleod’s conviction that a reorientation of British policy towards colonial Africa was required’ (Butler and Stockwell 2013, p. 7).



Furthermore, the speech had three main objectives. The first was to embrace the process of decolonization which remaining imperialists had resisted by ignoring the rise of nationalist movements in indigenous African nations; the second was to condemn the racism of the white-dominated apartheid regime of the South African *National Party* since coming to power in June 1948 (Ingalls 1960); and third, to acknowledge that the UK had little control over the decline of its Empire and that the shifting international contexts and hostilities towards imperialism were not only inevitable but a present shift in global attitudes. Indeed, as Pierce (2009) notes, 'Macmillan clearly indicates the British realization that decolonization was inevitable'. These objectives pointed towards trying to convince his audiences to accept imperial decline. Toye (2013a) also notes that there was further objective of confronting 'white minority leaders such as Sir Roy Welensky' (Prime Minister of colonial Rhodesia and Myasaland) and those sympathetic to white supremacy (Toye 2013a, p. 147). Indeed, such was Welensky's white supremacy that he had expressed the doubly racist view that indigenous 'Africans would have been no more significant than the American Indians' (Cross 1968, p. 336).

These objectives ran contrary to prior Conservative objectives to slow or end the process of decolonization initiated under Attlee's 1945–1951 Labour government (Theakston 2012). This was because 'under Churchill's leadership, the Conservatives portrayed the Attlee government's approach as one of "scuttle", an unseemly refusal to live up to Britain's imperial responsibilities' (Toye 2013a, p. 143). Furthermore, Conservatives highlighted the hasty partitioning of India by the British in 1947 who believed that such an occurrence could be avoided by ignoring calls for independence by other countries. This, however proved impossible because 'Indian independence... represented a watershed, and was quickly followed by British withdrawal from Burma, Ceylon and Palestine' (Toye 2013a, p. 143). Furthermore, the humiliating consequences of the Suez crisis (Martel 2002) and the longstanding demands for independence from majority-indigenous populations on the African continent (Moyd 2017) created a set of circumstances that were impossible for imperialists to continue to ignore. The significance of the speech was that it accepted a set of shifting anti-colonialist global realities that were already in place at the time of delivery, and that these were out of the hands of imperialists to reverse (Evans 2012). Thus, the speech should be a *reaction* to longstanding events, rather than one which shaped circumstances favorable to a British timetable for decolonization (Robb 2015). Thus, the speech was a call to British imperialists to accept that the Empire was over, and that decolonization was a choice between either orderly independence or disorderly independence.

## Impacts of the speech

Harold Macmillan's first use of the phrase *wind of change* was made to a State Banquet in Ghana capital, Accra. This instance failed to resonate due to the lack of interest from journalists, who 'regarded it as a statement of the obvious' (Wintour 2008). However, 2 months later, it was again used in his keynote speech in South Africa to an assembly of Parliamentarians, which included South African Prime Minister,



party leader of the *National Party*, and architect of apartheid, Hendrik Verwoerd. The South Africa Prime Minister was a prime target of Macmillan's condemnation which was 'a none-too-subtle message for Prime Minister Hendrick Verwoerd and the Nationalist Party in South Africa' (Ward 2013, p. 49). Furthermore, it would also simultaneously be presented as a response to Verwoerd's unexpected calls for a referendum to ask whether the Union of South Africa should become the Republic of South Africa. Macmillan's speech would be an opportunity for him to challenge this aim and to condemn the racist apartheid regime which the white nationalist minority had used to dominate the civil society of South Africa and dominate the majority indigenous culture. As is well documented, the apartheid regime was deeply oppressive to the indigenous majority population, thus putting themselves in opposition to both the majority of South Africans and Macmillan's own commitment 'to retreating from the colonies' (National Archives 1963).

In terms of the broader contexts of delivery, the nationalist steps towards becoming a white-dominated independent republic can be seen as an extension of the drift away from the values of the Commonwealth and an attempt to secure more power for the white minority of nationalist rulers (Schmidt 2013). Moreover, in the immediate aftermath of the delivery of the speech, the Sharpeville Massacre by the apartheid regime (Wheatley 2020) and the Langa March on March 30th (South African History Archives 1960a) would demonstrate the scale of escalating violent opposition to the regime (until its eventual collapse in 1993), alongside international condemnation of the regime by the United Nations Security Council (Stulz 1991). In this context, the nationalists introduced the 'state of emergency' that would be declared thereby enabling the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (Gurney 2000). Within these contexts, the tense republican referendum took place on October 5th 1960, returning a result of 52.29% in favor of South Africa becoming a republic, and 47.71% opposed to South Africa becoming a republic (South African History Archives 1960b). Such was consolidation of the regime, that the eventual withdrawal from the Commonwealth took place in May 1961 following pressure from member states against the tide of apartheid racist authoritarianism (Makin 1997).

Needless to say, Macmillan's speech was a single event within a wider trajectory of such events, however the significance of the speech is that it confronted the regimes policies directly whilst promoting an acceptance that colonial countries with indigenous majorities who demand independence should be granted self-governance, thereby challenging the existence of the apartheid regime. Indeed, such was the significance and longevity of the impact of the speech that Nelson Mandela 'is said to have thought Macmillan's speech 'terrific'' (Dubow 2011, p. 1103) and that, when he addressed the Houses of Parliament in London in 1996, reflected that 'we are in the Houses in which Harold Macmillan worked: he who spoke in our own Houses of Parliament in Cape Town in 1960' (Mandela 1996).

Succinctly, the purpose of the speech was to outline a clear roadmap for British withdrawal from the African continent as a colonial power. Alongside this, Macmillan sought to promote autonomous states governed by indigenous majorities within those nations. These aims would take many years to realize, but they frame the significance of the speech in the road to the end of Empire (Ovendale 1995). A further



ambition would be to connect the future international destiny of the UK with those of the United States in opposition to the Soviet Union, and also to foster a closer destiny connected to Europe (Ashton 2005). The rationale underscoring these aims would be for the UK to begin the process of accepting and embracing decolonization whilst moving on to accept new roles on the world stage. A further aim of the speech, for which it can largely be judged a failure, would be to persuade the minority white population that was supportive of apartheid to embrace the principle of majority population rule (Fitzmaurice 2017). A consequence of the speech was to motivate the struggle for the liberation of indigenous South Africans, which ultimately led to the abandonment of apartheid and the embrace of the benefits of decolonization Macmillan argued for in his speech. However, this should not be overstated given the immediate consequence of the speech was for the Verwoerd regime to strengthen its hold on domestic politics through nationalism and racist policies, thereby distancing 'Britain from South African racial policies' (Butler and Stockwell 2013, p. 2).

In terms of drafting the speech, like most keynote Prime Ministerial speeches it was subject to several drafts and input from trusted advisors or senior figures. Importantly, Sir John Maud (British High Commissioner to South Africa, and former Dean of University College, Oxford), as the author of the first draft of the speech, set the philosophical tone for the speech which Macmillan sought to communicate (Horne 1989, p. 194). As the speech went through re-drafts to downplay the impact of critical linguistic elements (for example, changing the word 'nationalist' to 'nation'), Sir Norman Brook, Lord Home, Julian Amery, and David Hunt also contributed to various sections along the drafting process (*ibid.*). Such was the involvement of others in the aims and drafting of the speech, that comment from Home was sought before Macmillan left England. Also, Amery contributed had two paragraphs on the successes of the African people (which were then cut from the delivered draft). Both Macmillan and Brock worked continually on the draft of the speech as they toured the African continent, thus demonstrating the depth of concern Macmillan had for the message of the speech.

Consequently, the significance of the speech as a set-piece statement of values with an anti-apartheid message was without doubt. It was a crucial moment of change for the UK's role on the African continent, the domestic politics in South Africa, and for Macmillan's own audiences in the United Kingdom. The purpose of this article is to present the results of a rhetorical political analysis within these wider contexts, however, before doing that, I would like to say a few more words about RPA as a theoretical framework in order to demonstrate its intellectual value and significance.

## Theorising rhetorical political analysis

As mentioned above, the 'Rhetorical Political Analysis' (RPA) employed here is designed as a systematic methodological approach to draw out valuable and original insights into the uses of political language within diverse ranges of contexts (contemporary and historical) (Finlayson 2021). A purpose of the article will be to





use RPA as a systematic framework for rhetorical analysis *vis-à-vis* the Aristotelian triptych of *ethos* (the character/credibility of the speaker); *pathos* (their depth of emotional engagement with the audience); *logos* (the use of logic) as defined by Aristotle in *The Art of Rhetoric* (Crines 2013a, Crines 2013b, Crines 2014a, Crines 2014b, Crines and McAnualla, 2017) In the case of Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech, it will be used to explore whether his appeals were dependent on his *ethos*, asking to what extent did he rest his arguments and conclusions on his background as a highly experienced and respected figure within the British political establishment, or instead as a realist that accepted the inevitable end of imperialism? Did he rely more upon his knowledge of the 'new Africa of today' (Macmillan 1960), or was it more upon his political position as a Prime Minister seeking further electoral validation in the United Kingdom? Moreover, to what extent did he utilize *pathos* in his arguments to connect emotionally with his audience? How did his 'story-telling' seek to invoke audience emotions in order to position the end of Empire within its wider historical contexts, including the decline of the Roman Empire? The hypothesis here is that the acceptance of a new role for the UK in the world would be an essentially emotional endeavor, whilst simultaneously celebrating the strength of the South African people alongside critiquing his immediate audience of the embrace of apartheid and its discriminatory character. Alongside this will be the questions over whether Macmillan sought to appeal to a sense of hope and optimism in his speech, or whether it was more critical and fearful for the future of both South Africa and the UK. Moreover, the framework will also ask whether his appeals relied more upon *logos*. Did Macmillan's arguments for change use evidence and/or empirical data to confirm the argument he was making, with the view to demonstrate the truthfulness of his arguments. If so, to what extent was his argument reliant upon evidence, facts, and data? By examining the speech using these concepts in an essentially comparative manner it will be possible to explore the extent to which the speech was reliant on particular rhetorical strategies.

It is worth remembering this framework has been utilized in a series of other contexts and locations, yet it has yet to be applied to the 'wind of change' speech. For example, the framework was employed successfully by Atkins et al. (2014) for their systematic study entitled *Rhetoric in British Politics and Society* where the modes of persuasion were applied to political concepts such as language and governance; Parliamentary rhetoric; devolution; as well as applying them to specific speakers such as Winston Churchill's wartime speeches. Their application of the modes of persuasion was thematically applied to concepts, thus demonstrating their adaptability. Each of these utilized *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos* as a framing device for their analysis, thereby providing a clear basis upon which to draw out valuable insights hitherto hidden from analysis (Gaffney and Atkins (2017), Toye (2013b)). They can also be applied to a single political actor across the totality of their career. Here, Crines et al. (2016) employed the framework for their 2016 study of *The Political Rhetoric and Oratory of Margaret Thatcher* whereby they systematically examined her impact on Conservative Party politics across wide range of political contexts and arenas she addressed over the course of her career, again using the modes of persuasion. Their study drew out such findings related to her character and variable uses of emotions and evidence to outline how and *why* her speeches were impactful to her





audiences. Thus, this article applies the approach for the analysis of Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech given 'he remains in many ways an elusive figure, whose inclinations can be difficult to read through the fog of political manoeuvring and sophisticated rhetoric' (Butler and Stockwell 2013, p. 4). The remainder of the article will focus on the rhetorical analysis of the speech itself followed by a concluding reflection.

## Rhetorical analysis of the wind of change speech

Many memorable keynote political speeches open by first paying tribute to their hosts. This is important because it demonstrates the speaker both respects and admires them, even if they hold disagreements. By doing so, the speaker is striving to capture their attention to the message they intend the audience to hear. This is most effective through the use of *pathos*, which Macmillan used here to extend the hand of friendship and to demonstrate mutual respect. This is despite that, over the course of the speech, Macmillan would approach subjects that placed them on opposite sides. Consequently, this dynamic necessitates attempts to appeal to an audience through *pathos* first.

Opening his speech, Macmillan did this by saying 'it is a great privilege to be invited to address the Members of both Houses of Parliament in the Union of South Africa. It is a unique privilege to do so in 1960 just half a century after the Parliament of the Union came to birth' (Macmillan 1960). By paying tribute, he is aiming to capture the attention of the audience by thanking them for their attention ahead of his speech. He is also demonstrating his awareness of the importance of the anniversary, thereby showing his audience he is aware of the importance of the occasion. Alongside this, to simultaneously demonstrate his *ethos* as a credible speaker, he goes on to say 'I am especially grateful to your Prime Minister who invited me to visit this country and arranged for me to address you here today' (*ibid.*). Here he is also demonstrating appreciation to an individual the audience recognise as a significant person. Indeed, by showing the speech is taking place because it was requested by the South African Prime Minister, thereby showing he is there by personal invitation, his is demonstrating his credibility as a figure the audience should listen to. Indeed, as a keynote speaker invited by the Prime Minister, Macmillan is able to demonstrate a strong sense of personal credibility to the audience, thus making them more receptive to the central messages he seeks to communicate.

Despite this, he still needed to enhance his *ethos* further by demonstrating knowledge of and familiarity with the topics he will raising in this speech. This is so that as he begins outlining his arguments, they too carry the *ethos* of a knowing individual who can present cases and criticisms, particularly on issues that relate specifically to South Africa. He does this by briefly sharing part of the story of his journey across the continent with the audience and seek to draw them into the narrative, saying 'my tour of parts of Africa—the first ever made by a British Prime Minister in office, is now alas nearing its end, but it is fitting that it should culminate in the Union Parliament here in Cape Town, in this historic



city so long Europe's gateway to the Indian Ocean, and to the East. As in all the other countries that I have visited my stay has been all too short' (*ibid.*). This is demonstrating his connection with the wider continent, thereby also invoking a sense of *pathos* (pride) to tell his audience that *they* are the culmination of his visit to Africa. The *pathos* is then confirmed by him remarking 'I wish it had been possible for me to spend a longer time here, to see more of your beautiful country' and that 'I have been able to get at least some idea of the great beauty of your countryside, with its farms and its forests, mountains and rivers, and the clear skies and wide horizons of the veldt' (*ibid.*). Here, he is complimenting both the people and the natural beauty of the nation. This enhances his sense of *ethos* because it demonstrates respect and consideration for his audience, whilst drawing up a sense of positive *pathos*. Alongside his respectful tones for the beauty of the nation, he also sought to demonstrate familiarity with and respect for 'some of your great and thriving cities', thus showing he admires the nation and its people. However, he then goes on to say 'I am most grateful to your government for all the trouble they have taken in making the arrangements', thereby showing his admiration for those who have invited him to deliver the speech. In terms of the immediate audience, this would likely be a positive demonstration of respect, however given the nature of the regime, Macmillan would (and later did) need to distance himself from their values, whilst retaining the value-based connection with the wider population and natural beauty of South Africa. The advantages gained with this opening engagement with *pathos* are key to ensuring the audience are not only listening to his speech, but are also receptive to the message he ultimately attempts to communicate, even if some parts are uncomfortable to the sentiments of the immediate audience. After establishing his *ethos*, he is then able to begin slowly developing his arguments.

He does this by first expressing his gratitude, again using *pathos*, to be present at a moment of 'special privilege' because 'you are celebrating what I might call the golden wedding of the Union' (*ibid.*). This is a significant moment for the audience, which is, for Macmillan, 'a time... to take stock of your position, to look back at what you have achieved, to look forward to what lies ahead' (*ibid.*). For Macmillan, this is a use of *ethos* combined with *pathos* to demonstrate the significance of the anniversary moment, which he seeks to frame as a possible turning point for South Africa and the wider African continent. He reflects back on those achievements, saying 'in the 50 years of their nationhood the people of South Africa have built a strong economy founded upon a healthy agriculture and thriving and resilient industries' (*ibid.*). This is an allusion to *logos* given the factual dimension of the comment. It is also important to note the commendation is accredited to the 'people of South Africa', who Macmillan credits for the economic achievement.

This is continued by him seeking to demonstrate the closeness between the UK and the South African economy (despite the apartheid regime), saying 'we have developed trade between us to our common advantage, and our economies are now largely interdependent. You export to us raw materials, food and gold. We in return send you consumer goods or capital equipment' (*ibid.*). This seeks to showcase the economic union between the two countries in such a way it appears to be based on



mutual need and economic benefit. This also seeks to project a sense of *logos*-based connections that ultimately are based upon mutual economic necessity.

He goes on, again using *logos*, to argue 'we take a third of all your exports and we supply a third of all your imports. This broad traditional pattern of investment and trade has been maintained in spite of the changes brought by the development of our two economies' (*ibid.*). The extensive use of *logos* here is to reaffirm the economic bonds, but also to show the level of inter-dependence between the two countries and, for Macmillan, the need to continue 'sustaining one another' (*ibid.*). These economic considerations, however were not the main purpose of the speech, however the purpose of these arguments are to show the closeness between the two countries regardless of the wider contexts and changes that are travelling across the African continent.

On these wider issues, Macmillan uses his *ethos* as an outside observer to say 'as I have travelled round the Union I have found everywhere, as I expected, a deep preoccupation with what is happening in the rest of the African continent' (*ibid.*). The wider context of decolonization, threats of possible conflict, and rising nationalism had taken hold following the decline of Empires. Here, he uses *pathos* to say 'I understand and sympathise with your interest in these events, and your anxiety about them' (*ibid.*). The anxiety relates to the uncertainty of change across the continent, which ultimately and inevitably would challenge the white minority rulers in South Africa. Again, using *pathos*, Macmillan goes on to say 'ever since the breakup of the Roman Empire one of the constant facts of political life in Europe has been the emergence of independent nations. They have come into existence over the centuries in different forms, with different kinds of Government, but all have been inspired by a deep, keen feeling of nationalism which has grown as the nations have grown' (*ibid.*). The use of *ethos* as a learned figure, and the *pathos* of the story being told of historical imperial decline and the emergence of newly independent countries, is designed to convey a sense of knowing to the audience. This is confirmed by his comment 'since the end of the war, the processes which gave birth to the nation States of Europe have been repeated all over the world. We have seen the awakening of national consciousness in peoples who have for centuries lived in dependence upon some other Power' (*ibid.*). This sense of change across Europe which, for Macmillan, was formed since I left London to be repeated globally can be seen as a force for nationalism that leads to new countries emerging out of the nations that were ruled by former colonial powers. He confirms this, again using *ethos*, to argue 'the same thing is happening in Africa and the most striking of all the impressions I have a month ago is of the strength of this African national consciousness' (*ibid.*). He continues by seeking to demonstrate the audience are already aware of this process, by drawing upon their own origins in Europe, saying 'you understand this better than anyone. You are sprung from Europe, the home of nationalism, and here in Africa you have yourselves created a new nation' (*ibid.*). Here, Macmillan reminds his audience of their ancestral origins whilst aiming to show them the nationalisms across Africa reflect the post-imperial experiences of other countries, and 'the growth of national consciousness in Africa is a political fact' which 'we must come to terms with' because 'that if we cannot do so we may imperil the precarious balance



between the East and West on which the peace of the world depends' (*ibid.*). This is a strong use of *pathos* (fear) to show his audience that global peace relies upon accepting the new decolonised nations and the indigenous majority rulers. Indeed, this is a stark warning to his white minority audience that the wind of change favours dominant indigenous rule, and that the practice of minority imperial rule is diminishing. For Macmillan, accepting the reality of decolonization is the only option ethnic conflict is to be avoided across the African continent, including South Africa.

A further objective of Macmillan's speech was to set out principles so that the new countries 'prove so successful' that 'the balance will come down in favour of freedom and order and justice' (*ibid.*). Inversely to the *pathos* of fear used above, here Macmillan is using emotion to demonstrate that decolonization offers *hope* through the opportunities for freedom, peace, order, and justice. This, he argues, is 'our way of life' and genuine decolonization can provide peaceful routes towards it (*ibid.*). Indeed, he also used *logos* to argue 'it is a basic principle of our modern Commonwealth that we respect each other's sovereignty in matters of internal policy' and that 'the internal policies of one nation may have effects outside it' (*ibid.*). This is a further use of *pathos* to demonstrate the importance of union, and that the Commonwealth can be a place of togetherness for all who share and aspire to achieve those values. Needless to say, those principles are contrary to the apartheid regime who comprised the immediate audience, which makes the argument deeply significant, given the arena of its delivery. However, because of his established *ethos*, they were compelled to listen to the *logos* of the argument.

The prime message of the speech, however was 'what Governments and Parliaments in the United Kingdom have done since the war in according independence to India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaya and Ghana, and what they will do for Nigeria and other countries now nearing independence, all this, though we take full and sole responsibility for it, we do in the belief that it is the only way to establish the future of the Commonwealth' (*ibid.*). Put simply, using his *ethos* as a credible speaker, Macmillan instructs his audience decolonization is an ongoing process that will produce the benefits of autonomous rule and the benefits of union. He turns his attention to his immediate audience directly, however, saying 'all this of course is also of deep and close concern to you' but 'we are well aware of this and that we have acted and will act with full knowledge' (*ibid.*). Put simply, this message to the *National Party* is the changes and challenges they opposed through the end of Empire were matters of policy being enacted by design. The design was of a post-imperial world in which majority rule would be the norm, rather than the exception.

Macmillan continued by used *pathos* to argue 'peoples must learn to live together in harmony and unity and strength' because 'it has been our aim to find means by which the community can become more of a community' (*ibid.*). The *pathos*-based aspiration of seeking to create communities belies the complexities of reality, however as a message to his audience, it demonstrates the values by which he was seeking to predicate decolonization. Put simply, the sense of togetherness includes all, including the population of South Africa. It is a message which he confirmed by saying 'it is our earnest desire to give South Africa our support and encouragement, but I hope you won't mind my saying frankly



that there are some aspects of your policies which make it impossible for us to do this' (*ibid.*). The existing regime made it impossible because of the segregationist policies that apartheid introduced because of its divisive and hostile nature. This *pathos*-led message resonates as a result of Macmillan's *ethos* as a figure holding high office in the United Kingdom, and his own political and intellectual background. Put simply, both give him the character and credibility to make such a critical argument. However, the significance of the speech was the call to accept the realities of decolonization and the need for the white minority government in South Africa to acknowledge and embrace the wind of change Macmillan outlined in his speech. As a central message, this point is unlikely to have resonated with his immediate audience, but as the speech travelled, it spoke to many audiences across the African continent and beyond.

After Macmillan had delivered the main parts of his message, and his speech began to conclude, he reminded them 'I said that I was speaking as a friend' (*ibid.*). This aims to remind the audience the speech was meant as a statement of reality for which they could choose to embrace. The key reminders of his speech was 'it is impossible for nations to live in isolation from one another' (*ibid.*), and so too separating populations was impossible. Despite the warning, however, Macmillan returned in the concluding remarks to the subject of trade, for which 'I certainly do not believe in refusing to trade with people because you may happen to dislike the way they manage their internal affairs at home' and that 'boycotts will never get you anywhere' (*ibid.*). This element of Macmillan's speech mistakes the significance of moral principle over economic prosperity. The reliance on *logos* belies the importance of *pathos* in developing convincing orations. Although short, it is important to remember at the time of delivery, trade was seen to be the determining factor in fostering relations, thus this use of *logos* would be included to demonstrate to domestic audiences those economic priorities remained key. This position would change, however, over the years that followed.

Finally, in his conclusion of his speech, Macmillan used *pathos* to look to the future—50 years from the time of delivery, to argue 'I am confident that in another 50 years we shall look back on the differences that exist between us now as matters of historical interest, for as time passes and one generation yields to another, human problems change and fade' (*ibid.*). As a conclusion for such a significant speech, this leaves the audience with a sense that regardless of how the regime responds to the speech, events will play out in ways that were at the time of delivery, somewhat unpredictable. Yet the significance of the speech was the acceptance of the principle of decolonization which, as mentioned earlier in the article, was a process already underway at the time of delivery. Put simply, the indigenous calls for independence and majority rule were already too loud for imperial powers to ignore. For a sitting Prime Minister of a (former) imperial power to deliver this speech is to acknowledge the significance of the changing global contexts and demands for greater indigenous autonomy. The dominance of imperial powers and the powers they held to carve up continents in offices in capital cities hundreds of miles from lands and people being separated had ended. Importantly, figures like Macmillan acknowledged this by seeking



to convince others to change their attitudes by accepting the imperial days were over. Also ‘this was not lost on Hendrick Verwoerd and the Afrikaner press, who immediately interpreted Macmillan’s speech as a clear downgrading of white African priorities on the part of the British Government’ (Ward 2013, p. 52). Looking beyond the point of delivery, it is also important to remember that, although the speech was undoubtedly significant, it was also a steppingstone towards the end of Empire, which would be and has proven to be an extremely lengthy process.

## Analysis and conclusions

*The Wind of Change* speech represents a key moment in the process of British decolonization. It was an attempt to shape how countries would become independent from colonial Britain over the years that followed. This belied the processes already complete or underway, or the autonomous direction some countries would choose to pursue, however the significance of the speech comes in the means and manner of its delivery *vis-à-vis* from a sitting British Prime Minister to a white minority Parliament on the African continent. Importantly, Macmillan did not start or change a decolonial policy, rather the policy of imperial retreat was well underway at the time of delivery. It is therefore necessary to conclude by discussing the reaction of the speech alongside considering the key themes of the speech which made it so impactful.

The reaction of Macmillan’s immediate audience to the overall message can be gleaned from the press coverage immediately following the delivery of the speech which are available from archival searches. By doing so, we can discern the reaction of the audience was essentially muted (Seyd 1972). Indeed, *The Times* reported on 4th of February that ‘there was a number of the 200-odd members present who refrained from applauding’ and that the speech was ‘heard in silence’ by the apartheid audience (*The Times* 1960). The report continued that ‘there was little in Mr. Macmillan’s speech that appealed to his listeners, though members of the Nationalist Party were afterwards saying that, given his point of view, they supposed they could not have expected anything else from the British Prime Minister’s address’ (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the *Daily Mirror* reported that ‘Mr. Harold Macmillan warned yesterday that Britain could not support South Africa’s racial policies’ and that he ‘pulled no punches in his speech’ which ‘was well said by Mr. Macmillan’ (*Daily Mirror* 1960, p. 7). This demonstrates clear support for Macmillan and the message he sought to communicate. The *Daily Express* described it as a ‘Challenge on Africa’ that Macmillan issued ‘fearlessly’ to the apartheid regime. Indeed, they reported that ‘this enormously public locking of horns took place over that sinister little word—APARTHEID. And yet that word was never uttered. Never once’ (*Daily Express* 1960, p. 1). The *Daily Mail* reported ‘black leaders say “the Premier understands us”. We no longer feel alone’ thereby describing Macmillan as the ‘toast of Africans’ (*Daily Mail* 1960, p. 1). A spokesperson for the African National Congress summarized the speech saying ‘we no longer feel we are alone. What we want is what Britain is



giving to other countries—self-government, our dignity, and a chance to raise our living standards' (*ibid.*). These press reports provide an insight into the immediate reception of the speech. The *Financial Times*, however sought to tap into domestic reflection on the impact of the speech. Here, they argued the speech 'represents what many moderate English people feel... they detest the Nationalist Government's policy of apartheid which they regard as wrong and think only too likely to lead to disaster' and that the apartheid rulers 'needed to be told' he sought the 'encouragement of independence' of African countries (*Financial Times* 1960). It is evident the speech represented a significant change of attitude towards the Empire and the inevitability of managed decolonization. Particularly noteworthy, according to a Gallop poll of the electorate carried out in March 1960, was Macmillan's criticism of the South Africa regime.

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*Have you read or heard anything at all about the speech which Mr. Macmillan gave to the South African Parliament in which he criticized South Africa's racial policies?*

Yes	58%
No	42%

*Asked of those who replied in the affirmative: on the whole do you, yourself agree with the criticism which Mr. Macmillan made about South Africa's racial policy?*

Agree	39%
Disagree	09%
Don't Know	10%

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(Source Gallop: 1976, p. 551)

It is also worth reflecting on Macmillan's style of delivery, and how he drew upon his depth of character to the speech. Indeed, his speaking style of slow, methodological delivery provided a sense of gravitas that compelled the audience to listen. This enabled him to use his character and oratorical persona to project an image of authority and values based upon certain principles of unity and togetherness, which contrasted with the immediate arena which inversely represented the embodiment of a pro-imperialist, white supremacist apartheid. The significance of this was the confrontation of perspectives and the clash of values which each side represented. It is possible to identify which common themes and topics were used in the speech by grouping particular phrases and words by values. The key themes and topics Macmillan uses are evident through repeated emphasis, in positive terms, towards 'Commonwealth' of nations (12 references), Africa/African (31 references) destinies, the place for decolonized nations in the 'world' (25 references) the value of 'union/united' (20 references). Each of these highlight Macmillan's alternative to Empire, and the benefits of decolonization. These also construct an image of Africa is one with an autonomous place in the world without the threats of European imperialism. Indeed, the speech contained only 2 references to 'Empire' in order to critique the concept and just 1 reference to 'Churchill'. This represents a shift away from tropes of imperialism, and towards independence and the re-centering of the African continent in autonomous terms, thereby displacing the British Empire and posing a direct challenge to the authority of the apartheid regime and its dominance over South Africa.





Finally, the speech represented a shift of leadership attitude within the British Conservative Party towards the Empire and the concept of imperialism. Hitherto its delivery, there was a tacit denial amongst some British conservatives that Britain's place in the world had been diminished in the post-war period because it still held onto a sizable proportion of colonial countries. However, the writing on the wall of decolonization was only accepted by some conservatives once it became a self-evident reality none could deny. Increasingly, imperialists were marginalised within the Conservative Party to the point where only figures like Enoch Powell publicly advocated a 'romanticised view of national identity predicated upon British imperial exceptionalism' (Crines et al. 2015, p. 1).

**Data availability** Not applicable

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