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Boer Communities and the British Colonial Policy, 1846-1881. Differences between the Boer Republics from the Aspect of the British Colonial Policy

Abstract

The political, economic and above all ethnical heterogeneity had crucial impact on the history of Southern Africa. Although vital tensions existed between the three main ethnical blocks (Africans, Boers, British), essential conflicts emerged between the subgroups. Especially the relation of the different Boer communities and republics (Orange Free State, South African Republic) was hectic. Despite the fact that Boers had same origin, spoke the same language, shared common traditions and followed similar religious views, in the field of politics and denominational issues, serious differences rose chiefly between the Orange Free State and the South African Republic. This diversity among the Boers influenced Great Britain’s South African colonial policy as well as the Colonial Office attempted to take advantage of the said circumstances.

Keywords: Boer republics, Orange Free State, South African Republic, Sir George Grey, 3rd Earl Grey, 4th Earl Of Carnarvon, Colonial Office, constitution, Volksraad, Cape Colony

Southern Africa witnessed crucial changes during the second half of the 19th century which is among the most important periods in the history of the subcontinent. Key events, for instance the emergence of the Boer republics, or the mineral revolution (discovery of the enormous diamond fields in Griqualand West and the gold layers in the Transvaal), then the South African war (1899–1902) inevitably shaped the face of the subcontinent. South Africa during almost the entire 19th century was from cultural, ethnical, economic and above all political aspects divided. The territory of the subcontinent was controlled mainly by three political groups: Great Britain, Boer settler communities and numerous African polities. Relation between these political/ethnic groups as well as the high degree of diversity and the conflicts it resulted had the most essential impact on the history of Southern Africa. Moreover, the importance of Great Britain’s colonial policy (as the fourth factor in that order), which was elaborated mainly in the Colonial Office, London but it was executed in the colonies by British

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colonial officers (men on the spot), is inevitable as well.

Further distinctions can be easily carried out within the borders of the said columns. For instance the British colonies (Cape Colony, Natal, British Kaffraria, Griqualand West) differed from each other in the field of their political/governmental status, structure of economy etc. The situation was the same in case of the Boers and the independent and semi-independent African communities. Concerning the Boers, the Great Trek was the first borderline which disunited the Dutch speaking part of the European society of Southern Africa. About ten thousand of Boers (the trekkers, trekboers or Voortrekkers) left Cape Colony between 1836–1854 in order to find a new country independent from the British control. Although, that meant a serious migration and a great challenge for the leaders of the British colonial policy, the bulk of the Dutch speaking society of Southern Africa remained in Cape Colony, in Western Cape exactly. The annexation of the Voortrekkers' territories (Republic of Natalia, Orange River Sovereignty) was the first British response for the Great Trek. Natal became a British colony, but the mother country abandoned the Sovereignty and guaranteed the independence of the Voortrekker communities beyond the Vaal River by the Sand River Convention (1852) and the Orange Free State by the Bloemfontein Convention (1854). Although it seems that these facts, namely the annexation determined evidently the Anglo-Boer political relations, but the relationship between Great Britain and the Boer communities in the second half of the 19th century can’t be described as a fierce hostility.

One of the main characteristic elements of the British colonial policy was the intention to unite the divided subcontinent under the union jack and form these fragments into a modern, unified, self-governing, whites, but particularly British-dominated South African dominion which would be loyal to the mother country. Great Britain attempted to realize that scheme three times between 1850–1881. Although, all of these plans failed, in my opinion, this factor was one of those which inevitably influenced the Anglo-Boer relations. The attitude of the Boers towards the British conceptions was not evidently and always critical and negative.

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3 The Sand River Convention, NA (The National Archives) CO 879/18 No 237.

Hypothesis of the present article is that the hostility is far not the only factor by which the Anglo-Boer relations can be characterized. From that point of view the British colonial policy attempted to exploit the differences and conflicts between the South African Republic and the Orange Free State and obstacle the union of the Dutch speaking communities of South Africa because it would jeopardize the British interests in the subcontinent. The Boer communities were far from being homogenous and unified. The Boers were divided not just in the field of politics and economy, but from cultural and some ways religious aspects (liberal – conservative Calvinists) as well. Furthermore, Great Britain’s South African colonial policy can be characterized as the relation of tendencies and changes. These trends shaped the Anglo-Boer relations, moreover the relationship of the said two groups affected the direction of the British colonial policy, thus the tendencies as well.

Present article focuses on the characteristic, direction and changes of the Anglo-Boer relations with a special emphasis on the political and cultural aspects regarding four decades of the second half of the nineteenth century. The examined period is marked by the milestones of the British unification policy, strategy. The first plan for the united subcontinent was elaborated in 1850 by Earl Grey who was Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (1846–1852) under the premiership of John Russell. 1881 was the year of the downfall of the first official British attempt made for the unification. The present article aims to offer answers for the following issues: What were the main differences between the Boer communities (then republics)? How did the Great Britain colonial policy influence the relationship between the said Boer republics? How did the Boer republics treat the presence of Great Britain: as a „careful” mother country or a dangerous great power?

Regarding the historiography of the topic it is necessary to highlight a trend. The historians during the last few decades turned their attention from the classic imperial history to the impact of the mineral revolution (discovery of the diamond and gold fields) on the social and political relations and improvement of the South Africa. If one compare the books of Cornelis de Kiewiet (written in the first half of the 20th century) like the The Imperial Factor in South Africa. A Study in Politics and Economics\textsuperscript{5} or British Colonial Policy and the South African Republics, 1848-1872\textsuperscript{6} with the recent studies and


\textsuperscript{6} DE KIEWIET, C. W.: British Colonial Policy and the South African Republics,
materials of Norman A Etherington such as *Labour Supply and the Genesis of South African Confederation in the 1870s* the difference is easy to note. *The Cambridge History of South Africa I-II* published in 2010 and 2011 belong to the later approach. Most of the monographies and articles tend to emphasize the importance of one factor (mineral revolution or strategic importance of the Cape of Good Hope) over the others. Opposite to them, one can argue that all of the elements, the complexity of the reasons and factors could have impact on the British colonial policy.

The examined sources can be divided into different categories, for instance there are official, non-official documents (such as the constitutions of the Boer republics – it is necessary to emphasize the importance of the official documents collected by G. W. Eybers), parliamentary papers, the Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates, contemporary press and pamphlets. Furthermore it is important to highlight the correspondence between the leaders of the Colonial office and the men on the spot the British Governors, Lieutenant-Governors and High Commissioners in Southern Africa.

The main element of the core hypothesis of the research is that Great Britain’s South African colonial policy during the second half of the nineteenth century can be described through the relations of different tendencies and changes. One can ask that what kind of tendencies could exist. At the present state of the research few of these historical processes have been already identified. At first according to the hypothesis Great Britain’s South African colonial policy was enormously influenced by several phobias. One can find that quite odd or strange especially regarding that Great Britain was the super and world power of the second half of the nineteenth century, but by examining the official correspondence and despatches of the leaders of the Colonial Office different fears and phobias can be easily found. The anxieties similar to the tendencies can be traced back to three factors. The first was the fact that the Africans overwhelmed the Europeans in numbers. Moreover, the settler population of Southern Africa was heterogeneous and the Boers outnumbered the English speaking communities. At last but not at least, the strategic importance of the Cape of Good Hope inevitable influenced the direction of the British colonial policy. For

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8 HAMILTON – MBENGA – ROSS: *op. cit.*
Britain the most problematic of them was the native alert. Namely the British officials were afraid of the probable unity of native tribes and they believed that a general anti-British and anti-European native revolt and war would mean the end of the British and European presence in Southern Africa. This was the most characteristic and crucial one among the listed elements. Besides of the native confederation the Colonial Office feared from the unity of the Boers as well, namely that the different so called Dutch speaking communities would unite in one Boer state and that could be a real threat for the British colonies. Furthermore especially some officials of the Colonial Office found possible some kind of Americanization of South Africa and the British Colonies. Moreover there were fears which derived from internal factors, such as Russo-phobia. For instance in case of the wars with the Xhosas and the Zulus, the Colonial Office found the Russian intervention possible. The Russian invasion chiefly during the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878) was considered as a real possibility by the leaders of the British Colonial policy. Carnarvon, who paid much attention to these threats, was afraid of that the Russians would take advantage of the tension between the Africans and the British. Thus he kept alarming and attempted to convince Prime Minister Disraeli about the necessity of improving the defence of Cape Colony and Simon’s Bay. He believed that the control over the Cape of Good Hope was the cornerstone of the architect of the British Empire and its defence system. The loss of that territory would result the demolish Britain’s status in Southern Africa as the paramount power in the region, but would cause the end of Great Britain’s position in the world politics as well.

Furthermore, especially from the 1880s, during the years of the scramble for Africa, the British colonial political elite were afraid of the colonial plans of other European powers like Germany. At last but not at least the bulk of the British Governments in the examined period treated the South African colonial politics mainly from one

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10 Sir Bertie Frere to Lord Carnarvon, 11 Jun. 1877. NA PRO 30/6/33, 167.

These fears especially the first and the second one (native- and Boer-phobia) can be traced back to the fact that Southern Africa during the entire long nineteenth century was ethnically, economically, culturally, socially and above all politically divided. The European population was highly outnumbered by the natives and among the Europeans the Dutch and not the British element dominated. Thus although Britain was the paramount power in that region, the position of the British, especially from ethnical aspects was far from being solid.

What did the British colonial policy do in order to neutralize these sources of problems? According to my research two main strategies were implemented by the Colonial Office (and these belong to another level of tendencies):

1. \textit{Reluctance and Abandonment}

The abandonment of the territories controlled by the British was preferred mainly by some of the economic minded politicians who could not find profitable and even justifiable the maintenance of the British colonial administration in Southern Africa. They argued that the high costs of the maintenance of the British troops in South Africa should not be such a heavy burden on the shoulders of the British taxpayers. From their point of view the population of Cape Colony was mature and prosperous enough to take over the financing of the mentioned military expenditures. Furthermore, according to their opinion, Cape should organize the defence of its own borders. The voice of these critics just became more harsh in Britain during the second half of the 1860s, when year by year Cape got closer to the attain the self-governing status. Some of these politicians would reduce the imperial presence only for the naval base in Simon’s Bay through Britain could control the Cape of Good Hope which was extremely crucial from an imperial point of view regardless for the fact the British Government was liberal or conservative.\footnote{The history of the idea of the abandonment can be easily traced back to the first decade of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Even just four years after the Congress of Vienna, where the British ownership of Cape Colony was confirmed, critical opinions already appeared in the Imperial Parliament. On 10\textsuperscript{th} June 1819 a Scottish radical representative, Joseph Hume according to the issue of the \textit{Colonial Establishments}.}

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significant milestones, peaks of the tendency of the abandonment can be defined. In a chronological order to the first one belong the Sand River Convention (1852) and the Bloemfontein Convention (1854), by which Great Britain abandoned the annexation of the Orange River Sovereignty as well as declared the entire freedom and independence of the „emigrant farmers beyond the Vaal River”\textsuperscript{16}, which became the Transvaal, and the „Orange River Territory”\textsuperscript{17}, which became Orange Free State, from Great Britain. The late 1860s, when the Colonial Office made serious attempts to reduce the South African imperial responsibilities meant the second important milestone. The third one was the Pretoria Convention (1881)\textsuperscript{18}, in which Great Britain after four years of British rule restored the almost entire independence of the Transvaal.

2, South African Unity

To the second belong the schemes and plans for the South African unity. The British intended three times between 1846 and 1881 to unite the British colonies and the Boer communities, later republics in a unified South African state (confederation or union) which would be loyal to Britain. In line with the British conceptions this would solve several acute problems, such as the native and the Boer questions. The first plan was elaborated during the Secretarship of State the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Earl Grey, the second one belong to Sir George Grey who proposed the reduction of the imperial military expenditures in case of „the newly acquired colonies of Ceylon, the Mauritius, the Cape of Good Hope, Malta” (Hansard, XI, col. 1077. Hume in Commons, 10 Jun. 1819.). Three and four years later Hume attempted again to draw the representatives’ attention to this question again: „In a time like this, every shilling that could be saved ought to be saved. Why should individuals in this country be called on to pay for the garrisons of Canada or the Cape of Good Hope, any more than for the troops employed in Jamaica?” (Hansard, XIV, col. 1127. Hume in Commons, 6 Mar. 1826.) He was supported by another radical MP, Sir Robert Wilson. Sir Robert with reference to his former visit in Cape, suggested to the honourable members of the parliament that Britain should „levy sufficient in the colony, for the maintenance of the garrison, […], without calling for a shilling from the mother country”, just as the former possessors of Cape, the Dutch had done before. (Hansard, XIV, col. 1127. Wilson in Commons, 6 Mar. 1826.) The primary elements of the later rhetoric and arguments in favour of the reducing the imperial responsibilities were akin to the opinion of Hume and Wilson.


\textsuperscript{17} Bloemfontein Convention, in ibid., 282.

\textsuperscript{18} Convention for the Settlement of the Transvaal Territory (Pretoria Convention), 1881. HCPP [C. 2998], 3.
was Governor of Cape Colony and High Commissioner between 1854–1861 and the last one in that order was the plan of Lord Carnarvon (1877–1881).

Earl Grey created three federal schemes in order to deal with difficulties occurred in Southern Africa. In a chronological order, the first one proposed to merge the African communities of the Lake Ngami into a confederation. The African confederation would stop the trek of the Boers, moreover the scheme according to Earl Grey’s argument, through the free trade and the missionaries would be the best mean of civilizing the Africans.19 Two of the plans aimed to unite Cape Colony, Natal, British Kaffraria and the Boer settler communities located between the Orange and the Vaal rivers.20 These plans were never realized, mainly because Earl Grey could not gather enough supporters among the leaders of the colonial policy.

The second milestone was the Governorship of Sir George Grey (1854–1859, 1860–1861). Grey as Governor of Cape Colony worked out several plans for the sake of solving acute and actual problems of the subcontinent. Grey’s conception focused on the federal union of Cape Colony, Natal, British Kaffraria and Orange Free State. The whole scheme was induced in the summer of 1858 by the political elite of the said Boer state which was threatened by the probable invasion of the Africans.21 That inspired and encouraged Grey in the attempts he made for convincing Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton the Secretary of State for the Colonies (1858–1859) about the inevitable implementation of the plan. Although initially the plan met with the ideas and conception of Bulwer-Lytton, the Governor started to negotiate with the Government of the Orange Free State and did not wait for the confirmation and instructions of the Imperial Government, which caused the fall of his scheme. Nevertheless, Sir George Grey’s activity is reviewed and examined in a later part of the present article.

Opposite to Earl Grey and Sir George Grey, Henry Howard Molineux, the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon had a chance to realize his own grand design about the unification of the divided subcontinent. As Secretary of State for the Colonies (1874–1878) Carnarvon turned his scheme to the main direction of the British colonial policy regarding to Southern Africa. At the centre of the scheme stood the unification of the South African Republic and the territories stood

19 Earl Grey to Sir H. G. Smith, 12 Nov. 1850. In HCPP [1360], 94.
under British control (Cape Colony, Natal, Griqualand West). The Colonial office took serious steps to create the South African Union. The most significant moment in that process was the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877. In that case the resistance of Cape Colony as the most developed British colony and the resurrection of the Boers in the Transvaal resulted the end of Carnarvon’s system.

Regarding the limits of the present article there is no space to review all the said tendencies, phobias, thus two issues were chosen which are worth to show in their details. The first is concerned with the differences between the Boer republics especially from political aspects. Besides the mentioned tendencies the leaders of the British colonial policy attempted to treat the listed threats in other ways as well. For instance they reflected for the differences and conflicts between the different Boer communities – and this is explained through the colonial administration of Sir George Grey in South Africa.

**Differences between the Boer Republics**

It is not so difficult to see and treat the Dutch speaking part of the European population of South Africa as homogeneous and united community. Some books and mainly British historians tended to share this belief and suggested that the three groups, the Bantus, Boers and Britons as homogeneous blocks which are mainly isolated from each other. Furthermore the relationship between these groups was characterized by conflicts. That happened with the Anglo-Boer relations as well. From that aspect it is worth to highlight that while the Anglo-Boer conflicts were always emphasized, the Boer-Boer clashes were in many ways neglected.

One can say that the relationship between the Boer settler communities located from Capetown to Zoutpansberg must be cordial because these groups belonged together from many aspects. They had a same origin, family relations bounded together the trek-Boers and those who stayed in Cape Colony after the Great Trek. The Boer people spoke the same language and had same religious views, namely they followed the principles of Calvinism. Moreover the legal system (Dutch-Roman law – Rooms-Hollands recht) and the political structure of the Boer republics showed a high level of similarity. So the former approaches emphasized these connections. Although it is

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not so difficult to find the said similarities, but in case of a non-
superficial examination the differences appear as well and after that
the most of the listed elements can be easily refuted. For instance
although the trekkers left relatives in Cape Colony after the Great
Trek, in the field of politics it meant a real advantage only for a very
few times. Despite the fact that the written language of the Boers,
especially in official matters was Dutch, during the second half of the
nineteenth century the language spoken by the descendants of the
voortrekkers started to alter from the Cape Dutch. In case of religion
that’s true that all of the Boers were Calvinist, but there were two
sources of conflicts which were caused by religious matters: in the
field of churches, and the conservative and liberal approaches of
Calvinism.

Both of these bunches of problems caused not only religious but
political conflicts as well. There are several examples for these issues.
The voortrekkers lived beyond the Vaal river desired to have an own
church which would be independent from the Cape Synod, but the
inhabitants of Lijdenburg wanted else. They kept the connection with
the Cape Synod alive. Because of the denominational conflict the
Court of the Transvaal accused and found guilty eight members of the
Volksraad from Lijdenburg for violation of the constitution.
Following this the representatives for Lijdenburg left the Volksraad.
This led in 1856 to the secession of the said eastern province which
became the Lijdenburg Republic with own and independent
government and Volksraad.24 It took four years for the political
leaders of the Transvaal to restore through tough negotiations the
territorial integrity of the South African Republic. The document
which set the framework of the reunification was assigned on 24th
November 1854 aimed to settle the problematic issues between the
republics, with a special emphasis on the denominational conflicts:
„The Dutch Reformed Congregation at Lijdenburg shall never be
forced to assimilate its form of church government to that of any
other congregation.”25

The election and the campaign of 1871 in the South African
Republic offer the best example for the influence of the difference
between the conservative and liberal interpretations of the Calvinism.
Transvaal could not have had more different two presidential
candidates. Commandant General Paul Kruger was an excellent
marksman and military leader but he was uneducated and learned

24 The political elite seated in Pretoria grasped the opportunity and the Volksraad
of the Transvaal accepted a new constitution which came into force in 1858.
reading from the Bible. According some narratives Kruger believed till the end of his life that the Earth is flat. Opposite to him, the other presidential candidate, Thomas François Burgers was a highly educated Calvinist minister who graduated at the University of Utrecht in Netherlands. During the theological studies he became familiar with the liberal and modern religious views of Professor Cornelis Willem Opzoomer. Opzoomer was rationalist and denied the literally truce of the Bible. Thus Burgers after the election as a president supported the liberal wing of the Calvinists opposite to the conservative Nederduitsch-Hervormde Kerk. Kruger was in a totally different standpoint. He was extremely conservative and belonged to the dopper wing of the Transvaaler Calvinists. He found Burger’s views absolutely unacceptable and dangerous for the future of the Transvaal. As he said to the freshly elected Burgers: „Your Honor, I have done my best to prevent your election, principally, because of your religious views, which appear to me to be mistaken. But as you have now been elected by the majority, I submit as a good republican to this vote of the people, trusting that you are a more earnest believer than I thought, in which case I congratulate you with all my heart.”

According to the quoted lines the political opposition criticized heavily Burgers’ liberal point of view.

That kind of difference between the qualities and background of the political leaders of the Boers, especially their education occurred in case of comparison of the political elite of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic as well. While the politicians, presidents of the Free State were more educated (studied in Cape Colony or even in Europe, like Sir Johannes Henricus Brand), the Transvaalers were mostly (except Burgers) farmers.

Both of these states gathered their freedom from the British by conventions. The Transvaal became free in 1852 by the Sand River Convention, the Orange Free State two years later in 1854 by the Bloemfontein Convention. While in the Free State the centralization of the state and the elaboration of the political system of the country went quite smooth and quick, in the Transvaal the government in Pretoria had to make enormous efforts to save the territorial integrity of the South African Republic and hold together the provinces. This resulted an acute problem in the Transvaal, a long lasting conflict between the central power, the government and the local, provincial

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or regional political elite. Thus while the Constitution of the Orange Free State came into force only three weeks after the signal of the Bloemfontein Convention, the Grondwet of the South African Republic was established in 1858 four years after assent of the Sand River Convention. These differences can be identified in the constitutions of the said Boer states as well. That is why it is important to compare the constitutions because these texts reflect well the state, position, aims and conditions of the Boer republics.

Constitutions

Although both the Transvaalers and the politicians of the Free State took few important principles from the Constitution of the United States of America\(^\text{28}\), several differences can be found between the constitutions, grondwets of the Boer states. Not only the structure and the langue of the two constitutions but their content differ from each other. The Grondwet of the Transvaal is much longer and more narrative (for example it includes the presidential and the electoral oaths) than the Constitution of the Orange Free State. The language of the constitution of the South African Republic is more democratic, it operates many times with the form: „The people desire to“ or „They shall“, while the Grondwet of the Orange Free State operates with short sentences and its language more official. I find important to highlight one element, namely the religious provisions of the two constitutions.

The Constitution of the Orange Free State has only one religious provision, the Article XXIV.: „The Dutch Reformed Church [De Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerk] shall be promoted and supported by the Volksraad.”\(^\text{29}\) Opposite to it, the Grondwet of the South African Republic is totally different. The Constitution of the South African Republic refers for different kind of denominational matters fifteen times. For instance the document has a chapter About the Protection and Defence of Church and State.\(^\text{30}\) According to the Grondwet only the members of the Dutch Reformed Church could bear any kind of office, could be the members of the Volksraad, President or a Veldcornet. Moreover, only the state church, the Dutch Reformed Church was accepted, and the presence of other Christian congregations was not permitted in the Transvaal: „They [the people] prefer to allow no Roman Catholic Churches among them, nor any

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\(^{28}\) GOODFELLOW: 8.

\(^{29}\) Constitution of the Orange Free State, in EYBERS: 291.

other Protestant Churches than those in which the same tenets of the Christian belief are taught, as contained in the Heidelberg Catechism.”

That motive refers to the denominational conflicts of the Transvaal, such as the secession of Lijdenburg and the activity of European missionaries in the region.

What could be the reason of these differences between these texts? First of all it is necessary and worth to approach the whole issue from one aspect, namely that the constitutions always reflect for the given, actual political and some ways the cultural state of a nation, a country. Opposite to the Orange Free State, the South African Republic in 1858 was less organized and less centralized country than the Free State. The government seated in Pretoria had slight influence in some of the provinces, especially in the 1850s and the 1860s. This kind of limited jurisdiction, the separatism which was popular in few provinces and which was connected to a congregational tension could induce the authors and elaborators of the grondwet to make such strict limitations concerning the religion and terms of office. The central political elite of the Transvaal desired to bind the provinces to the government and save the integrity of the republic.

Apart from the denominational issues and the term of office, there are other differences between the grondwets of the said Boer states. In the Transvaal all the burghers reached the age 21 possessed the right to vote, while in case of the Orange Free State he burghers above age 18 shall be entitled to possess the franchise.

Furthermore, the Grondwet of the South African Republic has serious regulations among the first provisions regarding the limit of the size of the immovable properties, farms: “The lands or farms

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31 Ibid, 366.
32 Only whites had the right to possess the burghership in both of the republics. In case of the Orange Free State the constitution dealt with that issue:

“The Burghers of the Orange Free State shall be:
1. All white persons born in the State;
2. All white persons who have resided in the State for one year and have immovable property registered in their names to the value of at least 2000 Rds.”
(In Constitution of the Orange Free State, in EYBERS: 286.) In case of the Transvaal the Resolution of the Volksraad of 18th June 1855 defined that “no strangers, who come to reside in this country and who were not to born in Africa, shall enjoy the franchise as a burgher of the Republic or be recognised as entitled to fill any public office in the State, without having first purchased their rights of burghership, which rights of burghership shall have to be bought for two hundred Cape Rix-dollars (Rds. 200). And no person who is not recognised as a burgher shall have the right to possess immovable property.” Through ye quoted Resolution, the Volksraad excluded all the coloured people from the burghership: “... they may never be given or granted rights of burghership.” (In Resolution of the Volksraad, 18 Jun. 1855, in EYBERS: 362.)
situated within this territory which have not yet been given out are declared to be the property of State, but are none the less obtainable as heretofore by the public. No farm inspected for that purpose shall be larger than 3000 morgen. And no one shall be entitled to apply for or to obtain lands until he has reached the age of sixteen.\(^{33}\) A great land hunger emerged in the Transvaal because of the traditional inheritance and economic system\(^{34}\) stood at the background of the strict control over the properties and farms. Such a provision cannot be found in the Constitution of the Orange Free State.

**Sir George Grey**

One can ask that what the British colonial administration did with this situation. The British followed the events took place in the Boer republics and they were interested in the Boer-Boer relations and the British colonial policy reflected for the given situation and many times took advantage of the difference between the Boer communities.

The way how the British colonial policy treated the Boers changed several times. In the late 1840s and the early 1850s the Colonial Office as well as the Governor of Cape Colony, Sir Harry Smith found unacceptable the Great Trek and made numerous attempts to follow the trekkers and keep them under British control. First of all the British were afraid of that the trek would result wars with the Africans which inevitably would have bad impact on the colonies and the British-African relations. Furthermore, Earl Grey was convinced that the Boers could cause unpredictable damage for the Africans and even exterminate them. Thus, the effective defence against the trek of the Boers seemed to be one of the most advantageous point of the scheme he created for the confederation of the Africans around the Lake Ngami: „*I am persuaded that this is the only policy by which there is any prospect of accomplishing that object, and that the spreading of the Boers over the continent, and their oppression and extermination of the native races, can never be successfully contended against by endeavouring to follow them from the Cape as far as they may think fit to go, and to extend British authority over these vast regions.*“\(^{35}\)

\(^{33}\) The Grondwet of the South African Republic, in EYBERS: 364.

\(^{34}\) According to the Boer traditions, a young man entering to adult age were expected to get married and move to his own farm.

\(^{35}\) (Earl Grey to Sir H. G. Smith, 12 Nov. 1850. In HCPP [1360], 93.) Sir Harry Smith shared same views with Earl Grey about the Boers: „These Boers being those
Opposite to Earl Grey, Sir George Grey and Carnarvon attempted to create a partnership and have a cordial relation with the Boers. The main reason was that they believed in that only the confederation of the Boers and the British could prevent Southern Africa from the probable outbreak of a great war between the Europeans and the Africans.

The governorship of Sir George Grey (1854-1861) offers the best example through the whole issue can be proved and explained. Sir George Grey was from many aspects the first modern governor in Southern Africa. He was deeply interested in the culture, traditions, folklore and everyday life of those who lived under his governance. Sir George Grey was the first among the British governors in this region who learned the Xhosa language. Grey travelled a lot and visited many times the African communities and attempted to keep a personal contact with some of the chiefs, like Sandilli. The other main characteristic of Grey’s colonial policy that he elaborated grandiose schemes which were designed to solve the acute and actual problems of South Africa, like the relations between the Europeans and the natives or the conflicts between the British and the Boers or the separatism of Eastern Cape.

One of these plans aimed the unification of British colonies (Cape Colony, Natal, and British Kaffraria) and the Orange Free State. The colonies and the Boer republic would form a federal union with common federal government and legislation, but the independence of the local governmental and other institutions, like the Volksraad would be preserved.

As he saw the Boers: "Although these European countries lying behind our Colonies are treated as separate nations, their inhabitants bear the same family names as the inhabitants of this Colony, and maintain with them ties of the closest intimacy and relationship. They speak, generally, the same language, not English, but Dutch. They are, for the most part, of the same religion, belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church. They have the same laws, the Roman Dutch. They have the same sympathies, the same prejudices, the same habits, and

who have fled from the pale of civilization, and are the most violent, are so much in the habit of moving from place to place that the expedition would cost them little trouble, and they are so determinedly averse to British rule, that they will gladly avail themselves of any opportunity of removing further from the country under Her Majesty’s sovereignty. They are turbulent and restless people, and cannot fail to be the enemies of civilization in the interior, especially if its approach from the side of the colony.” (In In Sir H. G. Smith to Earl Grey, 12 Jul. 1850. In HCPP [1360], 29.)

37 Ibid.
frequently the same feelings, regarding the native races, although marked and rapid changes in public opinion, in relation to this subject, are taking place, as also in reference to the increasing use of English language and the adoption of English customs.\textsuperscript{38}

Although he speaks about European countries in the quoted lines, the Orange Free State had a key role in Sir George Grey plans. One can ask why and why not the South African Republic? First of all, the leaders and the Volksraad of the Boer republic took the first step when they expressed their desire to join Cape Colony in the late spring of 1858. The reason was that the political elite of the Free State feared from the attack of Moshesh and the Sothos. They believed that the Free State would not survive a war with the Sothos and this case only under the protecting wings of a union with Cape Colony could mean a real defence. The language of the said letter which was in some aspects flattering proves this attitude: „It is, therefore, our earnest opinion, that unless this country called Orange Free State is allied in federal union with our parent Colony, it never will enjoy the blessings of peace and prosperity.“\textsuperscript{39} It is worth to note that the petitioners called Cape as a parent Colony.

Then Sir George Grey’s choice could be influenced by geographical, geopolitical considerations. Without the Orange Free State the successful unification of Cape, British Kaffraria and Natal was impractical.

Opposite to the Free State the administration and the civil service were less improved in the Transvaal. The South African Republic had to face with serious domestic problems such as the separatist movement. In comparison with the Free State the Transvaal seemed to Grey a less organized country whose borders was not fixed – these factors made for him the country not ripe enough for being part of the planned union. Anyway he did not exclude the possibility of taking the South African Republic to the federal unity – Grey only did not find it practical in that situation.

Grey showed sympathy towards the Free State not in the field of political theory but in the practice as well. He paid visits in the Orange Free State several times. Furthermore, when Prince Albert, son of Queen Victoria travelled to South Africa (the first member of the royal family who ever visited the region) Grey who organized the whole journey accompanied the Prince. Moreover Grey founded a college in the capitol of the Free State, the Bloemfontein College whose name was later altered for Grey College. The Grey College

\textsuperscript{38} Sir George Grey to Sir E. B. Lytton, 19 Nov. 1858. In HCPP 1860 (216), 6.
\textsuperscript{39} Sir G. Grey to Lord Stanley, 5 Jul. 1858. In HCPP 1860 (216), 1.
still exists.\textsuperscript{49} So this sympathy was mutual.

There were symbolical elements of Sir George Grey’s efforts to bring the colonies emotionally closer to the mother country and the Boers to the British. One of the most significant moments of that rapprochement was the said visit of Prince Alfred in Southern Africa. Grey and Prince Alfred paid visit in all the British colonies of the region and in Orange Free State as well. According to Grey’s biographer, William Lee Rees, after a hunting nearby the borders of the Transvaal, Sir George Grey and the Prince found a Boer hut where they were “gladly welcomed”: “They were hospitably entertained by the occupant of the little dwelling, an old woman, who cooked some exceedingly greasy pancakes for them. The Prince’s appetite was not at all spoiled by the fact that the appointments of the table were rather more primitive than at Buckingham Palace. In the absence of spoons and forks, he rolled up his pancake and ate it from his fingers with intense relish, telling Sir George it was ‘the most delicious pancake’ he had ever tasted. His companion, less hungry, and accustomed to much longer fasting, was quietly amused at such high appreciation of the greasy compound. When, on leaving, the Governor told the kind hostess who her guest was, the old woman was almost overcome with the thought that she had been entertaining ‘the son of the Queen’.”\textsuperscript{50}

Moreover, the Boers of the Orange Free State in case of tough conflicts with the Africans or even with the South African Republic tended to find shelter under the protecting wings of Great Britain. The relationship between the republics was extremely strained in 1857, when Martinus Wessel Pretorius, the President of the South African Republic (1857–1860, 1864–1866, 1866–1871) went to Bloemfontein in order to realize his political purpose: unification of the Boer republics under his presidency. First of all he claimed the Orange Free State on the ground that it had been granted for his father, Andries Pretorius, by Queen Victoria. Although it was totally unfounded, other elements of Pretorius’ strategy varied seriously. Jacobus Nicolaas Boshof, the President of the Orange Free State (1855–1859). Namely, Pretorius promised that he would negotiate with Moshesh, chief of the Sothos and forced him to restore the cattle stolen from the Free State Boers.\textsuperscript{42} Boshof and his staff were worried about the possibility that Pretorius supported by the border

\textsuperscript{50} REES: 318.
\textsuperscript{42} DE KIEWIET: British Colonial Policy, 108.
malcontents and Moshesh would have the power to overthrow the Government in Bloemfontein and eliminate the independence of the Free State. In order to preserve the separateness of his country Boshof turned to the British for help. He reminded Sir George Grey for the fact that the Governor had emphasized the common interests of the Free State and Cape Colony. Boshof's stratagem worked, he had supporters even in the Transvaal as well. Lijdenburgh and Zoutpansberg aimed to have more autonomy and decrease the power of Pretoria, thus these provinces assisted Boshof. Although Pretorius rode with a commando to the Free State and Boshof was ready to fight, on 2nd June 1857 the treaty of peace was signed and Pretorius left the Free State.43

Although Grey's scheme about the federal union of the British Colonies and the Free State was never realized because the Colonial Office did not support it, the relationship between the British and the Boer Republic stayed cordial especially under the long presidency of Johannes Brand (1864–1888) who was knighted in 1882 and became Sir Johannes Brand. Facts like the birthday of Queen Victoria was celebrated in the Free State prove this positive and friendly relationship.44 The British Colonial policy in many cases saw a partner in the Free State which influenced the relations between the Boer republics. Because of the qualities of the political elite of the Orange Free State, the said geographical matters as well as satisfying state of the domestic relations had impact on the British intentions towards the said Boer republic. Apart from these there could be another political factor: By preferring the Free State the British interfered to the Boer-Boer relations (implemented the Roman divide et impera principle) and obstacle the union of the Boer republics which was among the phobias of Great Britain's South African colonial policy.

44 DE KIEWIET: The Imperial Factor, 93.