THE CABINET COMMITTEE SYSTEM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF BRITISH COLONIAL POLICY, 1951-1964

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis has a dual focus: the British Cabinet committee system and British colonial policy. Its primary interest is the functioning of the Cabinet committee system and in order to investigate this colonial policy will be analysed. This policy area has been chosen both for its intrinsic interest and because it provides an ideal vehicle for a full analysis of the workings of the committee system and the impact it had on policy development.

Chapter One provides a critique of studies of British government and an outline of the main debates in the literature on colonial policy. It then outlines the nature, aims, hypotheses and aims of this study and the topics that will be studied.

The second chapter provides an account of the development and workings of the Cabinet committee system. A brief account of the period up to the end of the Second World War is followed by a more detailed account of the elaboration and consolidation of the system under Attlee and then by an account of how the system fared under the Conservatives.

Chapter Three examines the interrelationship between colonial policy and external policy. It first examines the various policy studies of the period and then examines three case studies: the Southern Cameroons, Malaysia and Aden. It concludes that sometimes colonial policy was entirely determined by strategic considerations, that the many external policy studies had little influence on the development of policy and that the committee system functioned erratically, had a conservative influence on policy-making and was poor at getting to grips with the big issues such as decline.

The fourth chapter deals with colonial constitutional development. An analysis of the various long-term timetables for constitutional development precedes a brief account of the committee structure for this subject. Two geographical areas are then analysed, the Caribbean and Africa. This chapter concludes that the timetables for independence were of little value, highlights the difficulty Britain had in relinquishing control of the smaller colonies, and concludes that there was no coordinated policy for Africa and that there was no planned process of decolonization.

The penultimate chapter deals with all aspects of policy for Malta, including its attempt to become part of the United Kingdom, and serves as a recapitulation of the various themes of this study and highlights the extent to which various policy areas were inextricably intertwined. It demonstrates the problems of constitutional advance in a strategically valuable colony and argues that the committee system did little to provide policy alternatives.

This study concludes that the Cabinet committee system was anything but a neutral piece of government machinery. It had a significant impact on policy, but that was because of its many failings, not least its failure to coordinate policy. What was designed to give cohesion and control frequently produced confusion and incoherence. Overall a flawed policy process produced a flawed outcome.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

CAB	Cabinet Papers
CAF	Central African Federation
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CO	Colonial Office
CoS	Chiefs of Staff
CPC	Colonial Policy Committee
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
DOPC	Defence and Oversea Policy Committee
EEC	European Economic Community
FO	Foreign Office
JICH	Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PREM	Prime Minister's Office Papers
PRO	Public Record Office
PUP	People's United Party
SEATO	South East Asia Treaty Organization
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis has a dual focus. Its primary interest is the British Cabinet committee system, a relatively neglected part of government. This structure consists of a large number of committees, some ministerial, some official, some a mixture of both, which are serviced by the Cabinet Office Secretariat, and carry out on behalf of the Cabinet functions which are part of the collective business of the government.[1] The specific purposes of these committees are 'to advise, to coordinate, to enquire, to negotiate or to administer (though the last case is not common in the government service)'.[2] This study will investigate how the committee system functioned in practice, and the impact its actual functioning had on the development of policy. In order to do so in a methodical manner a specific policy area had to be chosen, and after careful consideration colonial policy was selected as the most appropriate 'vehicle' for this study. This thesis will therefore also be able to analyse and evaluate certain aspects of British colonial policy. This chapter will begin by critically evaluating how studies of British government have dealt with the Cabinet committee system and will show what is being investigated. It will then outline the main positions taken in the debates about colonial policy, specifically the factors believed to be responsible for the transfers of power in Britain's colonies, and will take issue with the approach of some studies of colonial policy. The next section will describe the nature of this thesis, the reasons for selecting colonial policy, and this study's aims, hypotheses and methods. Lastly, the colonial policy topics selected for this study will be outlined, and the reasons for selecting them will be given.

I. STUDIES OF BRITISH GOVERNMENT

Omissions and inaccuracies characterize the treatment of the Cabinet committee system in many of the standard accounts of British government. One reason is the considerable, not to

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[1] Public Record Office, CAB 21/2966, Brook to Armstrong, 11 December 1951.

[2] From Treasury booklet on Committee Procedure, partly reproduced in *Public Administration*, Vol. 36, Autumn 1958, p. 249. Two types of committees exist: standing committees, long-lived bodies set up to deal with a particular policy area, and *ad hoc* committees, short-lived affairs, sometimes meeting only once, which deal with a specific issue. For further information on the definition of Cabinet committees see A. Seldon, 'The Cabinet Office and Coordination, 1979-1987', *Public Administration*, Vol. 68, Spring 1990, p. 113.

say obsessive, secrecy which has surrounded them for so long; it was not until 1992 that the names and membership of the current standing Cabinet committees were made available.[1] Despite this secrecy some general accounts of the Cabinet committee system are to be found in the secondary literature, but because of the lack of available information at the time they were written, many offer little more than general and often vague descriptions of the Cabinet committee system, and cannot provide an analysis of how the system actually functioned in practice, and the consequences of this functioning.

The problem of secrecy is acknowledged by one of the more important writers on government. In *Government by Committee*, K. C. Wheare states that he has excluded Cabinet committees from his study because those who know most about them are unable or unwilling to provide information on them.[2] A later study, and one of the finest works on British government, is *Cabinet Reform in Britain* by Hans Daalder.[3] Although Daalder does deal with Cabinet committees, he does so only as part of a wider study, and so not a great deal of space is devoted to them. In addition, this study is unable to offer an examination of how the committee system worked in practice.

Many studies, such those by Mackenzie and Grove, and N. H. Gibbs give only sketchy information on Cabinet committees.[4] Samuel Beer pays relatively little attention to Cabinet committees, referring vaguely to 'interdepartmental committees' rather than specifically

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[1] At the time of research slightly more than twenty percent of the CAB 134 files, the papers of standing Cabinet committees, that appeared relevant to this study were still closed. Another problem is that the CAB 161 files, which give information on the terms of reference and composition of Cabinet committees, have been kept closed for some time; for example the CAB 161 file for 1946 was not released until 1996. According to the Historical Section of the Cabinet Office the late release of the CAB 161 files was not due to secrecy about Cabinet committees, it was due to the classification of these documents as low priority because most of the information in them was duplicated in CAB 134 material. (Email from Sally Falk, Historical Section, Cabinet Office to the present writer, 4 December 2000.) However, the slow release of the CAB 134 files means that a lot of material that may be duplicated is not actually yet available. Another example of government secrecy is given in a PRO file on a book by Max Beloff, *New Directions in Foreign Policy*. In a letter to Beloff, the Cabinet Secretary, Norman Brook, said he hoped that Beloff would not be unduly restricted by the rule against disclosure of the committee organization and would do his best to avoid referring to committees by name. See PRO, CAB 21/3903, Brook to Beloff, 11 December 1959.

[2] K. C. Wheare, *Government by Committee* (Oxford 1955), p. 4. In *The Machinery of Government* (Oxford 1945) Wheare refers only briefly to Cabinet committees. The justification given for withholding information was that it could damage collective responsibility, undermine the authority of departmental ministers, and lead to arguments about the status of decisions made by Cabinet committees rather than the Cabinet. See P. Hennessy, *Cabinet* (Oxford 1986), pp. 89-90 and G. W. Jones, 'The Development of the Cabinet', in W. Thornhill (ed.), *The Modernization of British Government* (1975), p. 55. In addition, the government withheld the names of committee chairmen. It did so in order to prevent Parliament from attempting to transfer ministerial responsibility from departmental ministers to committee chairmen. See PRO, CAB 21/4327, Padmore to Brook (undated).

[3] H. Daalder, *Cabinet Reform in Britain, 1914-1963* (1964).

[4] W. J. M. Mackenzie and J. W. Grove, *Central Administration in Britain* (1957) and N. H. Gibbs, *The British Cabinet System* (2nd edition 1952). As far as the post-1945 period is concerned, Gibbs has (p. 121) little more to say than that the scope and number of committees has increased.

mentioning Cabinet committees, and has nothing on what impact the committee system might have had on the position and authority of the Treasury - whether it strengthened or weakened Treasury control.[1] Other studies offer more information, but only in terms of historical background and general information, not in terms of analysis.[2] *Cabinet Government* by Ivor Jennings offers some details on the growth of the committee system and a brief account of how the system was meant to function.[3] However, because of the restrictions on information about Cabinet committees that were in force when his study was written, he is unable to offer any information on the committee system after 1947.[4] In consequence there are a number of omissions, for instance there is no mention of the Cabinet committee system in the section on prime ministerial power - whether it was increased or reduced by the system - and so his account of prime ministerial power is incomplete.[5]

Some studies not only fail to provide much information, they also demonstrate a misunderstanding of the system. F. M. G. Willson, for example, shows in his brief mention of Cabinet committees a lack of knowledge of the committee system, and a misapprehension of its nature. He states that sometimes a high-level committee of senior civil servants is appointed to work closely with a ministerial committee, and that both types are loosely referred to as Cabinet committees.[6] In fact, Cabinet committees were carefully defined and were clearly differentiated from other interdepartmental committees.

Although John Mackintosh gives some space to Cabinet committees and provides an historical account of their development, he makes no mention of the committees as forming a system and, given the nature of his study, does not offer an analysis of the actual functioning of the system.[7] A more recent version of Mackintosh's *The Government and Politics of Britain* by Peter Richards also fails to offer any analysis using archival material, meaning that although the intended functions of committees are outlined, such as saving the Cabinet's time by reducing the amount of work that has to come before it, and clarifying issues that need to be dealt with by the Cabinet, there is no consideration of whether the committee system actually performed these intended functions.[8] Richards makes a number of assertions about Cabinet committees, such as

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[1] S. H. Beer, *Treasury Control* (2nd edition Oxford 1957).

[2] See for example W. K. Hancock and M. M. Gowing, *British War Economy* (1949).

[3] I. Jennings, *Cabinet Government* (3rd edition 1959).

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 256.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204.

[6] F. M. G. Willson, *The Organization of British Central Government* (2nd edition 1968), p. 312. The lack of information on Cabinet committees is not entirely due to government secrecy because an earlier work, *The British Economy, 1945-1950* (Oxford 1952) by G. D. N. Worswick and P. H. Ady provides more background, albeit still sketchy, on the committee system.

[7] J. P. Mackintosh, *The British Cabinet* (2nd edition 1968).

[8] P. G. Richards, *Mackintosh's The Government and Politics of Britain*, (7th edition 1988), p. 70.

that in most cases on committees ministers will tend to use the brief provided by officials because they are so overworked, and that official committees meet for preliminary discussions so that their parallel ministerial committees can easily reach an agreed conclusion, but does not back them up with any archival evidence. [1]

Some of the more recent studies contain a number of errors. Michael Rush overlooks the important developments that took place during the Second World War, which is presumably why he wrongly suggests that the basis of the present system was established by Attlee, whereas what Attlee did was to refine and expand the system created during the war.[2] G. W. Jones says that in 1964 the Foreign Affairs Committee, established in 1956, and the Defence Committee were merged.[3] In fact, one of the surprising features of the committee system was that for many years there was no committee for foreign affairs.[4] The first standing committee that dealt with foreign affairs was the Oversea (*sic*) Policy Committee, established in 1962.[5] It was this committee that was merged with the Defence Committee to form the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee, and the merger actually took place in 1963.[6] Jones claims that the committee system enables government to work more effectively, clears away routine work, allows the Cabinet to concentrate on controversial matters, has a conciliatory role by allowing further discussion in a different arena when there is disagreement in the Cabinet, and facilitates the coordination of policy.[7] These various features may have been how the system was intended to function, but Jones offers no evidence that this was how the system functioned in practice.

Bruce Headey states that official committees are only supposed to reach agreement on matters not important or sensitive enough to refer to ministers, and that any paper produced by official committees for ministerial committees should therefore set out all the options in relation to issues that ministers might wish to decide for themselves.[8] He offers no evidence for this and does not consider the possibility that ministers might ask official committees to come up with a

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[1] Richards, *Mackintosh's Government*, pp. 183-184.

[2] M. Rush, *The Cabinet and Policy Formation* (1984), p. 45. Like many others he makes no attempt to evaluate how the committee system actually worked and what impact it had on policy formation.

[3] Jones, 'The Development of the Cabinet', p. 47. Mackintosh also says that a Foreign Affairs Committee was set up. Jones may simply be repeating Mackintosh's mistake, although Mackintosh correctly states that the DOPC was established in 1963. See J. P. Mackintosh, *The British Cabinet* (3rd edition 1977), p. 527.

[4] This presumably reflects Bevin's determination to prevent anyone intervening in his domain, and the fact that Churchill, Eden and Macmillan were all Prime Ministers who kept foreign affairs under close personal supervision.

[5] See PRO, CAB 134/2370, OP(62)1, 29 June 1962, p. 1.

[6] See PRO, CAB 148/15, DOP(63)1, 1 October 1963, p. 1.

[7] Jones, 'The Development of the Cabinet, pp. 48-49. Jones also says that the committee system does not increase the Prime Minister's power.

[8] Bruce Headey, 'Cabinet Ministers and Senior Civil Servants', in V. Herman and J. Alt, *Cabinet Studies: A Reader* (1975), p. 127.

specific policy recommendation, or that all the options were listed only when an official committee was unable to agree on a recommendation to ministers. Although he offers a number of reasons why the existence of official committees may lead to policy options being foreclosed, he cannot demonstrate that this was what actually happened.[1]

Herbert Morrison has provided an insider's account of the workings of government.[2] However, Morrison seems somewhat uncritical in his account of the committee system and complacently assumes it worked as intended. In addition, implicit in Morrison's account of government is the assumption that the structure of government was neutral and did not affect the policy-making process. Another insider's account, by Patrick Gordon Walker, gives an outline of the development of the committee system, but is neither fully comprehensive nor fully accurate and has nothing on how the system actually functioned or its effect.[3] That insiders were not fully aware of how the system functioned, or were not willing to acknowledge how it functioned, is demonstrated in a work by the Labour politician Gerald Kaufman. He states that the Prime Minister decides what are to be the Cabinet committees.[4] As will be shown later this is an oversimplification which ignores the influence and involvement of officials, particularly the Cabinet Secretary.

Although later works have the advantage of being written when archival material was available, the political science nature of these studies mean they tend to offer no analysis of how the system actually functioned and what implications this had for policy development. In addition these studies also contain a number of mistakes. For example, Peter Hennessy's study of Cabinet government, a work that straddles rather uneasily the gap between political science studies and historical studies, says that Eden constructed a 'battery' of new committees on the domestic front, of which the most important were the Industrial Relations Committee, the Colonial Immigrants Committee and the Social Services Committee.[5] In fact, far from creating a battery of domestic committees, relatively few were created during Eden's premiership, and most of these were unlikely to have been created on Eden's instructions, given that they either dealt with minor topics or were sub-committees of already established committees. In addition, the Industrial Relations Committee can scarcely be described as one of the most important, given that it only met twice, and therefore did not perform an important policy coordinating or

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[1] Headey, 'Cabinet Ministers and Senior Civil Servants', p. 126. He suggests this will happen because of the formation of a united departmental view, the operation of the inter-departmental civil service network, and the fact that almost all ministerial Cabinet committees are serviced by parallel official committees.

[2] H. Morrison, *Government and Parliament* (2nd edition 1959).

[3] P. G. Walker, *The Cabinet* (2nd edition 1972).

[4] G. Kaufman, *How to be a Minister* (1980), p. 69.

[5] Hennessy, *Cabinet*, p. 53.

monitoring function, or make a long-term contribution to policy development. Furthermore, of all the committees created under Eden, about half dealt with overseas policy issues.[1] In the case of Macmillan, Hennessy says that he chaired few committees.[2] So far as committees dealing with colonial matters are concerned, this is far from correct.[3] Hennessy also states that standing committees are permanent for the duration of a Prime Minister's term.[4] As will be seen this is wrong; committees were disbanded as and when it was felt necessary. Hennessy quotes one former senior civil servant, Sir John Hunt, as saying that the criticisms that the Cabinet committee system makes a coherent strategy more difficult to achieve, causes unnecessary delays and produces unsatisfactory compromises, are not fully justified.[5] Hennessy fails to offer any evidence to either support or refute Hunt's claims.

One work which does focus on Cabinet committees is the study by Mackie and Hogwood.[6] However, this comparative study of the role played by those committees in decision-making in various countries sheds little light on how Cabinet committees function in practice. The political science nature of this study means that it offers information, usually in the form of some basic statistics, but provides no insight. There is little detail given, it mainly uses anecdotal evidence, and because it simply describes how the committees are supposed to contribute to the decision-making process, it makes no points that have not been made in other studies.

The chapter by Simon James in the study edited by Rhodes and Dunleavy contains a number of errors.[7] James seems unaware of developments pre-1945 and wrongly states that until the Second World War committees were infrequent *ad hoc* affairs.[8] As will be seen in Chapter

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[1] See PRO Online Catalogue, www.pro.gov.uk, CAB 134 pages. An examination of these suggests that about twenty-six new standing committees were created, fourteen of which dealt with domestic issues and twelve of which dealt with overseas issues. Some of these committees dealt with only minor matters such as open cast mining and the welfare of overseas students, or were only sub-committees of committees that had been created before Eden became Prime Minister, such as the Mutual Aid Committee, Sub-Committee on South and South-East Asia.

[2] Hennessy, *Cabinet*, p. 59.

[3] Of the committees that dealt with colonial policy, Macmillan chaired the following: European Economic Association, Common Market Negotiations, Cyprus, Defence, Defence and Oversea Policy, Africa, Colonial Policy, Oversea Policy, Central African Affairs, The Yemen, The Common Market and the Free Trade Area, Jordan and Cyprus, Defence Policy in South-East Asia, Muscat and Oman, The Position of the United Kingdom in World Affairs, Commonwealth Affairs, Trade with Soviet Russia, Singapore, Constitutional Development in Africa, Mr Dillon's Visit, Boycott of South African Goods, The Maldives, Economic Questions, Cotton Imports, The Congo, Nigerian Resolution on Colonialism, and Greater Malaysia.

[4] Hennessy, *Cabinet*, pp. 30-31.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

[6] T. T. Mackie and B. W. Hogwood, 'Cabinet Committees in Executive Decision-Making: A Comparative Perspective', *University of Strathclyde Studies in Public Policy*, No. 111 (Glasgow 1983).

[7] R. A. W. Rhodes and P. Dunleavy (eds.), *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive* (Basingstoke 1995).

[8] S. James, 'Relations between Prime Minister and Cabinet', in *ibid.*, p. 69.

Two, this is not entirely accurate. Although this chapter is described as an historical account, this is in the sense of 'contemporary history' and so it has not been able to use primary sources, and as a result its conclusions, such as that the system reduced prime ministerial power, are not supported by any archival evidence.[1] Similarly, the nature of the study by Burch and Halliday means that there is no analysis using archival material, and there is little on the role of the committee system in policy-making. Not only does this study state what the committees were intended to achieve without considering whether they actually performed these functions, it also fails to give a full and entirely accurate historical background.[2]

Rhodes and Dunleavy make the valid observation that earlier work done on the Cabinet committee structure has established only a basic listing of which committees existed, even in the period for which PRO files are open.[3] This study aims to rectify this situation. In fact, for the most part the only worthwhile thing the political science studies do is throw up lots of questions that need to be answered by a study of the papers of the Cabinet committee system.

To sum up: too little is known about the Cabinet committee system in terms of how it worked, the influence it had, how it was used, how well it worked, and the implications of the functioning of this part of government for the development of policy. This all arises from the fact that no methodical and comprehensive analysis of how the system operated in practice has been undertaken. Those studies that deal with Cabinet committees are descriptive rather than analytical, they deal with how the system was supposed to work rather than how it actually functioned in practice, and make little or no use of archival material.

II. COLONIAL POLICY STUDIES

As this thesis is not a comprehensive analysis of colonial policy no general colonial historiographical background is provided. However, as this study will amend, clarify and supplement the conclusions of certain studies of British colonial policy, and will also take issue with the approach of some studies, an outline of the main debates in the areas of colonial policy that this study deals with will be given.

A variety of explanations have been offered for the British withdrawal from Empire.[4] The 'official' account is that this was simply an evolutionary process in which Britain responded to

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[1] S. James, 'Relations between Prime Minister and Cabinet', p. 72.
[2] M. Burch and I. Holliday, *The British Cabinet System* (Hemel Hempstead 1996).
[3] Rhodes and Dunleavy, *Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive*, p. 320.
[4] For a review of the historical arguments see J. Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (Oxford 1991).

the aspirations of its colonial subjects.[1] Not surprisingly, few historians accept such a dubiously simple and high-minded account. Instead they propose explanations encompassing a range and combination of factors such as a reduction in the economic value of the colonies, colonial nationalist pressure, the impact of the Suez Crisis, changes in the international political climate, the after-effects of the Second World War, a collapse in British power, the actions of other colonial powers, the need to reduce overseas expenditure, neo-colonialism, Britain's changing strategic needs, a desire for closer economic relations with Europe, American anti-colonialism and Cold War concerns.

Many studies emphasise that any monocausal interpretation of decolonization is unlikely to be correct. John Darwin, for example, suggests that explanations that attribute decolonization to one great cause are fundamentally unsatisfactory and argues, for example, that economic factors on their own are not an adequate explanation for decolonization. He considers this to be the case because decolonization increased Britain's economic commitments in the short-term and because in many cases the transfer of power had been decided upon before the government was fully aware of the extent of Britain's relative economic decline.[2] He also suggests that British policy makers did not conclude in the fifteen years after 1945, when most of the crucial decisions about colonial withdrawal were taken, that the imperial economy was now redundant.[3] Furthermore, he argues that self-government came about not because of an anticipation of economic decline, but in part because Britain considered that a steady transfer of power was the price of getting stability and cooperation in developing colonial economies.[4] In the economic sphere what he does feel had an influence was the decision to apply for membership of the EEC, which meant that from summer 1960 to January 1963 the government's approach to the colonies was influenced by the assumption that Britain would soon be a member of the EEC.[5]

Darwin takes a cautious approach to the significance of colonial nationalism, and suggests that its role needs careful qualification because the creation of a mass nationalism strong enough to force out colonial powers was much more difficult than hindsight suggests. Most colonies consisted of a number of different communities with little in common, open rebellion was politically difficult and physically dangerous, and for the leaders of colonial nationalism there was the danger that political action could degenerate into unrest that could

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[1] J. Darwin, 'British Decolonization since 1945: A Pattern or a Puzzle?', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1984, p. 189. For an example of the 'official' view see, for example, A. H. M. Kirk-Greene (ed.), *The Transfer of Power* (Oxford 1979), p. 19.

[2] John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke 1988), pp. 330-331.

[3] Darwin, *The End of the British Empire*, p. 48.

[4] Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization*, p. 243.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

damage them more than their colonial masters.[1] He suggests that nationalism did make some contribution to the shape and timing of British withdrawal because of the skill with which local politicians seized any opportunities offered to them, and because those politicians succeeded in establishing the conviction that self-determination required the dismantling of colonial empires and the removal of all types of colonial subordination.[2] But in general he considers that it was only when nationalism was combined with other forces that it had a real impact.[3]

Darwin does not see decolonization as the product of a change in Britain's global role, arguing that even after 1960 the old assumptions about this role had not necessarily died away.[4] He also suggests that at the international level there is little evidence that Britain simply gave in to an overwhelming international pressure to decolonize.[5] He suggests that rather than being the root cause of British decolonization, the new international atmosphere and Britain's eagerness to adapt to it, was responsible for the reinforcement and acceleration of the ending of colonial rule.[6] As for other factors at the international level, Darwin suggests that there was no overwhelming US pressure on Britain. Although in the end Britain had to respond to any pressing US demand for a change in imperial policy, the Cold War meant that the US came to recognize the important role of the British imperial system in the containment of communism.[7] However, the Cold War also meant that Britain had to take USSR activity in the Third World into account when considering the timing of constitutional advance, and whether Britain could retain control of those colonies that had been assumed to be too small for independence.[8] In addition the competition at the UN between East and West for the support of third world countries further constrained Britain's leeway in controlling the speed of constitutional advance.[9]

In contrast to those who see the Suez Crisis as a major turning point, Darwin suggests that the Crisis had a more subtle influence. It emphasised the domestic and international difficulties which actions that might isolate Britain could pose and highlighted the dangers of armed intervention when the circumstances were not extremely favourable.[10] The result of Suez

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[1] Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization*, p. 18.
[2] Darwin, *The End of the British Empire*, pp. 109-110.
[3] Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization*, p. 19.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[5] Darwin, *The End of the British Empire*, p. 114.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[9] *Ibid.*, 73.
[10] Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization*, p. 231.

therefore was to emphasis how important it was to avoid having a large gap between British and American foreign policy.[1]

Darwin considers that the rapid pace of withdrawal was due to the conjunction of international and colonial pressures. Britain did not want to alienate moderate colonial politicians, was uncertain about its ability to suppress disruptive elements, and was concerned about the possibility of simultaneous serious unrest in the colonies and the damage this might cause to Britain's non-colonial interests. Britain also wanted to avoid the risk of being overcommitted in any one region and did not want to be seen as an old-fashioned imperialist power because appearing so would lose Britain influence. And so to retain world power the colonies had to go.[2]

Overall, Darwin stresses that decolonization was the product of changes at the international, metropolitan and colonial levels, and can only be explained by taking into account the changes at all these levels. He suggests that the most significant change was the Second World War and its after-effects, which set off an infinite series of changes that in total destroyed the pre-war relationship between the imperial powers and their colonies.[3] The war destroyed the old conditions which had favoured European colonial empires, the colonial system in Asia was wrecked by Japanese expansion, the requirements of a war economy strained the relations between colonial rulers and their subjects, the rise of the new superpowers meant that the possession of colonies was no longer a standard attribute of great power status, and the reaction against fascism and nazism created an ideological climate in which self-determination became a standard political doctrine.[4] However, he cautions that the actual pattern of decolonization was not an inevitable outcome of the war because it was determined by the interlocking of events at the international, domestic and colonial level.[5]

In contrast to Darwin, Porter and Stockwell emphasize the economic imperatives behind decolonization and argue that the colonial connection came to be seen as of little economic value, because of various factors such as the reduction in commodity prices and the terms of trade moving in favour of industrial nations.[6] They also argue that decolonization was not a response to colonial nationalism, and insist that the Suez Crisis was not a watershed.[7] Instead, they suggest that there was a turning point in 1961 when Britain realized it could no longer

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[1] Darwin, *The End of the British Empire*, p. 70.
[2] Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization*, p. 334.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 332.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[6] A. N. Porter and A. J. Stockwell (eds.), *British Imperial Policy and Decolonization, 1938-64*, Vol. 2, *1951-64*, p. 27.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 47 and p. 29.

significantly influence colonial economic and social conditions in preparation for independence, either in the time available or with the funding Britain could afford, and that there was no option other than rapid and determined decolonization.[1]

R. F. Holland also feels that economic factor were significant, and contends that the change from limited constitutional reform to nation building came about because fully independent states were the type of economic partner that Britain required.[2] Furthermore, it increasingly seemed that applying for EEC membership was the best course for Britain to take.[3] He sees Suez as significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it made Macmillan realize that an emphatic shift from conventional to nuclear spending was required.[4] In turn, the move to a nuclear strategy made the colonies a 'tiresome disturbance'.[5] Secondly, Holland considers that decolonization in Africa and the Mediterranean was simply one aspect of an adaptation of Britain's status that took place because Suez forced Britain to recognize that its world power status needed to be scaled down.[6] Thirdly, Britain now had to recognize that it could no longer have an independent foreign policy, and so had to pay more attention to American concerns by paying more attention to NATO objectives, and attaching less importance to African and Asian commitments.[7] Domestic concerns also played a part. He suggests that Macmillan wanted to get rid of the colonies so that the Conservative Party could be presented as a modern and progressive party.[8]

David Goldsworthy stresses the importance of both economic and strategic factors, and suggests that changing government assessments of how best to promote Britain's strategic and economic interests were the main factors that determined the nature of colonial policy. He considers that from 1951-57 policy was about containing change in the colonies, but that under Macmillan and Macleod change was promoted. This happened because the increase in colonial nationalism and the reduction in imperial ambitions had led them to conclude that a point had been reached, beyond which any continuation of the old pace and style of colonial policy would incur social, economic and political costs which Britain could not afford.[9] In contrast to those who put much emphasis on economic factors, David Reynolds suggests that although there was a change in the economic value of the colonies - due to the alterations in Britain's economic

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[1] Porter and Stockwell, *British Imperial Policy and Decolonization*, pp. 37-38.
[2] R. F. Holland, 'The Imperial Factor in British Strategies from Attlee to Macmillan, 1945-63', *JICH*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1984, p. 174.
[3] R. F. Holland, *European Decolonization, 1918-1981* (Basingstoke 1985), p. 206.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 204.
[5] *Ibid.* pp. 204-205.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 192.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 202.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 208-209.
[9] D. Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945-1961* (Oxford 1971), p. 1.

position, sterling convertibility, and the growing interest in the European Economic Community which Europe's industrial growth produced - the main reason for a change in colonial policy was the change in the international setting caused by French and Belgian decolonization.[1]

The influence of America on British policy has caused some disagreement. W. Roger Louis suggests that although it is difficult to measure it must have been small.[2] Others feel that if America had little to do with the fact of decolonization, it had a significant influence on the pace. Watt contends that without the external stimulus of American anti-colonialism in the 1950s there would have been a more gradual move towards independence.[3]

The reasons behind Britain's withdrawal from its African colonies have given rise to much debate.[4] Some historians consider that African nationalism was the most important factor. Austin, for example, argues that decolonization in East and Central Africa was a response to events, especially the transfer of a radical nationalist sentiment from West to East and Central Africa, and suggests Britain had not developed any 'prescient pre-emptive policy'.[5] Hemmings insists that the primary factor driving African decolonization was the fear of nationalist explosions.[6] Low puts much emphasis on African nationalism, arguing that Britain was not making the running in its African colonies, and concluding that basically what happened was that the government's 'colonialist feet slipped out from under them'.[7]

Other historians put nationalism in a wider context. Although Louis says that Britain was responding to African nationalism, Britain also made its own calculations about keeping these colonies against domestic and international opinion and decided that the best move would be a quick transfer of power in the hope of retaining economic and political influence.[8] Darwin suggests that British policy in Africa was determined by three main factors. The first was the increasing evidence that there would be considerable waves of unrest in the African colonies similar to those which had occurred in Asia at the end of the Second World War; one example of such evidence was the Central African Emergency. The government considered that any systematic repression of colonial unrest would stretch Britain's resources and could be

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[1] D. Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled* (1991), pp. 222-223.

[2] W. R. Louis, 'American Anti-Colonialism and the Dissolution of the British Empire', *International Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 3, 1985, p. 418.

[3] D. C. Watt, 'Demythologizing the Eisenhower Era', in W. R. Louis and H. Bull (eds.), *The Special Relationship* (Oxford 1986), p. 82.

[4] For a brief survey of the various studies on this subject see R. Ovendale, 'Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa, 1957-1960, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 1995, pp. 455-456.

[5] D. Austin, 'The Transfer of Power', in W. H. Morris-Jones and G. Fischer (eds.), *Decolonization and After* (1980), p. 25.

[6] P. E. Hemming, 'Macmillan and the End of the British Empire in Africa', in R. Aldous and S. Lee (eds.), *Harold Macmillan and Britain's World Role*, p. 110.

[7] D. A. Low, *Eclipse of Empire* (Cambridge 1991), pp. 237-238.

[8] Louis, "American Anti-Colonialism', p. 418.

unpopular both domestically and internationally.[1] The second influence was the actions of other colonial powers in Africa, in particular France giving its African colonies independence, which left Britain worried that it would seem less liberal than France.[2] In addition the crisis in the Belgian Congo motivated Britain to construct native governments in East Africa to which power could be transferred before unrest spread there.[3] The third factor was the local situation in Africa. This includes a number of aspects of the situation in specific colonies, such as the fact that Tanganyika was a trust territory, and therefore denying it independence would put Britain under pressure at the UN.[4]

Holland sees the Emergency as important, but also puts emphasis on the significance of French decolonization and the failure of French policy in Algeria.[5] He also stresses that there was a petty bourgeois social grouping which the government was responding to, one which wanted more public expenditure at home and less overseas.[6] Horowitz considers that the Emergency and the Hola Massacre reinforced the government's view that British rule could only maintained by force, and force would not be acceptable to the British public, a view that helped shape British policy in combination with the Suez crisis, the impact of French and Belgian decolonization and the electoral success of African nationalists.[7] He also suggests that no clear decision was taken after the 1959 general election to adopt a new policy for Africa; changes under Macmillan were ones of approach and climate of opinion, rather than a matter of formal decision.[8]

Others put less emphasis on nationalism and local unrest. Reynolds points out that, with the exception of the Central African Federation, African nationalism was often weak, and suggests that the withdrawal from Africa was due to changing assessments of the economic value of the colonies there.[9] Fieldhouse takes a similar approach, suggesting that Britain hung on to its African colonies as long as it needed them to prop up its economic position, and once

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[1] Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization*, pp. 248-249. Darwin argues elsewhere that the political fall-out of the Emergency derailed British colonial policy in East and Central Africa and increased the speed of British withdrawal from these regions. See J. Darwin, 'The Central African Emergency, 1959', *JICH*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1993, pp. 218-219

[2] Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization*, pp. 251-252.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 258.

[5] R. Holland, *The Pursuit of Greatness* (1991), pp. 298-299.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[7] D. Horowitz, 'Attitudes of British Conservatives towards Decolonization in Africa', *African Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 274, 1970, p. 10.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[9] Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, p. 224.

they became less valuable gave them quick independence in order that Britain could retain some influence over them.[1]

Hargreaves considers that Macmillan felt that Britain's colonial commitments were damaging its relationship with the United States, the new members of the Commonwealth and the United Nations, and could harm any application for EEC membership. It was therefore necessary for Britain to reduce these commitments and Africa seemed a region where many of them could be safely contracted.[2] Ovendale suggests that the decision to 'abdicate in Africa' was influenced by international considerations and Cold War politics, a change from 'multi-racialism' to non-racialism', the recognition that Britain needed a common policy for Africa and, for Macmillan himself, the aftermath of Belgium's withdrawal from the Congo and above all the failure of French policy in Algeria.[3]

Underlying many accounts of colonial policy is the assumption that, for whatever reason or combination of reasons, there was a planned procedure of decolonization which Britain implemented. Others see matters differently. Darwin considers that it is a fallacy to believe that the decolonization process was the planned result of the actions of British policy-makers or colonial politicians.[4] He suggests that in fact there was no plan; all that happened was an unpredictable erosion of position after position, with policy being little more than improvised responses to events.[5] He suggests that decolonization, in terms of a planned, coordinated procedure implemented by Britain, is little more than a myth. In essence Britain fabricated an account of its colonial policies from a mass of incoherent actions to make them appear more altruistic, and to make past decisions appear to be the obvious precursor to future policy.[6] Darwin also suggests that most accounts of colonial policy assume broadly consistent policies were applied across Britain's imperial system, but that in fact there was no coordinated pattern, with foreign and colonial policy riddled with inconsistencies.[7] Furedi takes a similar approach, insisting that there was no plan for a gradual discharge of colonial responsibilities; what in fact happened was that unexpected events led to actions being taken that had unintended consequences.[8]

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[1] D. K. Fieldhouse, *Black Africa, 1945-80: Economic Decolonization and Arrested Development* (1986), pp. 7-8.

[2] J. D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (1988), p. 186.

[3] Ovendale, 'Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa', p.455 and p. 457.

[4] J. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization*, p. viii.

[5] Darwin, 'British Decolonization since 1945', p. 206.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[8] F. Furedi, 'Kenya: Decolonization through Counterinsurgency', in A. Gorst, L. Johnman and W. S. Lucas (eds.), *Contemporary British History, 1931-1961: Politics and the Limits of Policy* (1991), pp. 141-142.

On a more general level this study will be challenging not only the conclusions, but also the approach of certain studies of colonial policy. A number of studies and articles, particularly one by Robert Holland, and to a lesser extent ones by David Goldsworthy, and W. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, credit policy-makers with a subtlety of thought, a clarity of vision and a degree of knowledge that approaches omniscience, and portray them as making incredibly subtle, complicated and well-informed judgements.[1] Goldsworthy offers the oversophisticated explanation that one reason that radical policies were able to be implemented was because Macmillan and Macleod confused the trail by moving about from issue to issue, taking apparently unconnected decisions without revealing the overall trend in policy.[2] Holland talks about Britain as being an imperial power 'with a clear sense of how to explore new coalitions capable of underpinning its international influence' and says that Macmillan moved with decisiveness and confidence on colonial issues.[3] He talks about the 'brazen confidence with which officials went through the motions of successive decolonizations.[4]

As will be seen, the papers of Cabinet committees show that the reality was very different; judgements were made in the dark, difficult decisions were avoided, conflicting assessments of situations were made, and there was often no appreciation of the full picture. There was a lack of coordination, and in consequence a fractured approach to policy-making, and a general lack of any grand, overarching strategy. Holland in particular ignores the messy realities of the day-to-day debate, including the unwillingness of ministers and officials to face up to the making of certain difficult decisions, and the fact that not infrequently the policy-makers had few policy initiatives to offer.

By ignoring policy debates and in consequence only dealing with the end product of the policy-making process, these studies paint a false sense of decisiveness. Policy-making was often a slow, cumbersome and confused process which often had no clear sense of direction and there were often real difficulties in taking decisions. Furthermore, the approach of such studies means that British policy is portrayed as being more proactive than it actually was and ignores the possibility that policy was often essentially reactive. In addition these studies do not differentiate between preferred and forced choices, so that a rationale for policy outcomes could be offered that never existed in the first place. An accurate judgement about British policy cannot be made if no distinction is made between forced decisions and preferred choices. A

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[1] Holland, *European Decolonization* and 'The Imperial Factor in British Strategies'; Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*; D. Goldsworthy, 'Conservatives and Decolonization', *African Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 276, 1970; W. R. Louis and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Decolonization', *JICH*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1994.

[2] Goldsworthy, 'Conservatives and Decolonization', p. 280.

[3] Holland, 'The Imperial Factor in British Strategies', p. 174 and p. 179.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

congeries of forced decisions does not constitute a planned withdrawal from the colonies as part of some grand shift in British strategy.

III. THE THESIS: NATURE, AIMS, HYPOTHESES AND METHODS

This study will analyse the actual working of the Cabinet committee system and the impact this system had on the policy that was developed within it. Colonial policy was selected as the focus of this analysis for a number of reasons. Firstly, a study of colonial policy is worth undertaking in its own right because works on British colonial policy have in general under-utilized the papers of the Cabinet committees, and therefore an analysis of this material is needed to see how it adds to and modifies our knowledge of colonial policy. Secondly, it is necessary to study a specific policy area because looking at the committee system using selected and unconnected examples from a variety of different policy areas would not provide a valid or meaningful analysis of the system. A selective study would be neither rigorous, nor comprehensive, nor representative enough; such a measure of selectivity would likely distort findings, and indeed could mean that practically anything could be 'proved' about the system. Thirdly, choosing a self-contained policy area would not be productive because such a policy area would not, because of its very nature, appear very frequently on the agenda of Cabinet committees. Colonial policy, in contrast, provides an ideal type of topic; it is a coherent and comprehensive one, but it is also one that was closely linked to an abundance of other policy concerns such as defence, the global role, foreign policy, economic policy, the Cold War and Anglo-American relations and because of this colonial policy was frequently discussed in the Cabinet committee system.

This study will accomplish a number of main aims. Firstly, it will provide a full account of the origins, growth and development of the Cabinet committee system. Secondly, it will deal with a significant gap in our knowledge of the functioning of British government by providing an account and analysis of the actual functioning of the Cabinet committee system, and by exploring the ramifications and implications of how it functioned in practice for the development of policy. In doing so it will provide an analysis of the policy-making mechanism which is more detailed and more sophisticated than previous accounts, and will clear up the many misconceptions that exist about the actual role of committees. It will also provide a more accurate view of the policy process in order that a more accurate characterization of the policy outcome can be made. In addition, by analysing the papers of the Cabinet committees this study will challenge, revise and supplement various aspects of the literature on colonial policy.

This study will test out a number of hypotheses about both the Cabinet committee system and British colonial policy. Its main contention about the Cabinet committee system is that it did not function as intended, and that its actual functioning had a damaging impact on the development of policy. There was little sign of issues being processed by the system - that is dealt with in a consistent and methodical manner. Above all, during the Conservative's period in office from 1951 to 1964, the system changed from the Attlee model of a decision-making apparatus to what was often little more than a talking shop. As a result the system did not contribute to the efficient and effective development of policy as it did under the Attlee governments.[1]

This thesis will contend that the system generated a lot of unproductive activity because much work was unnecessary or had a negligible impact, that the policy reviews and studies had little influence and that there was a problem with duplication of work. This thesis will seek to demonstrate that committees failed to scrutinize policy alternatives properly, that often committee meetings did not produce many concrete results with neither any conclusion reached nor the argument advanced any further, and that there was often a reluctance to take the initiative, and an inability to come up with new policy proposals. As a result of all this the system produced a semblance of activity that helped camouflage the evasion of decision-taking and disguised the fact that policy was often reactive

Another hypothesis is that the committee system helped produce policy drift. There was a lack of lead in the system, with the system functioning poorly when no clear sense of purpose was identified and there was little sense of urgency, with an unwillingness to take decisions until there was no option other than to do so. This bureaucratic inertia appeared when ministers were not giving a lead, and because they often did not, the result was that the system tended to become directionless unless there was an imperative imported from outside it either by events or by a key personality.

This thesis will contend that the committee system failed to coordinate policy. Often committees seemed to exist in isolation, rather than working as part of a system, leading to a lack of coordination between ministerial and official committees. In addition the committee system was poor at considering the implications of a policy initiative in one area for other policy areas, and so there was policy fragmentation. It will be shown that one reason for this was that there was not much of a will to coordinate because departments wanted to maintain as much autonomy as possible, and so were reluctant to draw attention to those implications lest it

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[1] For the functioning of the Cabinet committee system during the period 1945 to 1951 see J. M. Finlayson, *The Machinery of Government and the Formulation of British Colonial Policy, 1945-1951* (University of Leeds MA thesis 1994).

lead to other departments intervening in their area of responsibility. Another problem was that when a specific issue was dealt with by a number of committees this could lead to inconsistent positions and decisions.

Various other hypotheses will be tested such as that the committee system was not a learning process in which mistakes were learned from and successes built upon. In essence it had no political educative function because lessons learned in one case were not applied in others. This thesis will also test the supposition that the committee system had a conservative influence in policy in that radical ideas were usually filtered out at an early stage. With regard to the role of officials, this thesis will seek to demonstrate that their influence is not as great as some have argued, and that the existence of official committees did not lead to policy options being foreclosed. Another assertion of this thesis is that there was a strong desire to reach consensus in Cabinet committees and that this could result in so much compromise that any resultant decision or agreement was an extremely weak one. In addition this thesis will seek to demonstrate that if used astutely the system increased prime ministerial power, and that the nature of the system meant that it was poor at long-term and contingency planning.

This study will examine a number of assertions about colonial policy. The main assertion is that there was no planned process of decolonization, and indeed that there was little coherence and consistency in colonial policy because Britain did not have any general strategy for its colonies. As a consequence British policy was often reactive, and in the absence of some external stimuli there was often a drift in colonial policy. This thesis will contend that what dynamic there was behind colonial policy was not a British plan for the transfer of power, it was the British feeling that it was not in a position to resist demands for independence. This study will also demonstrate that there was no big decision made to pull out of Africa; that nationalism, albeit in a less straightforward way than some studies suggest, was an important factor in the transfer of power in Africa; and that the decision to Tanganyika early independence was a crucial factor in the withdrawal from East Africa. This study will demonstrate that the withdrawal from the colonies was not the next evolutionary step, or even a forced speeding-up of a planned process, it was in fact a complete departure from earlier policy which envisaged no more than full internal self-government within the Commonwealth. This thesis will argue that a revised conception of Britain's global role was not responsible for decolonization; and that decolonization did not take place because Britain considered that the strategic value of the colonies had declined. In contrast this thesis will argue that the strategic value of certain colonies had a major influence on colonial policy, and that colonial constitutional advance was sometimes determined solely by strategic considerations. It will also show that the government was unwilling to face up fully to the implications of decline and properly grapple with the

question of retaining the global role. This thesis will also argue that Cold War considerations played a part in shaping African and South-East Asian policy, and that partly because of this American pressure did not play much of a part in the withdrawal from Empire.

This study will test these hypotheses in the following way. It will not make hindsight judgements about policy or the system within which that policy was developed. Rather it will judge the system on its own terms. In effect Chapter Two, which provides the first full account of the history, growth and development of the Cabinet committee system, also provides the analytical basis for the treatment of the papers of the Cabinet and its committees. This basis is judging and analysing the committee system on the basis of how those who established, developed, ran and used the system intended it to function. Much space has been given to the terms of reference of the committees so that each can be judged on the basis of its allotted functions.[1] As well as utilizing the minutes and memoranda of the Cabinet and its committees, this study has made use of the files of the Cabinet Office and the papers of the Prime Minister's Office. These provide further information on the intended functioning of the committee system and what it was intended to achieve.

All these primary sources on the committee system have been considered in conjunction with the secondary literature, that is the many lacunae regarding the Cabinet committee system in the studies of British government as well as the many unsupported conclusions in these studies. This has given rise to a long list of speculative questions about the actual functioning of the system, and the implications and ramifications of that functioning. All the relevant minutes, memoranda and reports of the Cabinet and its committees have been examined bearing in mind these queries. These questions fall into three main categories. Firstly, those that concern how the committee system actually functioned. This category covers questions concerning whether the Attlee model of how the system should function was followed, how policy issues worked their way through the system, whether the Cabinet committee system did actually function as a system, how well the system was managed and what the potential shortcomings of the system were. Related to all this is the second category of questions: what contribution might the committee system have made to the efficient and effective functioning of government. These questions include whether the committee system aided the coordination of policy, how effective it was in carrying out ground-clearing tasks such as filtering away routine business and

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[1] As part of the analysis of the relevant papers an attempt was made to construct a typology of the Cabinet committees. This proved impossible to do on the basis of the policy area they dealt with, their intended function or their actual function. The basic problem was that most committees could happily fit into several different categories. The fact that it proved impossible to construct a meaningful categorization suggests a number of things about the Cabinet committee system: that it lacked focus, that there would be a duplication of work between committees and that issues would not always be clearly and efficiently processed by the system.

clarifying points of disagreement for the Cabinet, and how much it reduced the burden of work on the Cabinet. The third category of queries concerns how the system might have affected the distribution of power within government. This covers the impact of the system on the power and influence of the Prime Minister, ministers, officials and the CO, and includes questions about how the various prime ministers used the system, whether having shadow official committees for ministerial ones led to policy options being foreclosed, and more general questions concerning the power and influence of civil servants. Seeking to answer all these speculative questions by analysing the primary material will enable an assessment to be made of the impact of the system on policy development, and in particular, given that it forms the vehicle for this study, on the development of British colonial policy. This analysis will in turn, because it is examining colonial policy within the context of the Cabinet committee system, give a more accurate and detailed picture of certain aspects of colonial policy and will enable a re-evaluation of these aspects to be made.

IV. THE THESIS: TOPICS TO BE STUDIED

This study does not deal directly with the economic aspects of British colonial policy. This omission has been made for a number of reasons. Colonial economic matters were of far less general interest to the government than had been the case from 1945 to 1951. Although the commodities boom following the outbreak of the Korean War made colonial exports more significant, in the longer-term other developments caused the economic significance of the colonies to decrease. From 1953 onwards Britain's share of colonial exports fell, one indication of a general decline in trading ties between Britain and its colonies, as the importance of manufactured goods increased and the importance of primary commodities declined.[1] One reason the Attlee governments had been so concerned with the economic value of the colonies was Britain's desperate shortage of dollars. However, by 1953 Britain was in balance on its current dollar account for the first time since the Second World War.[2] In 1957 the 'profit and loss account' study of the colonies, which Macmillan had asked for, concluded that economic considerations were evenly matched, and were unlikely in themselves to be the decisive factor as to whether or not a territory should become independent.[3] Other important factors included

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[1] See M. Havinden and D. Meredith, *Colonialism and Development* (1993), pp. 239-252.
[2] See Worswick and Ady, *The British Economy in the 1950s*, p. 27.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1551, CP(O)(57)2nd, 5 June 1957, p. 1.

the gradual convertibility of sterling, Britain's increased interest in the European economy and the attempt to join the Common Market.

This reduction in the importance of colonial economic matters is reflected in the CO's level of involvement with those Cabinet committees that dealt with general economic issues. By 1957, if not earlier, the CO had lost its place on the Economic Policy Committee, and even though the membership of this committee was later enlarged on a number of occasions, the CO never regained its place. The CO was a member of the External Economic Relations Committee but took little part in its work, which by 1964 did not cover any colonial matters. Neither was it a very active member of the Economic Steering (General) Committee. In terms of the work of Cabinet committees, by 1957 or 1958 the colonies do not seem to have been regarded as having much significance for the balance of payments. By this time the CO rarely bothered to attend meetings of the Balance of Payments Prospects Committee because colonial matters were not often discussed. The general pattern in economic committees, such as the official European Economic Questions Steering Group, was that there were no lengthy discussions of colonial issues, only a brief CO contribution when anything touching on colonial interests was mentioned.[1]

Overall, at the level of the committee system colonial economic development became of less significance, reflecting an increasing emphasis under the Conservatives on political development. At the end of 1951 the Colonial Development Committee was disbanded. The main committees that dealt with colonial affairs, such as the Colonial Policy Committee and the ministerial Africa Committee, spent little time on economic development or indeed on any other economic matters.[2] Development policy became more and more a tool of foreign policy and concentrated less on specific colonial needs, as can be seen in the discussions of the Development Policy Committee.[3] The CO took little part in the work of this committee apart from the occasional discussions of specifically colonial topics such as independence aid for the

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[1] See PRO, CAB 130/155, GEN 671.

[2] There were, of course, some exceptions to this. The official Africa Committee discussed, at some length, the proposal by the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara for a Colombo Plan for Africa. See PRO, CAB 134/1351. In general, this committee did not discuss economic matters in their own right, but discussed the economic implications of other aspects of colonial policy, mainly constitutional advance. See for example PRO, CAB 134/1357. In 1962 the Oversea Policy Committee, now the main committee for external affairs, discussed the question of the timing of the introduction of the next Colonial Development and Welfare Act. See PRO, CAB 134/2370, OP(62)4th, 28 November 1962, pp. 1-3.

[3] See for example PRO, CAB 134/1637.

West Indies.[1] Furthermore, the creation of the Department of Technical Cooperation in 1961 relieved the CO of much of the responsibility for such matters.[2]

There was a general lack of discussion of colonial economic matters, not just of development policy. When such matters were discussed this was usually as part of a debate on wider issues, especially of matters such as Britain's attempt to set up an industrial free trade area with the Common Market, establishing a more limited European Free Trade Area and attempting to join the European Economic Community, when the implications for the colonies were frequently discussed.[3] However, these topics say less than others about the workings of the committee system. There are a number of reasons for this. The discussions were often highly technical and narrow, and as such they tended to take place only in official committees, and very often did not feed into the committee system as a whole. Often such discussions were more administrative in nature and had little to do with policy-making, hence the fact that vastly more official than ministerial committees dealt with them.

This is not to say that colonial economic matters were of no importance, or that broader economic and financial concerns had no significance for colonial policy. Clearly they had, as a number of studies have shown.[4] However, they are the least informative topics when it comes to the Cabinet committee system. This is because for the most part there was a lack of general interest in colonial economic matters, and one consequence of this was a relative lack of discussion of such matters by the Cabinet and its committees. As a result an analysis of such matters sheds less light on the workings of the Cabinet committee system than those policy areas that have been selected.

The period under study saw many major developments and has left behind a mass of documentation. In order, therefore, to make this study manageable, and to ensure that colonial policy is examined in a coherent manner, certain topics have been selected. For the same reasons a number of colonies have been omitted from this study. The numerous and widely scattered very small islands will not be dealt with because they were, for the most part, too

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[1] See PRO, CAB 134/1629.

[2] The question of what functions should be transferred from the CO to the new department caused considerable disagreement. See the papers of the Working Party on a Plan for the Creation of a Department of Oversea Technical Services, PRO, CAB 134/1627.

[3] For a study of the effects of the first issue on colonial policy see C. R. Schenk, 'Decolonization and European Economic Integration: The Free Trade Negotiations, 1956-58', *JICH*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1996.

[4] For an analysis of the workings of the Sterling Area and the implications of this for the colonies see C. R. Schenk, *Britain and the Sterling Area* (1994). An examination of the connection between international monetary relations and colonial policy is provided by G. Krozewski, 'Sterling, the "Minor" Territories, and the End of Formal Empire, 1939-1958', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 1993. Another study which looks at the relationship between British economic policy, particularly the sterling system, and colonial policy, especially decolonization, is Y. Bangura, *Britain and Commonwealth Africa* (Manchester 1983).

insignificant to have been discussed in their own right by the Cabinet or its committees.[1] Cyprus is excluded from this study for the very opposite reason: it was discussed often by the Cabinet and its committees, especially the CPC, and forms far too large a subject in its own right to be dealt with satisfactorily as part of a wider study; similar concerns have led to the exclusion of the colonies in the CAF, with the additional reason that they were removed from CO control when the Central African Office, headed by R. A. Butler, was set up in March 1962.

The topics that have been selected are the strategic aspects of colonial policy, constitutional development and the unique case of the island of Malta. Strategic concerns were closely linked to colonial policy and had considerable influence on it, and provide some of the reasons why colonial policy had major implications for many areas of government policy. Many strategic studies were carried out and these provide information on the attitude of the government as a whole to colonial matters, and its view of the significance of colonial concerns. Equally, those colonies that were strategically significant provide similar information, and will show the influences that shaped colonial policy. Because such matters had wide significance, they had a high profile in the Cabinet committee system and so will help assess its role in policy development. The colonies that have been chosen as the case studies for this topic are the British Cameroons, Malaya, Singapore, North Borneo and Aden. The British Cameroons shows the difficulties posed by developments in a less significant colony, and how the committee system dealt with them. The remaining colonies provide differing examples of how Britain dealt with strategically significant colonies and the impact strategic concerns had on colonial policy. Colonial constitutional development was one of the most significant aspects of colonial policy, and indeed became an important issue of government policy as a whole in the period under study, and because this aspect of colonial policy had such wide ramifications it featured a great deal in the work of the committee system. The African colonies loom large in any consideration of decolonization and so have been chosen. But in addition several other less significant colonies have been selected - British Guiana, British Honduras and the Caribbean colonies. Many studies ignore these colonies, particularly British Guiana and British Honduras, which ostensibly seem of little interests or significance, but in fact they shed further light on the functioning of the committee system and various aspects of colonial policy, including American attitudes to British colonial policy. Despite its one time strategic significance, not that much attention has been paid to Malta, perhaps because it was not part of some region where there

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[1] However, as a group they were, along with other smaller and problematic territories, frequently discussed by various Cabinet committees, in their search for an answer to the problem of the constitutional future of the smaller colonies and the status they could hope to achieve. For an account of this problem, utilizing Cabinet committee material see W. D. McIntyre, 'The Admission of Small States to the Commonwealth', *JICH*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1996.

was a wave of decolonization, or perhaps because it is seen as *sui generis* and therefore unlikely to shed any general light on colonial policy. In fact because strategic concerns and the problems posed by colonial constitutional development are united in the case of Malta, it provides an intriguing and valuable case study which says much about colonial policy and how colonial policy was developed in the Cabinet committee system.

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Two conventions have been adopted in this study. Firstly, when the various Colonial Secretaries of this period, Oliver Lyttelton, Alan Lennox-Boyd, Iain Macleod, Reginald Maudling and Duncan Sandys are referred to in their capacity as Colonial Secretary, only their name and not their office will be given. At all other times both their name and office will be given i.e. Duncan Sandys, Minister for Housing.[1] Secondly, in order to avoid overburdening the text with an excessive amount of footnotes, when a paragraph refers to a single document only one citation will be given.

[1] Lyttelton was Colonial Secretary from November 1951 to July 1954, Lennox-Boyd from July 1954 to October 1959, Macleod from October 1959 to October 1961, Maudling from October 1961 to July 1962 and Sandys from July 1962 to October 1964. During this last period Sandys was also Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CABINET COMMITTEE SYSTEM

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYSTEM UP TO 1945

When the Conservative Party took office in October 1951 it inherited an extensive Cabinet committee system which, having been considerably developed and refined by its Labour predecessor, had become an important part of the government machinery. The origins of this system are hard to determine precisely, because although various committees existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they were, as Hans Daalder points out, no more than expediencies for settling specific problems.[1] A further difficulty is that, as mentioned in the previous chapter, governments have always been very secretive about Cabinet committees, not only about their terms of reference or composition, but often about their very existence - the Major government was the first administration to release details of its ministerial Cabinet committees. Various early committees can be identified, however, such as one set up to draft a reform bill in 1854.[2] As will be seen much of the development of the committee system was due to the exigencies of war, and this was the case in 1855 when a War Committee was established in response to criticisms of the Crimean War effort, in particular the condition of the army before Sebastopol.[3] The first more permanent committees were a Colonial Defence Committee which was set up in 1878, lapsed in 1879 and was reconstituted in 1885, a Join Naval and Military Committee on Defence formed in 1890, and an informally convened Defence Committee established in 1895.[4]

The Defence Committee was tentatively reconstituted as the Committee of Imperial Defence by Balfour in December 1902, and two existing committees, the Colonial Defence Committee, and the Joint Military and Naval Committee, became sub-committees of it. In response to recommendations by Lord Esher's War Office Reconstitution Committee, the CID was given increased powers and its own secretariat in May 1904.[5] The latter carried out a

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[1] H. Daalder, 'Cabinet Reform since 1914: Major Trends', in Herman and Alt, *Cabinet Studies*, p. 247.

[2] Rush, *The Cabinet and Policy Formation*, p. 44.

[3] J. P. Mackintosh, *The British Cabinet* (2nd edition 1968), p. 148. It met sporadically until 1861.

[4] S. S. Wilson, *The Cabinet Office to 1945* (1975), pp. 27-28.

[5] Lord Hankey, *Diplomacy by Conference* (1946), p. 84; S. W. Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets*, Vol. I, *1877-1918* (1970), p. 90. I. Jennings and A. B. Keith on the other hand suggest that the origins of the CID lie in the Joint Naval and Military Committee which was established by the Hartington Commission in 1890. See Jennings, *Cabinet Government*, p. 290 and A. B. Keith, *The British Cabinet*

number of functions including recording the committee's discussions and conclusions, collecting and coordinating information, preparing memoranda and making possible 'continuity of method in the treatment of questions which may from time to time come before the committee'.[1] Another important change was the way the CID gradually developed a system of sub-committees and made use of them in a coordinated manner. From July 1909 to August 1914 thirty subordinate committees were established to study various specific problems.[2]

The First World War produced an increase in the number of Cabinet committees as new ones, some consisting of officials and some of ministers, were set up to deal with aspects of the conflict such as Shipping, Control of Imports, Food Production and Development of Air Power.[3] In September 1914 there were twenty-two Cabinet committees and by March 1915 there were thirty-eight.[4] At the outset of the war Balfour set up a War Council (which later became the Dardanelles Committee and then the War Committee) which absorbed the functions of the CID and took over its secretariat. Early in 1915 the secretariat became responsible for coordinating the activities of all Cabinet committees, and keeping proper records, with the result that the business of the Cabinet's more important committees was put on a more organized basis than that of the Cabinet itself.[5]

The development of a proper Cabinet committee system did not, however, take place until the reform of the structure of government at the end of 1916, and it was only then that the Cabinet began to make systematic use of committees. When Lloyd George became Prime Minister one of the first changes he made was the setting up of a small War Cabinet. This had its own secretariat, headed by the Secretary to the CID, Maurice Hankey, which had been constructed under his supervision from the former CID secretariat, and which was responsible for the general organization of the secretarial work of the Cabinet and its committees. Its work included providing Cabinet members with a weekly list of questions awaiting consideration, including those that had been referred to cabinet committees, so that ministers knew the exact state of Cabinet business.[6] In addition, it distributed papers by ministers on matters about which a decision was required, recorded decisions made by a committee, and ensured that this record was circulated to whoever was responsible for taking action.[7] The committees were now run in a more methodical manner and were designed to help the War Cabinet function efficiently by

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System, 1830-1938 (1939), p. 139. S. S. Wilson mistakenly claims that the Colonial Defence Committee did not become a CID committee until 1904. See Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, p. 28.

[1] PRO pamphlet, *List of Papers of the Committee of Imperial Defence to 1914* (1964), p. vi.

[2] Hancock and Gowing, *British War Economy*, p. 34.

[3] Rush, *The Cabinet and Policy Formation*, p. 44.

[4] Roskill, *Hankey*, Vol. I, p. 145.

[5] PRO pamphlet, *The Records of the Cabinet Office to 1922* (1966), p. 15.

[6] PRO, CAB 21/1629, pp. 2-3.

[7] PRO pamphlet, *List of Cabinet Papers 1880-1914* (1964), p. vi.

dealing with any disputes that did not need to be discussed at the highest level, by concentrating on specific issues, providing initial clarification of controversial issues, and generally allowing the Cabinet to concentrate fully on the war effort.[1]

In July 1918 a Home Affairs Committee was established. Unlike later committees it did not have the authority to make decisions in its own right, and had to submit its conclusions and recommendations to the Cabinet for approval. However, it is noteworthy because it was the only Cabinet committee to exist for the entire inter-war period and because matters within its remit were passed directly to it without first going to the Cabinet.[2] The following year the Cabinet Office was reorganized into a Home Affairs branch and an Imperial, External Affairs and Defence branch, and in March 1920 the Treasury agreed that the Office should be placed on a permanent and established basis.[3] By 1922 the Home Affairs branch had become the Cabinet Office secretariat.[4]

In general, after 1918 there was a decrease in the number of committees, and it could be argued that because most of the remaining committees were *ad hoc* ones they hardly constituted a committee system. Some were, however, less transient than others, such as the Finance Committee which was established in July 1919 and met forty times between then and July 1922.[5] A further reduction in the number of committees took place when Bonar Law became Prime Minister. There was also a decrease in the size of the Cabinet Office secretariat, although it continued to exist despite Bonar Law's election pledge to abolish it. In general, fewer committees existed from 1922 to 1924 under Bonar Law and then Baldwin, than either before or after.[6] The Labour government created a number of new committees of which the main ones were Unemployment Policy, Industrial Disputes, Indian Affairs and Poor Law Reform. Similarly, when Baldwin returned to power he also set up a number of committees, such as the National Expenditure Committee.[7]

Macdonald's second administration reconstituted the Home Affairs and Unemployment Committees, abolished the Expenditure Committee, and set up a Committee on the Fighting Services. The Unemployment Committee was the first ministerial committee to have a shadow

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[1] In the two years after Lloyd George became Prime Minister sixty-three committees were set up. See Walker, *The Cabinet*, p. 46. This work also states that by December 1916 102 committees existed, and that by the end of the war a total of 165 committees had been created.

[2] John Turner, 'Cabinets, Committees and Secretariats', in Kathleen Burk (ed.), *War and the State* (1982), p. 67; Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, p. 41.

[3] PRO pamphlet, *Records of the Cabinet Office to 1922* (1966), p. 24.

[4] Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, p. 44. The other branch became the staff of the CID.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

[6] *Ibid.*, Chapter Five.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

official committee.[1] As before, a number of *ad hoc* committees were established to deal with specific issues and were eventually disbanded, although not in a very orderly manner.[2] In general, the committees of Macdonald's second administration and of the National government tended to be longer-lived than those of Baldwin's second government.

It was not until the resignation of Macdonald that, apart from the Home Affairs Committee, committees were carried over from the previous administration, despite the fact that the committees set up by each administration tended to cover the same policy areas and their associated problems.[3] Throughout the 1930s the National government made greater and more systematic use of standing Cabinet committees.[4] In addition there were a large number of *ad hoc* committees, some of which existed for long periods; the Protection of British Shipping Committee, for example, existed from 1936 until at least 1939.[5] One important development in the late 1930s was the increasing use of official committees. As Atlee later found out it became the custom that every ministerial committee should have a shadow committee of officials to carry out preparatory work and save the ministerial committee time.[6]

In general, most committees were short-lived. It has been suggested that one reason for this was ministerial concern about losing influence over a particular policy area if it were to be dealt with by a committee on a long-term basis.[7] Nevertheless, committees grew steadily in number and importance and established themselves as an integral part of the governmental system; it has been estimated that on average about twenty committees were in existence in any one year.[8] Indeed, the increasing use of committees in the 1930s meant that by the time the Second World War broke out there were growing complaints about their number.[9]

As before, war stimulated a number of important developments in the governmental machinery. Chamberlain's War Cabinet was originally based on three main committees, Home Policy, Civil Defence and Priority, with each of these having a number of sub-committees, but later on committees on Economic Policy and Food Policy were set up. The system does not seem to have worked efficiently because when Churchill became Prime Minister he complained to the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Edward Bridges, that there were 'far too many committees...and

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[1] Walker, *The Cabinet*, p. 47.
[2] Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, p. 56.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] J. F. Naylor, *A Man and an Institution* (Cambridge 1984), p. 255. These included Foreign Policy, Defence Plans (Policy), Defence Policy and Requirements, National Expenditures, and General Purposes.
[5] Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, p. 212.
[6] Mackintosh, *The British Cabinet*, p. 537.
[7] Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, p. 13.
[8] Hancock and Gowing, *British War Economy*, p. 42.
[9] Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, p. 95. Wilson records (p. 12) that between 1923 and September 1939, 379 Cabinet committees existed, which met a total of 1,990 times.

which do not yield a sufficient result'.[1] Attlee, given the task of looking at the way the organization of government had developed under Chamberlain, found there was a 'mass of committees' with each ministerial committee having a shadow official committee, and concluded that the best thing to do was start afresh.[2] In total Chamberlain's War Cabinet had created sixty committees, two-thirds of which were composed of officials.[3]

Following Attlee's review a system based around six main committees was constructed. Both the Civil Defence Committee and the Food Policy Committee emerged unchanged, although the latter had its official sub-committees disbanded, the Home Policy Committee was split into two sections, and the Economic Policy Committee was given wider terms of reference, had its membership increased and lost its official sub-committee. In addition, the ministerial Priority Committee was replaced by a Production Council. Probably the most significant change was the creation of the Lord President's Committee, a steering committee that coordinated the work of the other committees.[4] Members of Churchill's small wartime Cabinet - small due to the systematic use of committees - chaired these main committees. As Lord Privy Seal, Attlee chaired the Food Policy committee and the Home Policy Committee.[5] In 1942 the functions of the legislation section of the Home Policy Committee were transferred to the Lord President's Committee.[6] This was an example of the increasing authority of the Lord President's Committee, which had developed into one of the most important in the system, as it came to assume control over all aspects of economic and domestic policy.[7] The Home Policy Committee was still an important committee, however, and its authority was such that the 1944 Education Bill was dealt with entirely by it and did not go to the Cabinet, thus establishing the new principle that a Cabinet committee was equal to the Cabinet.[8] As the war went on the number of committees steadily increased, as new ones were set up to deal with problems and issues as they arose.[9] Many of the more important committees had sub-committees to which certain issues could be remitted. These sometimes consisted of officials, as was the case with the

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[1] Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, pp. 94-95.

[2] F. Williams, *A Prime Minister Remembers* (1961), p. 40. According to Roskill (*Hankey*, Vol. III, p. 373) the Cabinet Secretary Edward Bridges reviewed all Cabinet committees and sub-committees just after the outbreak of war and many were wound up. If this was the case then clearly the committee system must have been very extensive and muddled for another review to be needed in such a short time.

[3] Hancock and Gowing, *British War Economy*, p. 91.

[4] For details of these changes see Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, pp. 103-109.

[5] J. Wheeler-Bennett, *John Anderson, Viscount Waverley* (1962), p. 260.

[6] Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, p. 103. Wheeler-Bennett mistakenly says (*John Anderson*, p. 262) that the Home Policy Committee was abolished.

[7] Daalder, *Cabinet Reform in Britain*, p. 87.

[8] Walker *The Cabinet*, p. 48.

[9] For example, in 1942 the Shipping Committee was established, and the following year the Armistice Terms and Civil Administration Committee was created. See Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, pp. 107-108.

Reconstruction Priorities Official Committee on Industrial Problems.[1] Some policy areas were dealt with by a number of committees; nineteen different committees dealt with Africa and the Middle East and five with shipping.[2] In total in 1939-45, 292 War Cabinet committees and ninety miscellaneous committees existed, which held a total of 5,440 and 210 meetings respectively.[3] One important feature of the war years, presumably in part a reflection of the vast strain ministers were working under, was the increasing involvement of officials in the Cabinet committee system, as a structure of parallel ministerial and official committees covering the same policy area was developed. In addition many official committees now existed in their own right, rather than just as shadows of ministerial ones.

II. THE ATTLEE GOVERNMENTS AND THE EXPANSION OF THE SYSTEM

Paul Addison has argued that Attlee conscripted the machinery of war for peacetime purposes.[4] This was certainly true of the committee system which was retained and expanded. One study identifies the government as having created a total of some 466 committees, consisting of 148 standing committees, 306 *ad hoc* committees, other ministerial committees, official committees, and a mixture of the latter two.[5] Policy-making and implementation therefore took place in a complex web of an administrative structure, with a system of committees so extensive that the Chancellor, Hugh Dalton, recorded despairingly in his diary, 'The greatest curse of ministerial life is the mass and multiplicity of ministerial committees and sub-committees'.[6]

The Labour Party had assumed power at a period of great upheaval when any incoming government would have been faced with a heavy burden of work. The extensive programme of reforms which Labour had committed itself to made this burden all the heavier and led to great pressure on ministers. Attlee was well aware of this and considered that one solution was to develop the Cabinet committee system. Attlee had been an advocate of Cabinet reform

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[1] PRO, CAB 87 class list.

[2] PRO, CAB 95 and PRO, CAB 97 class lists.

[3] Wilson, *The Cabinet Office*, p. 12. Simon James states that in this period 400 committees existed, which held between them 800 meetings. He arrives at these figures because he includes Chiefs of Staff committees. See S. James, 'The Cabinet System since 1945: Fragmentation and Integration', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 47, No. 4, 1994, p. 614.

[4] P. Addison, 'Child Labour', *New Statesman*, 17 December 1982, p. 23.

[5] P. Hennessy and A. Arends, *Mr. Attlee's Engine Room: Cabinet Committee Structure and the Labour Governments 1945-51* (Glasgow 1983), p. 9. These figures should be treated with some caution, however, given the many errors in this study. These include errors in the names of committee chairmen, the number of times a committee met, and the PRO references for the papers of the various committees.

[6] B. Pimlott (ed.), *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton* (1986), p. 372.

throughout the 1930s, had seen at first hand the valuable role its committees played in the functioning of the Coalition government, and now thought that the system would save Cabinet time, reduce the risk of departments duplicating the work of one another, enable the Cabinet to become aware of issues which any particular department was not yet handling, enable committee chairman to give guidance to departments and monitor their activities, and where necessary act as an advocate for them in the Cabinet.[1] Herbert Morrison, Lord President of the Council, regarded the system as so significant, he claimed that the development and elaboration of the wartime committee system was responsible for preventing the system of government from breaking down.[2]

A memorandum circulated by Attlee in 1947 outlined the basic structure of the system. It was

> not designed as a rigid hierarchy of Committees. Though some of these Committees are subordinate to others, it is not intended that all recommendations from a lower committee shall be passed up through the various superior bodies. The Materials Committee, for example, though it works within the framework of policy laid down by the EPC (Economic Policy Committee) or the Production Committee, is able to report any difficulties direct to the Minister of Economic Affairs, who can submit them to either of these Committees or to the Cabinet itself as he may think appropriate....It is the duty of the Chairmen and Secretaries of the various Committees to see that the organization is used, and business is routed, in the manner best calculated to secure speed in reaching agreed decisions.[3]

One feature of the system was sets of parallel ministerial and official committees which dealt with the same policy area, with the shadow official committees undertaking such tasks as reviewing technical issues, outlining policy alternatives, and generally providing the ministerial committee with the support and information needed so that ministers could take policy decisions.

Although often the chairman of a committee was the minister with the most responsibility for the policy area it dealt with, non-departmental ministers were sometimes used as chairmen. Morrison claimed that the choice of the chairman was crucial and that he should 'be an understanding friend who is seeking to assist his colleagues in finding a way through the maze of conflicting considerations....His business is to be a helpful conciliator and not an additional irritant'.[4] This was a rather idealistic expectation, but one which illustrates how it was hoped the system would function.

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[1] See J. H. Brookshire, 'Clement Attlee and Cabinet Reform, 1930-1945', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 24, 1981.

[2] Morrison, *Government and Parliament*, p. 18.

[3] CAB 129, CP(47)288, 18 October 1947, p. 6.

[4] Morrison, *Government and Parliament*, pp. 24-25.

Attlee laid down strict guidelines about the committee system to ensure it functioned as efficiently as possible. At the end of 1945 he circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet defining the principles governing which issues should be dealt with by Cabinet or its committees, and which should be resolved at lower levels of the administrative machine. The Cabinet and its committees should deal with 'questions on which there is a conflict of interest between departments which have not been resolved' and 'questions of major policy which affect a number of Departments or engage the collective responsibility of the Government'.[1]

He emphasized that disputes between departments 'should not be referred to the Cabinet or a Cabinet Committee until all means of resolving the conflict have been exhausted'. He also insisted that major policy matters 'should be thoroughly examined at the official level, if necessary interdepartmentally, before they are referred to Ministers, so that the policy decision required may be clearly defined'. In addition ministers were informed that matters 'which fall within the departmental responsibility of a single Minister and do not engage the collective responsibility of the Government need not be brought to Cabinet or Government at all'.[2]

Attlee wanted committee work conducted as efficiently as possible and therefore warned that although committees provided a useful forum for the discussion of policy, and enabled ministers to make their views known and contribute to policy development, 'their prime object is the despatch of business and the making of decisions'.[3]

The system had to be flexible enough to cope with the various stages of a new government's work. Hence a short time after the above memorandum was issued another was circulated saying that because the government was moving from the planning of policy to the detailed preparation and implementation of it, 'We must therefore relax the strain which we have had to place on the Ministerial Committees of the Cabinet. Ministers must be given more time for their own duties in Parliament and in their Department'.[4] This was not the only indication of Attlee's anxiety about this; as early as August 1945 he had stressed that the 'work of all Cabinet Committees will be so conducted as not to derogate from the departmental responsibilities of individual ministers'.[5]

Attlee monitored and adjusted the system constantly, trying to ensure it worked properly. He circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet on the dangers of ministers spending too much time at committee meetings, instructing them that they should

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[1] CAB 129, CP(45)306, 4 December 1945, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
[3] CAB 129, CP(47)288, 18 October 1947, p. 2.
[4] CAB 129, CP(45)306, 4 December 1945, p. 1.
[5] CAB 129, CP(45)110, 13 August 1945, para. 2.

> refrain from referring to Committee questions which do not engage the collective responsibility of Ministers and can readily be dealt with by other means....In many fields the broad lines of Government policy have now been settled and Ministers should find it possible to decide themselves, without discussion among their colleagues, many questions which in the last session had to be referred to Committee.[1]

Another task of managing the system undertaken by Attlee was setting up new committees such as the Oversea Economic Policy Committee, which he chaired. As a result of this change, the committee on External Economic Policy and Oversea Trade was abolished.[2] In 1946 he decided, in consultation with the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, that because of its excessive workload it was necessary to reorganize the Oversea Reconstruction Committee. It was split into two panels, one for European business and one for Far Eastern, and given the remit of dealing with any problems arising from the occupation of Germany, Austria and Japan, and of considering 'such other external questions as the Foreign Secretary in his discretion may refer to it'.[3]

Attlee also appeared to decide the composition of a committee when necessary. For example, when Emmanuel Shinwell, then Minister of Defence, suggested setting up a committee to deal with Malaya and suggested its composition, Attlee responded that because the proposed membership overweighed the military side, the Secretary of State for Air should be omitted and the Commonwealth Secretary and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs added.[4]

However, the memorandum that Attlee circulated on this was in its essentials almost identical to a note which the Cabinet Secretary, Norman Brook, had sent Attlee on this matter, and this was only one of many examples of Brook taking the initiative.[5] Indeed, it was he as much as Attlee who managed the committee system. Brook was often the one who took the lead in establishing new committees. For example, he proposed the setting up of a committee to deal with African affairs. This came about as a result of discussions in May 1948 between Brook and representatives from the Foreign Office, the CO and the Commonwealth Relations Office, when it was agreed that where policy on Africa was concerned 'there is at present no fully effective means of securing a coordinated view on major questions'.[6]

Brook also suggested who should sit on particular committees, such as when he sent a memorandum to Attlee proposing that the Minister of Civil Aviation might be made a member

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[1] CAB 129, CP(46)357, 26 September 1946, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/165, E(45)1, 17 December 1945, p. 1.
[3] CAB 129, CP(46)226, 11 June 1946, para. 2.
[4] PRO, PREM 8/1126, Attlee to Shinwell, 12 April 1950.
[5] PRO, PREM 8/1126, Brook to Attlee, 31 March 1950.
[6] PRO, PREM 8/922, Brook to Attlee, 25 May 1948.

of the Colonial Affairs Committee, on the grounds that as a minister outside the Cabinet he had few opportunities for committee work and on this committee the minister's departmental expertise could be useful.[1] He was also willing to suggest who should chair particular meetings of committees. When the Oversea Reconstruction Committee was due to meet in the absence of Bevin, who was its chairman, Brook wrote to Attlee suggesting that Attlee should take the chair himself, because this would emphasize the importance he attached to the work of the committee. Attlee agreed.[2]

Brook was keen to ensure that the system worked efficiently and supervised it in various ways. For example, in a letter to all ministers' private secretaries he stated that it had been pointed out to him that Cabinet committee memoranda were being circulated too widely for the information of other ministers; as a result these ministers were having to read more material than they needed to, and so this practice should stop.[3] He was also clearly keen to promote the value of Cabinet committees. On one occasion he reminded Attlee that when they had discussed a draft directive on them, Attlee had said he would consider making it clear in this directive that 'the Cabinet committee system was a valuable piece of government machinery'.[4]

Despite the efforts of both Brook and Attlee to manage the system tightly there were still some basic problems with it which do not seem to have been properly addressed. The lack of activity of some committees suggests the system was unnecessarily large, with superfluous committees set up like the Africa Committee, which met only twice and discussed only a small number of topics.[5] One absurd feature of the system was that some committees which were officially in existence never actually met or produced any memoranda, such as the ministerial Middle East Committee.[6] It was finally abolished in October 1947, having led a phantom existence since 1945.[7]

Another problem was, as Morrison complained to Edward Bridges, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and Cabinet Secretary, on behalf of his Cabinet colleagues, that ministers had to attend so many committee meetings and read so many committee papers they had insufficient time to deal with their departmental work.[8] Bridges carried out a review of the Cabinet

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[1] PRO, CAB 21/1739, Brook to Attlee, 12 September 1947. Brook sent Attlee a number of memoranda in which he suggested which ministers should sit on which committees. See PRO, CAB 21/1701.

[2] PRO, PREM 8/154, Brook to Attlee, 6 June 1946.

[3] PRO, PREM 8/434, Brook to all Private Secretaries, 5 December 1945.

[4] PRO, PREM 8/434, Brook to Attlee, 23 September 1946.

[5] See PRO, CAB 134/1.

[6] PRO, CAB 21/1701, letter to Brook (sender's signature illegible), 1 October 1946.

[7] See PRO, CAB 21/1702.

[8] Up to 1945 Bridges was sole Cabinet Secretary. From 1945 to 1946 Bridges had Brook working alongside him as additional Cabinet Secretary. Brook was sole Cabinet Secretary from 1947 to 1962.

committee structure to see how the level of work there could be reduced. He concluded that as the Cabinet itself was able to function by meeting no more that twice a week, it was clear that the system was reducing the pressure of work on the Cabinet and ensuring that it did not become overloaded. However, as far as the committees were concerned, he felt that the effect of them was to put too much work on senior ministers, although he considered that as the government went on in office the pressure of work would decrease.[1]

The Chancellor, Sir Stafford Cripps, also felt that too much time and energy was being devoted to Cabinet committees and asked for the situation to be reviewed.[2] By the beginning of 1947 such complaints were so frequent that Brook wrote to Attlee that because of ministerial discontent about the amount of time spent on committee work, he had compared the number of committee meetings in each half year of 1945 and 1946. His conclusion was that the figures did not support the feeling that the volume of committee work was increasing.[3] Nevertheless, the mere fact that Brook felt it necessary to carry out such an exercise indicates the extent of ministerial disquiet.

Ministers also complained about the committee system when they felt it was damaging their interests. Dalton was concerned that ministers should consult him on all proposals involving expenditure before they were put to the Cabinet. He wanted ministers to clear them first with the Treasury at departmental level, and thereafter discuss them with him personally and not via a Cabinet committee.[4] Clearly, Dalton was concerned that ministers might try to use the committees to evade Treasury control.

Some ministers played a more constructive role and proposed changes to the committee system. Colonial matters were of considerable concern to Bevin as part of the wider issues of external affairs, and in any case Bevin was never one to be inhibited from involving himself in almost every area of policy. In September 1947 he informed Attlee in a memorandum of his suggestion to the Colonial Secretary that a committee was needed to deal with balance of payments questions and that its terms of reference should be wide enough to enable it to 'take into consideration the development of the Empire...so as to earn by the production of raw materials, a large contribution to the balance of payments'.[5] As a result of this initiative the Export Drive Committee was established in September 1947.[6]

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[1] PRO, PREM 8/434, Bridges to Attlee, 23 November 1945.
[2] J. M. Lee, *Reviewing the Machinery of Government* (privately printed 1977), p. 71.
[3] PRO, PREM 8/434, Brook to Attlee, 27 January 1947.
[4] PRO, PREM 8/434, Dalton to Attlee, 30 November 1945.
[5] CO 537/3047/19128/71 in A. E. Hinds, 'Sterling and Imperial Policy, 1945-51, *JICH*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1987, p. 155.
[6] Hinds, 'Sterling and Imperial Policy', p. 156.

In some instances the initiative for change came from officials. In November 1947 Sir Sidney Caine, a Deputy Permanent Under-Secretary at the CO, suggested that an interdepartmental working party should be set up to consider colonial economic development. This came about in the wake of disturbances in the Gold Coast which had highlighted the supplies problem.[1] The Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech Jones, passed on this suggestion to Cripps, and as a result the Working Party on Colonial Development was formed. It in turn, at the urging of the CO, proposed that a permanent interdepartmental committee was needed to deal with the issue of colonial development. The Economic Policy Committee approved this suggestion and in December 1948 the Colonial Development Committee was established.[2]

The CO was closely integrated into the committee system, as the sheer number and diversity of committees on which it was represented demonstrates; whenever an area of government activity touched on colonial concerns, no matter how peripherally, the CO was involved. It was a member of over one hundred Cabinet committees including at least fifty-six standing committees and their respective sub-committees and working parties.[3] These included committees as varied as those on Colonial Development, the Coordination of Activities on US Foreign Assistance, the Working Party on Long-Term Economic Relations with China, the Raw Materials Committee, Nationalized Industries, and Social Affairs in Western Europe, Furthermore, the CO was sometimes on the working party of a committee when it was not on the actual committee itself, such as the Imports Conversion Committee's Working Group on Cotton. Its involvement with the committee structure increased during the lifetime of the Attlee governments because many of the new committees that were established dealt with colonial affairs either directly or indirectly.

By the time the Conservatives took office a well-established, extensive and refined Cabinet committee system was in place. Much attention was paid by Brook and Attlee to managing this system to ensure that it was a valuable part of the government machine. An analysis of the work of the committees shows that despite the difficulties in getting the system to function as intended, it was a valuable tool and helped reduce the pressure of work on the Cabinet itself, as indicated by the sheer bulk of work it got through, and the amount of times decisions were reached without matters being referred up to the Cabinet.

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[1] D. J. Morgan, *The Official History of Colonial Development*, Vol. 2, *Developing British Colonial Resources, 1945-1951* (1980), p. 17.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[3] See J. M. Finlayson, *The Machinery of Government and the Formulation of British Colonial Policy, 1945-1951* (University of Leeds MA Thesis 1994).

III. THE CONSERVATIVES AND THE CABINET COMMITTEE SYSTEM, 1951-1964

Churchill's attitude to the Cabinet committee system contrasted greatly to that of Attlee; indeed, it has been suggested that had the Conservatives won the 1945 election he would have dismantled it.[1] Fortunately for the system his Conservative successors did not share this hostility. However, before looking more closely at the attitudes to the system, and the use made of it by the Prime Ministers of the period under study, the structure of the system as it existed under the Conservatives will be described.

The system was roughly hierarchical with sub-committees having parent committees, and certain committees having to report to more senior committees. Thus the External Economic Relations Committee's terms of reference stated that it would report as necessary to the Economic Steering (General) Committee.[2] Sometimes the chain of authority was more circuitous, as with the Balance of Payments Prospects Committee which had to report to the Chancellor, as chairman of the Economic Policy Committee, through the Economic Steering Committee.[3] Other committees were given some power of choice. The official Africa Committee was instructed to report as necessary to the ministers concerned with the subject matter of its report. However, if the report needed to be considered by the Cabinet or a ministerial committee the official committee decided which minister would be most appropriate to present it.[4]

Sometimes matters could be quite complicated, as with the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) Policy Committee whose terms of reference stated that it would normally report as necessary to the Economic Steering (General) Committee, and that while the Common Market negotiations continue 'special arrangements will be made to secure coordination with the work of the Common Market Negotiations (O) Committee and periodic reports will be made to the Common Market Negotiations (O) Steering Committee'.[5]

Certain committees were given specific tasks to perform by more senior committees. For instance, the Materials (Allocation) Committee was asked to determine the allocation of raw materials in short supply for the Economic Policy Committee, and to deal with any other questions that the latter might submit to it concerning raw materials.[6] The remits of some other committees give the impression that they existed simply to fill any possible gap in the coverage

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[1] James, 'The Cabinet System since 1945', p. 614.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1775, EER(63)1, 4 March 1963, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/778, BP(55)1, 17 March 1955, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1351, AF(57)1, 9 May 1957, p. 1.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1957, GP(62)12, 22 November 1962, p. 1.
[6] PRO, CAB 134/486, M(51)72, 19 December 1951, p. 1.

of a particular policy area, such as the External Economic Relations Committee whose task was to review and advise on external economic relations 'except in so far as they are dealt with by other Committees'.[1]

There was considerable concern to ensure that there was no duplication of work or overlap of responsibilities between committees. The remit of the official Oversea Coordinating Committee was to consider 'questions of oversea policy (other than defence policy and external economic policy) which concern more than one of the overseas Departments'.[2] The chairman explained that the terms of reference were framed so as to make it clear that the committee would not discuss broad general questions of policy which were already dealt with by other parts of the government machinery, but that they were not intended to prevent the committee from considering a particular question of overseas policy which had a general bearing on defence or external economic policy. In particular, the committee would need to deal with the problem of economic aid to colonies on the verge of independence. The committee agreed, however, that it would need to be aware of the relationship between its functions and those of other committees, such as the Development Policy Committee, to ensure that they did not cover the same questions, and that to avoid this it might at some stage be necessary to reconsider their terms of reference.[3] In some ways, therefore, the system needed to be self-regulating in that inflexible, or too narrow, terms of reference could stifle discussion and be self-defeating; some room to manoeuvre was necessary. However, this flexibility could lead to a duplication of work or friction between committees.

The terms of reference of the official Africa Committee caused some difficulties which show the problems involved in fitting a new committee into the system. Its remit specifically excluded it from dealing with any problems which concerned the Suez Canal, and issues in which the only African countries involved were Egypt or Libya, because these matters were already dealt with by the official Middle East Committee.[4] At the same time responsibility for issues involving the Sudan and the Nile Waters was transferred to the new committee. These were, however, not the only potential overlaps of work; there was also a problem with questions concerning the colonial investment fund established by the Treaty of Rome. The chairman said he would keep in touch with the chairman of the economic Steering Committee's Sub-Committee on the United Kingdom Initiative to Europe to ensure they did not cover the same ground.[5] This difficulty shows how extensive and deeply interconnected the system was. The

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1775, EER(63)1, 4 March 1963, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/2276, OC(O)(62)1, 17 July 1962, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/2276, OC(O)(62)1st, 26 July 1962, pp. 1-2.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1351, AF(57)1, 9 May 1957, p. 1.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1351, AF(57)1st, 17 May 1957, p. 1.

official Middle East Committee considered that it should still deal with general Middle Eastern problems even if they, for example, touched on the Sudan, despite the establishment of the Africa Committee. In addition, a member of the former committee suggested that there would be advantages in only one committee discussing oil problems. It was, however, pointed out that coordination on oil problems could be obtained by the overlapping membership of the two committees and the powers the official Africa Committee had to co-opt members from other departments.[1] Clearly there was potential for disagreements between committees regarding their respective areas of responsibility and the possibility of a committee interpreting its remit so broadly as to impinge on the authority of another committee.

Sometimes the terms of reference were such that there seemed to have been no attempt to prevent an overlap of work. As the chairman of the Development Policy Committee pointed out, there was a danger of committee work overlapping because of the number of other committees working in the same field - Africa, South-East Asia, Mutual Aid and UK External Development. He felt, however, that there would not be any practical problem in avoiding any overlap.[2] This seems a rather complacent attitude, given that certain policy areas were so obviously overcrowded with committees, and points to a possible weakness in the system.

In other instances the division of responsibilities between committees, and a particular committee's place in the system, were carefully defined, especially when there was a transfer of functions between committees. When the terms of reference of the Development Policy Committee were revised, the task of preparing reports on the UK's balance of payments situation and prospects was

> remitted to the Committee on Balance of Payments Prospects, which will prepare reports of the kind hitherto prepared by the Economic Steering Committee's Sub-Committee on UK External Investment. These reports will be considered by the Committee on Development Policy and submitted to the Economic Steering Committee with their own observations so far as policy on Government expenditure on development is concerned.[3]

This sort of precision indicates a painstaking degree of management and control, and shows the complex interrelationship between the parts of the system.

The practice of parallel ministerial and official committees continued, and as before the division of responsibilities between the two varied. Sometimes official committees existed to make detailed policy studies of a particular question and report their recommendations back to

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2338, OME(57)19th, 23 May 1957, p. 4.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1628, DP(59)1st, 15 October 1959, p. 1. The terms of reference of the Development Policy Committee were to examine the problems involved in helping less developed overseas areas, and recommending how to coordinating this aid with any assistance from other Western countries. See PRO, CAB 134/1628, DP(59)1, 25 September 1959, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1632, DP(60)74, 29 July 1960, p. 1.

the ministerial committee. The official Territorial Waters Committee, for example, was appointed 'to assist the Ministerial Committee...in considering the tactics to be adopted at the next International discussion'.[1] Some, such as the official Economic Policy Committee, were there to reduce the burden of work on the ministerial committee by dealing 'with matters of administration in the economic sphere which do not require the attention of Ministers'.[2] Others had greater responsibility, such as the Economic Steering Committee which was charged with 'preparing and processing submissions to Ministers' on all 'economic matters of major importance'.[3] One feature of this part of the system is that sometimes, as in the case of the Commercial Policy Committees, not all the departments involved had seats on both the official and the ministerial committees.[4]

Not all official committees were simply shadows of ministerial ones; a large number existed in their own right. As the Cabinet committee organization diagram reproduced in Appendix Two shows, a large network of official committees underlay a small layer of ministerial ones. Many official committees had considerable authority in their own right; indeed, sometimes they were too senior for their own good, as was the case with the official CPC which was disbanded because it had met so infrequently. The Cabinet Office official who reviewed its existence concluded that its inactivity was due to it being 'so high-powered that obviously only matters of the very first importance can reasonably be referred to it'.[5]

Both official and ministerial committees could have sub-committees and working parties. The latter were usually short-lived affairs, set up to examine a particular limited issue or a specific part of a committee's work. The relationship between committees and sub-committees was such that it was possible for a department to be on the latter but not the former. The CO was not a member of the Mutual Aid Committee, yet it was a member of four of its sub-committees.[6] One unusual, if not unique, arrangement was the CO's associate membership of the Security Policy and Methods Committee.[7]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2553, TW(O)(59)1, 30 July 1959, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1234, EP(O)(56)1, 12 June 1956, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1840, ES(60)22, 17 March 1960, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/787, CCP(52)1, 23 May 1952, p. 1 and PRO, CAB 134/787, CCP(O)(52)1 (undated), p. 1.
[5] PRO, CAB 21/4373, Mitchell to Robertson, 30 November 1961. Although it had been in existence since 1956 it had met only ten times. This note added that because most of the major colonial issues now involved Africa, the official Africa Committee could deal with much of the work which might otherwise have been dealt with by the official CPC.
[6] These were the sub-committees on East/West Trade, South and South-East Asia, the role of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Relation to the Soviet Economic Offensive, and the Working Party on European Common Market. See PRO, CAB 134/1045; PRO, CAB 134/1051; PRO, CAB 134/1293; PRO, CAB 134/1044.
[7] See PRO, CAB 161/11.

The hierarchical nature of parts of the system could be a problem for sub-committees when the parent committees were abolished. The future of the official Far East Committee's Rice Sub-Committee provides an example of this. The FO, supported by a number of members of the sub-committee, felt it should continue as a sub-committee rather than be re-established as an official committee in its own right because the present working arrangements were satisfactory. It was also suggested that whatever happened it should remain free to negotiate directly with other bodies at the appropriate level. Eventually the sub-committee agreed that its future form must in the end be decided by the Cabinet Secretary.[1] Brook's verdict was that the sub-committee should be reconstituted as an official committee in its own right.[2]

This type of promotion could also happen to working parties. Because of the growing importance of economic cooperation in South-East Asia, it was decided that the Working Party on Economic Development in South and South-East Asia should be more closely associated with the Mutual Aid Committee. As a result Brook changed the terms of reference of the latter so that it was no longer restricted to Europe, and the working party was reconstituted as one of its sub-committees.[3] In addition, on rare occasions ordinary interdepartmental committees, such as the one that dealt with the issue of territorial waters, found themselves changed into fully-fledged members of the committee system.[4]

Ad hoc committees were set up for a number of reasons. Sometimes one would be established when a committee felt that a particular aspect of its work needed more examination, for instance the ministerial Economic Policy Committee decided that certain aspects of a forthcoming Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference required further study, and convened a meeting of ministers and officials.[5] Often these committees were only concerned with preparations for a particular meeting or conference, such as Preparations for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting (GEN 531), and sometimes they dealt with only the most mundane matters, such as Commonwealth Economic Conference Detailed Administrative Arrangements (GEN 416).[6] On at least one occasion an *ad hoc* committee had to be set up to discuss how to reassign the functions of a committee which had been abolished. Churchill had ordered that the Commonwealth Economic Affairs Committee should be dissolved, but had

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1159, RS(54)2nd, 22 January 1954, pp. 5-6.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1152, R(54)1, 13 May 1954, p. 1. This was not the only instance of a sub-committee being promoted. The Mutual Aid Committee's Sub-Committee on South and South-East Asia was dissolved and in its place a South and South-East Asia Committee was set up with identical terms of reference. See PRO, CAB 134/2512, SEA(58)1, 6 March 1958, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 21/2977, ED(SA)(55)3, 23 April 1955, p. 1.

[4] It was reconstituted, although with narrower terms of reference, as the official committee on Territorial Waters. See PRO, CAB 134/2553, TW(O)(59)1st, 2 September 1959, p. 1.

[5] PRO, CAB 130/143, GEN 631/1st, 5 February 1958, p. 1.

[6] See PRO, CAB 130/116, GEN 531 and PRO, CAB 130/79, GEN 416.

failed to say which body should take over its responsibilities for trade and financial negotiations with the Commonwealth and making arrangements for Commonwealth Conferences. In consequence a group of officials had to meet to resolve this problem, suggesting some degree of poor management of the system under Churchill.[1] Some of these *ad hoc* bodies had the parallel ministerial/official committee structure to be found in the standing committees, such as Commonwealth Economic Conference (GEN 420), an official committee which worked in tandem with the ministerial Commonwealth Economic Conference Committee on Further Consultation (GEN 424).[2] If the issue an *ad hoc* committee dealt with turned out to be long lasting then the committee was sometimes turned into a standing committee, as happened with Oversea Broadcasting (GEN 554) which was replaced by the Oversea Information Services Committee.[3]

Committees were set up in various ways. Sometimes the Cabinet took the initiative when it felt a particular problem needed examination, as when it decided to establish the Commonwealth Membership Committee to 'consider and report to the Cabinet whether it would be practicable...to enable independent Commonwealth countries to remain within the Commonwealth without enjoying all the present rights and privileges of full membership'.[4] The Cabinet also established the ministerial and official committees on the Review of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, charging the latter with the task of examining the issues and reporting back to the ministerial committee.[5] Interestingly, these parallel ministerial and official committees were set up under Churchill's premiership, despite his strident objections to such structures.

Occasionally committees were established on the initiative of other committees. For example, the Economic Policy Committee proposed setting up a Commercial Policy Committee because it felt that a ministerial committee was needed to review external economic policy.[6] The President of the Board of Trade suggested that a ministerial committee should make a preliminary examination of this issue, and that an official committee should then examine the specific course of action which might be taken.[7] Ministerial committees sometimes established their own shadow official committees, as when a member of the Oversea Information Services Committee suggested that the committee could be helped in its work if an official committee was established to assemble data on the cost of overseas information services, and to

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/72, GEN 393/1st, 3 December 1951, p. 1.
[2] See PRO, CAB 130/82, GEN 420 and PRO, CAB 130/83, GEN 424.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/2318, OI(57)1, 22 January 1957, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/786, CCM(53)1, 4 May 1953, p. 1.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1154, RG(O)(54)1, 11 May 1954, p. 1.
[6] PRO, PREM 11/2229, Brook to Churchill, 22 May 1952.
[7] PRO, CAB 134/842, EA(52)9th, 26 March 1952, p. 2.

recommend what changes should be made in those services.[1] On other occasions a committee would be set up at the request of a particular department, such as the Latin America and the Caribbean Committee, which was established because of FO concerns about the rapidly increasing significance of Latin America.[2]

As under Attlee, ministers were appointed to a committee either because of their ministerial responsibilities or in a personal capacity. Sometimes the chairman would be the senior minister most closely concerned with the policy area a committee dealt with, or sometimes he would be a minister who was thought to be above the fray. Committee members were also selected on a similar basis and sometimes appointing a 'neutral' member was successful. Lyttelton was a member of an *ad hoc* committee that dealt with Town and Country Planning and as a disinterested party was able to suggest a way of resolving the deadlock which occurred on this committee between Butler and Macmillan.[3] However, Lyttelton was also appointed to the Farm Price Review Committee in a personal capacity but failed to attend any of its meetings.[4] In the case of official committees the chairman was usually a member of staff of the department that had responsibility for the policy area of the committee. Therefore when the responsibility for work connected with technical assistance was transferred from the Treasury to the Board of Trade, the chairmanship of the European Economic Cooperation Committee's Sub-Committee on technical Assistance was transferred likewise.[5]

Committee membership was defined in a memorandum on the terms of reference and composition of a committee and was usually fixed. There were, however, a few exceptions to this rule. In the case of the Defence (Transition) Committee, 'the Permanent Secretaries of the Departments concerned (were) invited as necessary'.[6] In 1958 ministers who sat on the Defence Committee lost their automatic right of attendance. Macmillan felt that because this committee dealt with such a wide range of issues, it could best function with a flexible membership. He therefore stated that he would decide which members should attend a particular meeting, based on the topics discussed and the ministerial responsibilities involved, and would invite other ministers to attend when their departmental interests were affected.[7] There was concern about the membership of official committees because it was felt they would function less efficiently if too many officials attended meetings. In consequence the memorandum on the terms of reference and membership of the Balance of Payments Committee stated that attendance at

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2318(OI)(57)5th, 25 February 1957, p. 3.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/2153, LAC(62)1st, 8 March 1962, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 130/109, GEN 486/1st, 23 February 1954, pp. 1-3.
[4] See PRO, CAB 134/2443.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1181, TA(L)(52)1st, 12 February 1952, p. 1.
[6] PRO, CAB 21/4369, J. M. Wilson to Brook, 16 May 1956.
[7] PRO, CAB 131/20, D(58)34, 15 July 1958, p. 1.

ordinary meetings was limited to those specified in the memorandum, and that members should not bring along other officials unless they had the chairman's permission.[1]

Committees' terms of reference were changed for various reasons and by various people. Sometimes this happened at the request of the committee's chairman, as in the case of the Materials (Allocation) Committee whose terms of reference were altered, at the request of Lord Swinton, from dealing with the allocation of raw materials and any other questions regarding this remitted by the Economic Policy Committee, to the narrower one of determining the allocation of scarce materials and keeping the methods of allocation under review.[2]

Official committees were not necessarily chaired by civil servants. The Materials (Allocation) Committee consisted of officials, but its chairman was Lord Swinton, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.[3] Another Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Charles Hill, was chairman of the official Government Publicity Committee and of both the ministerial and official Oversea Information Services Committees.[4] Occasionally committees had a mixed membership of officials and ministers, such as the Commonwealth Economic Development Committee.[5] In addition officials, especially the more senior such as Brook, would sometimes attend meetings of ministerial committees.[6]

As mentioned earlier, Churchill showed hostility to the committee system as soon as he took office. One of his first actions, and perhaps a surprising one considering the heavy workload of a new government, was to set up a review of the Cabinet committees. One reason for this action was his dislike of parallel official committees. He felt they undermined ministerial control of business because their work could result in the ministerial committee being faced in effect with a *fait accompli*.[7]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/778, BP(55)1, 17 March 1955, p. 1.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/486, M(51)72, 19 December 1951, p. 1 and PRO, CAB 134/1006, M(52)15, 14 January 1952, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/486, M(51)72, 19 December 1951, p. 1.

[4] See PRO, CAB 134/1503; PRO, CAB 134/2318, OI(57)1, 22 January 1957, p. 1; PRO, CAB 134/2325, OI(O)(57)1, 4 September 1957, p. 1.

[5] PRO, CAB 134/1496, CED(57)1, 15 February 1957, p. 1. Another example of such a mixture was the *ad hoc* Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference Committee. See PRO, CAB 130/143, GEN 631/1st, 5 February 1958, p. 1.

[6] For example, Brook sometimes attended meetings of the Commonwealth Membership Committee. See, for instance, PRO, CAB 134/786, C(M)(53)1st, 7 May 1953. This minute record him as being 'also present' indicating that he was not there in just a secretarial capacity. The Cabinet Office's 'Handbook for the Committee Clerk' states that in committee minutes the chairman and members should be recorded as 'present', and non-members, including substitutes for members, should be recorded as 'also present'. See PRO, CAB 21/2819. As an example involving the CO, Sir John Martin of the CO sometimes attended meetings of the Oversea Policy Committee. See, for instance, PRO, CAB 134/2370, OP(62)3rd, 12 July 1962.

[7] M. Beloff, *New Dimensions in Foreign Policy* (1961), p. 26. See also A. Seldon, *Churchill's Indian Summer: The Conservative Government, 1951-55* (1981), p. 117.

In November Churchill sent notes to Brook and Bridges asking for a list of all the committees, sub-committees and working parties, both ministerial and official, which currently existed.[1] Brook replied that the only ministerial committees currently in existence were the five appointed by Churchill, and added that it would be useful to have two or three more in order to help reduce the burden on the Cabinet. He suggested that such committees provided a chance for ministers who were not in the Cabinet to join in the collective discussion of policy, and proposed that standing committees on Home Affairs, Financial and Economic Affairs, and Defence should be set up.[2]

This was not what Churchill wanted to hear. He told Brook that the reason he had asked for details of Cabinet committees was

> to lead to the slaughter of a great number of second and third grade committees which now, I am assured, cumber the ground. In reply you present me with a new crop on the highest level. However there is no difference between us on this point. It is a necessary step in Cabinet organization....But now I want you to get on with the real work and give me a list of all the committees which I am assured are luxuriating.[3]

Brook finally provided details of the sixty committees, forty-seven sub-committees and seventeen working parties which existed at the time of the election, but pointed out that these 'central' committees had been annually pruned by the Prime Minister on his recommendation, and that therefore there would not be much scope for a reduction in their numbers. He did, however, agree that there were some Cabinet committees which could be abolished. But he also cautioned that although some of them only met infrequently, they provided a quick means of carrying out occasional business and should be left untouched, otherwise Cabinet business might be conducted inefficiently, which would waste as much of the time of officials as having too many committees.[4]

After consulting Bridges, Brook proposed that the following committees should be abolished: European Economic Cooperation (to be merged with Mutual Aid), Commonwealth Economic Affairs, Colonial Development, Raw Materials, Productive Capacity (to be merged with Manpower), Home Information Services, Welfare of Overseas Students, Social Services in Western Europe and Briefing Group on Rearmament.[5] Churchill agreed to the abolition of all

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[1] PRO, CAB 21/3931, Churchill to Brook and Bridges, 12 November 1951.
[2] PRO, CAB 21/3931, Brook to Churchill, 15 November 1951.
[3] PRO, CAB 21/3931, Churchill to Brook, 16 November 1951.
[4] PRO, CAB 21/4363, Brook to Churchill, 20 November 1951.
[5] PRO, CAB 21/4363, Brook to Churchill, 26 November 1951. Bridges suggested that Commonwealth Economic Affairs, Raw Materials, and Colonial Development could be abolished, adding regarding the last that responsibility for whatever was required in that field could be laid on the Colonial Secretary, although special arrangements would need to be made about colonial import programmes. See PRO, CAB 21/3931, Bridges to Brook, 19 November 1951. Earlier that year officials had already

these, with the exception of the last one, and decided that the Civil Application of Atomic Energy Sub-Committee should be added to the scrap heap.[1]

Churchill still felt, nevertheless, that there was a needless proliferation of committees which gave rise to a 'grave risk of overlap, inefficiency and waste of time' and to further reduce their numbers suggested to Brook that combinations of committees should be set up.[2] When replying to Churchill that there was not yet any scope to do this, Brook took the opportunity to promote the benefits of the committee system. He reminded Churchill that it enabled ministers not of Cabinet rank to join in the collective discussion of policy, which meant that it was possible to have a small Cabinet without infringing the principle of collective responsibility, and helped the government develop a sense of solidarity.[3]

Churchill's moves were not welcomed by officials who started to complain that the system Attlee had so carefully built up was falling apart, and that the coordination of work at Cabinet committee level was becoming poorer.[4] Subsequent developments showed that these complaints were acknowledged; new committees were established and some disbanded ones were reconstituted. The statistics illustrate the extent of Churchill's defeat: during his Premiership there were 137 standing and 109 *ad hoc* committees.[5]

However, although there was an increase in the number of committees it does not follow that the system itself - that is a coherent, coordinated and properly managed group of committees - was rebuilt properly. Rather what happened was that after Churchill's culling the system gradually re-formed, but in a muddled and inchoate manner. Thus when Seldon contends that by 1953 a Cabinet committee structure similar to Attlee's had quietly re-established itself he overstates the case.[6]

In May 1952 Churchill circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet 'Questions of procedure for ministers'.[7] This consolidated the instructions on Cabinet and Cabinet committee business given by Attlee. It stated that the Cabinet should deal with:

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discussed abolishing the Commonwealth Economic Affairs Committee. See PRO, CAB 21/4363, memorandum to Brook (sender's signature illegible), 16 February 1951.

[1] PRO, CAB 21/3931, memorandum by Brook, 28 November 1951.

[2] PRO, CAB 21/3931, draft memorandum by Churchill, December 1951 (full date not given).

[3] PRO, CAB 21/3931, Brook to Churchill, 6 December 1951.

[4] A. Seldon, 'The Churchill Administration, 1951-55', in P. Hennessy and A. Seldon (eds.), *Ruling Performance* (Oxford 1987), p. 77. Seldon suggests (p. 69) that the Overlords scheme (ministers to supervise and coordinate the work of several ministries) was introduced by Churchill in order to cut down on the need for ministerial and official Cabinet committees.

[5] Hennessy, *Cabinet*, p. 50.

[6] Seldon in Hennessy and Seldon, *Ruling Performance*, p. 77.

[7] This memorandum was produced by Brook and circulated at his suggestion. He wrote to Churchill that ministers would find it convenient to have, for reference, a consolidated statement of the directives which had been issued from time to time on points of procedure. See PRO, CAB 21/2778, Brook to Churchill, 24 April 1952.

> (i) Questions which engage the collective responsibility of the Government, either because they raise major issues of policy or because they are likely to occasion public comment or criticism.
> (ii) Questions on which there is an unresolved conflict of interests between Departments.[1]

The memorandum emphasized that all issues involving more than one department should be examined interdepartmentally before being brought before the Cabinet, and that if a conflict of interests between departments was involved that matter 'should not be referred to the Cabinet until all other means of resolving it have been exhausted....' To further ensure that as much work as possible was done outside the Cabinet, it was stipulated that matters involving expenditure should first be discussed with Treasury officials, and then if necessary the Chancellor, before they were put before the Cabinet. In addition it was made clear that those issues, 'which fall within the Departmental responsibilities of a single Minister and do not engage the collective responsibility of the Government need not be brought to Cabinet at all'. It was admitted, however, that it was impossible to give a precise definition of such issues and that in borderline cases 'a Minister is well advised to bring the matter before his colleagues'.[2]

Clearly, an overburdened committee system was a as undesirable as an overburdened Cabinet, and so Attlee's stricture that the prime object of committees was the despatch of business and the making of decisions was repeated. The memorandum also warned that committee meetings should be attended only by the permanent members and ministers who had a major interest in the topic being discussed.[3] It would appear that Churchill's interest in the system waned by this point as he did not circulate any more memoranda on this subject. This suggests that either the system was working perfectly or, more likely, that once settled in office his attention was taken up by other matters.

His successor took even less interest in this part of the government machinery and appears to have regarded it with little more than wary indifference. In his one memorandum on it Eden complained, in a typically highly strung manner, that decisions had had to be reconsidered because of public criticism of them. In sharp contrast to Attlee and Churchill's concern to minimize what was brought to the Cabinet, Eden said that ministers should take advantage of the collective wisdom of their colleagues.

> Apart from the major issues of policy, Departmental Ministers should not hesitate to bring to the Cabinet, or to the appropriate Cabinet Committee, any questions which are likely to occasion public controversy or criticism or may need to be carefully explained to the Government's supporters in

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[1] CAB 129, C(52)157, 13 May 1952, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

> Parliament. If a Minister is in doubt about this, he can always seek my view or that of the Chairman of the appropriate Cabinet Committee....[1]

In addition Eden had earlier told Brook that in future more economic problems should be brought to the Cabinet because 'in recent months the Cabinet had left rather too much to the Economic Policy Committee with the result that members of the Cabinet who were not on that committee had no opportunity to share in the formulation of economic policy'.[2]

One of the few other occasions when Eden bothered himself about the committee system was when he suggested that the Cyprus Committee should be replaced by a more senior committee, and that the Colonial Secretary should be in the chair.[3] Apart from this, and the creation of a number of committees to deal with domestic issues, he does not appear to have taken any more interest in the system.[4]

Macmillan, in contrast, took a considerable interest in the management of the committee system. One of his main concerns was to reduce the amount of business that the Cabinet had to deal with. In a memorandum circulated to ministers he complained that:

> Recently, too many proposals have been submitted to the Cabinet at short notice and with inadequate inter-Departmental preparation. We should constantly remind ourselves that the Cabinet should not be troubled with any questions which can be settled by a Cabinet Committee....

However, Macmillan also wanted to ease the pressure of work on committees and so he also stated that they 'should not be asked to devote time to problems which can be settled by direct discussion between the ministers concerned'.[5]

In another memorandum Macmillan again expressed his concern about the operation of the system, repeating points made by Attlee and warning that:

> Matters falling wholly within the jurisdiction of a single Minister often need not be brought up for collective discussion at all. Each Minister must judge whether such a question is so important that it ought to be brought to the notice of his colleagues. A Minister who is in doubt can seek guidance from me or from the Chairman of the appropriate Cabinet Committee.
>
> A Minister should not submit a question to the Cabinet or a Cabinet Committee because it concerns one or more other Ministers. This may seem an easier course than to arrange a meeting with those directly concerned; but, unless the collective responsibility of the Government is involved, it wastes the time of the other members of the Cabinet or the Committee who are not directly concerned.
>
> Discussion in Cabinet occupies more Ministerial man-hours than discussion in a Cabinet Committee. This should be one of the considerations

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[1] CAB 129, CP(55)208, 19 December 1955, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 21/4363, memorandum by Brook, 15 April 1955.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] See Chapter One, p. 5 for more on these committees.
[5] CAB 129, C(59)1, 7 January 1959, p. 1.

> which a Minister takes into account in deciding whether a paper should be submitted to a Committee or to the Cabinet itself.[1]

This all suggests that one of the problems with the system was not the system itself, but the way ministers were exploiting it to further their own interests, and that this was a long-running and perhaps inevitable difficulty.

The Suez crisis highlighted the excessive pressure of work on ministers, and in its aftermath Macmillan set up a committee of Privy Councillors, chaired by Attlee, to see if this workload could be reduced. The committee's report 'The Burden of Ministers' suggested that the number and membership of Cabinet committees should be regularly and critically reviewed, that ministers should be told to settle as much of their interdepartmental business as possible directly with the other ministers concerned, and that guidance should be given to ministers on which questions needed to be referred to the Cabinet or its committees. It concluded that 'Greater use should be made of Committees as instruments of decision to avoid repeated discussion of the same question and overburdening of the Cabinet'.[2] Shortly after the report was issued, Macmillan circulated a note urging that committees

> should be used to reduce the burden on the Cabinet by ensuring that, wherever possible, a decision is reached below Cabinet level or that, if an issue has to be submitted to Cabinet, it has been adequately discussed and prepared in advance.[3]

Macmillan's response to Brook's suggestion that the Minister of Aviation and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster should be made members of the Economic Policy Committee illustrates his views on the role of committees. He replied that:

> If these Committees become practically the whole Cabinet, it may be better to turn them into Cabinet meetings. The alternative is to reduce them into a workable form. Members of the Cabinet should not regard membership of a Committee as a privilege but as an unpleasant duty. Some of them seem to regard it as a matter of prestige which is a mistake.[4]

This again suggests that one of the main problems with the system was how ministers abused it.

Other action taken by Macmillan included suggesting to the Chancellor that a smaller group of the Economic Policy Committee should be set up to consider general economic problems. Macmillan felt this committee was becoming unwieldy because the Chancellor had to invite to many of its meetings ministers who were not members of it, in particular the ministers

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[1] PRO, PREM 11/1734, memorandum by Macmillan, 11 March 1957. Circulated as CAB 129, C(57)64, 11 March 1957.

[2] PRO, PREM 11/2351, Report on 'The Burden of Ministers', 29 July 1957.

[3] PRO, PREM 11/2351, note by Macmillan, November 1957, (full date not given).

[4] PRO, PREM 11/4114, Macmillan to Brook, 3 September 1960.

of the overseas departments who had to be present when certain overseas economic problems were discussed.[1]

In contrast to his various political masters, Brook consistently took a close interest in the functioning of the committee system. The Cabinet Office itself

> exists to assist Ministers in the exercise of their collective responsibility through the Cabinet and its Committees. The function of the office includes the arrangement of meetings, the preparation of agenda papers, the circulation of memoranda, the drawing up of minutes, and the drafting of reports. In carrying out their functions, the members of the office act on the instructions of the Prime Minister, of the Chairmen of the Committees, and of other Ministers concerned.

And the Secretary to the Cabinet

> has a special responsibility to the Prime Minister for the orderly arrangement of Cabinet business, for the security of Cabinet documents and the security of Cabinet business, and for the continuous oversight of the working of the Cabinet Committee system.[2]

Brook monitored the system carefully. His private Office had to be notified immediately of any proposal to set up a new ministerial or official committee 'within the Cabinet Committee structure', and when a Cabinet committee decided to set up a sub-committee, the terms of reference and composition of the latter had to be shown in draft to Brook's Private Secretary, who would, if necessary, consult Brook about them.[3]

Brook's role was not, however, just a passive supervisory one. He frequently took the initiative in setting up committees, especially ones which dealt with colonial policy. It was he who took the lead in establishing the CPC. By 1955 ministers were complaining that their departments were not being given advance information on developments in colonial issues, and that the Committee had had to handle a number of constitutional proposals concerning Malta, Cyprus, Singapore and Malaya at short notice. Brook felt that not only would these particular colonial problems continue, they would be succeeded by others. A memorandum sent to Sir Charles Jeffries of the CO outlined Brook's thoughts on the matter. He proposed one standing committee, instead of a series of different *ad hoc* ones, to deal with specific constitutional problems as they arose, and to take a long-term view of colonial policy as a whole. This committee would be able to spend more time on such matters than the Cabinet, and although some matters would still need to be referred to the Cabinet, discussions would be shorter and easier as those members of the Cabinet who sat on the committee would already be familiar

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[1] PRO, PREM 11/4114, Macmillan to Heathcoat Amory, 31 October 1959.
[2] PRO, CAB 21/2797, Cabinet Office organization chart, August 1952 (full date not given).
[3] PRO, CAB 21/2809, notice to secretaries of committees from Brook, 21 May 1957.

with those matters.[1] Brook considered that past experience over India and Burma had shown that a standing committee could be of great help, not only in shortening Cabinet discussions, but also in preparing the way for taking decisions, and that it would be valuable to have a small body paying close and continual attention to colonial problems. Brook asked if Eden could preside himself because 'this would add greatly to the authority of the committee and I believe that the importance of the subject is such as to warrant your personal guidance'.[2] As a result the CPC was established under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, with Brook as its secretary.[3] Brook also proposed the setting up of a parallel official committee of which he was made - on his own suggestion - chairman.[4]

By the time of Macmillan's premiership the ministerial committee was chaired by the Lord Chancellor, and problems had arisen because the Commonwealth Relations Secretary felt that the CO was not bringing his department in at an early enough stage on colonial constitutional development issues. Brook, combining management of the system with a close interest in colonial affairs, persuaded Macmillan to resume the committee chairmanship in order to ensure closer cooperation between the CRO and the CO. He also successfully convinced Macmillan that the CPC should resume its original function of discussing the longer-range problems of constitutional development.[5] One reason the CPC could now do so was that it no longer had to spend time on the urgent day-to-day problems of Malta and Cyprus; these were now dealt with by the Cabinet because they required the presence of the Chancellor.[6]

In 1962 this committee was abolished and replaced by the Oversea Policy Committee, which had wider terms of reference. Brook was behind this change, and felt that it was necessary because constitutional development increasingly involved broader questions of international relations; for instance, colonial policy in Africa had to be considered with reference to Britain's United Nations policy, and Britain's relations with the Afro-Asian group and those European countries which still had African interests.[7]

Brook was involved in other decisions to abolish committees, sometimes without consulting the Prime Minister. He decided that the Individual Service Overseas Committee should be disbanded because of the establishment of the Department of Technical Cooperation.

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[1] CO 1032/60, no. 1, Brook to Jeffries, 23 September 1955, in D. Goldsworthy (ed.), *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire, 1951-1957*, Part II, *Politics and Administration* (1994), p. 48.

[2] PRO, PREM 11/2617, Brook to Eden, 26 August 1955. Eden minuted 'I must'.

[3] CAB 129, CP(55)144, 3 October 1955, p. 1.

[4] PRO, CAB 21/4373, Brook to Sir Charles Jeffries, 23 September 1955.

[5] PRO, PREM 11/4117, Brook to Macmillan, 13 November 1958.

[6] PRO, PREM 11/4117, Macmillan to Lennox-Boyd, 14 November 1958.

[7] PRO, PREM 11/4117, Brook to Macmillan, 19 June 1962. The ministerial CPC was dissolved on 29 June. See PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)2, 29 June 1962, p. 1.

The Cabinet Office official who was told to arrange this felt that as the committee had been set up by direction of the Prime Minister its dissolution should be cleared with him, but a more senior official decided that there was no need to trouble Macmillan with this.[1]

Brook wanted to ensure that there were no superfluous committees. He decided that the official Far East Committee should be disbanded because he was 'satisfied that Far Eastern policy is adequately best kept under review and effective liaison maintained between the Departments concerned without the need for an official committee'.[2] By ensuring that committees did not outlive their usefulness, he hoped to prevent the system becoming unwieldy. Following the 1959 election Brook suggested to Macmillan that the new administration was now sufficiently formed to enable Macmillan to review the composition and structure of the ministerial Cabinet committees, and that for the time being only those committees which were likely to meet in the next few weeks should be appointed - Defence, Economic Policy, Home affairs, Legislation, Colonial Policy, Africa, Law of the Sea and Civil defence, Brook said he would

> take this opportunity of seeing whether we can reduce the number of Official Committees, which have a natural tendency to proliferate, Meanwhile I should be glad if I might have your authority to keep in being the Official Committees which were in operation under your previous Administration.[3]

When major policy initiatives were taken Brook suggested how the committee system should be altered to deal with them, and tidied up the system in their aftermath. In 1959 Brook pointed out to Macmillan that in his previous administration he had chaired an *ad hoc* group of ministers which dealt with the proposals for a European Free Trade Area, and that another group of ministers, headed by the Chancellor and with a similar composition, discussed the same issues. He suggested that these two groups should be replaced by a formal committee of the Cabinet, to be called the European Economic Association Committee, which should be presided over by Macmillan.[4] Macmillan agreed and the committee was established in October that year.[5]

Brook clearly felt that his job included, when necessary, nudging the Prime Minister into taking action to ensure that the system worked smoothly. For instance, he suggested to Macmillan that it would be timely if he reminded ministers of the need to give their colleagues sufficient time to consider memoranda, and to ensure that those memoranda were as concise and

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[1] PRO, CAB 21/4378, Mackintosh to Bishop, 20 September 1961. Clearly in practice the Cabinet Office did not, as Daalder says, only abolish committees with the consent of the Prime Minister. See Daalder in Herman and Alt, *Cabinet Studies*, p. 248.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1152, R(54)1, 13 May 1954, p. 1.

[3] PRO, PREM 11/2912, Brook to Macmillan, 16 October 1959.

[4] PRO, CAB 21/4376, Brook to Macmillan, 23 October 1959.

[5] PRO, CAB 21/4376, EQ(59)1, 26 October 1959, p. 1.

clear as possible.[1] The result was a circular to ministers from Macmillan covering these points - Brook's notes to Macmillan on the efficient despatch of government business often underlay memoranda later circulated by the Prime Minister. In December 1957 Brook emphasized to Macmillan that questions which did not engage the collective responsibility of the Cabinet, or raise any major political issues, should be dealt with as much as possible by direct contact between the ministers concerned, and that ministers should not put subjects of limited interest on the agenda of committees.[2]

Another aspect of managing the system was ensuring that its rules were followed, particularly the one that any proposals involving expenditure or affecting general or financial policy should not be submitted to the Cabinet or its committees without prior reference to the Treasury.[3] Butler sent a number of notes to Eden in 1955 asking that this rule should be strictly observed, and that a memorandum to this effect should be circulated to ministers.[4] Brook was not very sympathetic; he felt that there was no need for such a memorandum as departments were aware of the rule and there was no evidence that they were failing to comply with it. In fact Brook took the side of other departments against the Treasury, pointing out to Eden that 'consultation does not mean consent' and that

> the Treasury sometimes talk as though a paper involving expenditure may not be submitted to Cabinet unless, or until, the Chancellor agrees. This goes too far. The Treasury must not be allowed to use this rule in such a way as to bar access to the Cabinet.

Eden minuted that he agreed with Brook.[5]

Another task Brook undertook was proposing who should chair Cabinet committees, both official and ministerial. One reason this needed to be done was when there had been ministerial changes, and especially when there was a major restructuring of government, as happened after Macmillan's 'night of the long knives' in July 1962.[6]

The amount of official committees dealing with colonial concerns that Brook chaired is striking. The official bodies he chaired included the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee, the Cyprus Committee, the Commonwealth Membership Committee and the Working Party on Expenditure in East Asia.[7] He was also involved with the ministerial committees that dealt with

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[1] PRO PREM 11/4659, Brook to Macmillan, 4 April 1960.
[2] PRO, PREM 11/2351, Brook to Macmillan, 2 December 1957.
[3] PRO, CAB 21/2809, notice to secretaries of committees from Brook, 3 March 1954.
[4] See PRO, PREM 11/4657.
[5] PRO, PREM 11/4657, Brook to Eden, 18 August 1955.
[6] See PRO, PREM 11/3670, Brook to Macmillan, 17 July 1962.
[7] He also chaired the following committees: Evacuation of Maltese from Egypt in Emergency, Office of the United Kingdom Commissioner-General in South-East Asia, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, Overseas Civil Service, Political Association with Europe, Defence (Transition), Royal Visits Overseas and Visits by Foreign Heads of State, Democracy in Newly Independent Countries,

colonial affairs; he was the secretary of the ministerial CPC, and sometimes attended meetings of the Africa Committee and the Oversea Policy Committee.[1]

As well as Brook, departmental officials sometimes took the lead in managing certain aspects of the system. In the case of the abolition of the official Middle East Committee, the initiative was taken by FO officials who felt this particular committee had outlived its usefulness, and that from the history of this committee it was clear that there was insufficient demand for it to keep it going. Following consultations with the other departments that sat on it, the FO sent a memorandum to Brook who agreed to its dissolution.[2] This example suggests that the committee system was not as tightly managed as it once was; there was even some confusion among officials about when the committee had last met. One memorandum stated that it had not met since January 1950, whereas another recorded that it had met once in 1952.[3]

Perhaps Brook, and those under him in the Cabinet Office, did not exercise as much control over the system as they thought they did. When in 1953 Brook asked what was happening about the general annual review of the committees, an official replied that he had 'in fact forgotten that we had an annual review of the committees...we did have one in January 1951, and also in 1947, but the word "annually" hardly applies to a periodicity of this kind'. However, the official did point out that when he reallocated the duties of committee secretaries, he examined the committee structure, and if he came across a committee requiring revision or abolition, he made a submission to Brook. He added that Brook was also informed when a committee secretary suggested that a committee should be abolished or have its terms of reference altered. Brook minuted that he was happy with this procedure.[4]

One importance source of information on the Cabinet committee system is the Cabinet committee books (CAB 161), which list all the main committees and gives information on their composition and terms of reference. Brook's standard forward to each book stated that it contained 'particulars of all the Standing Committees and Sub-Committees forming part of the Cabinet Committee structure' but that *ad hoc* committees and committees with limited terms of reference were not included unless they dealt with an important subject.[5] An analysis of these

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Future Policy, Expenditure in Eastern Asia, Working Party on Smaller Colonial Territories, and Study of Future Policy Steering Committee.

[1] See for example PRO, CAB 134/1362, AF(M)(60)1st, 6 October 1960 and PRO, CAB 134/2370, OP(62)2nd, 4 July 1962.

[2] See the various memoranda in PRO, CAB 21/2962. For its abolition see also PRO, CAB 134/1053, ME(O)(53)2, 21 August 1953, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 21/2962, N. J. P. Hutchison to Sir James Bowker, 1 September 1953 and Bowker to Brook, 28 July 1953. Bowker was chairman of the committee.

[4] PRO, CAB 21/4363, George Mallaby to Brook, 19 December 1953.

[5] PRO, CAB 161/7, January 1955, Preface.

books provides a general picture of the changes in the system and the CO's involvement with it.[1]

YEAR	TOTAL COMMITTEES IN BOOK	NUMBER OF COMMITTEES CO ON	% OF COMMITTEES CO ON
1952	59	10	17
1954	65	13	20
1955	70	13	19
1956	82	15	18
1957	84	21	25
1959	95	27	28
1960	94	30	32
1961	109	34	31
1962	96	24	25
1963	76	27	36

As can be seen from the above table the CO was on more committees when it was working itself out of a job; as the pace of decolonisation increased so did the CO's involvement in the committee system. At a time when the colonies had become of less strategic and economic importance, the government as a whole was having to pay greater attention to colonial matters. The table shows that despite Churchill's assault on the system, the number of committees grew again under him, although there were still less overall than under his successors. The CO was least involved in the system following Churchill's cull both in terms of the number and proportion of committees it sat on, and was most involved under Macmillan. Its involvement peaked in 1963, when it was a member of over a third of all Cabinet committees, by which time many colonies had gained their independence.

The CO was involved in a wide range of committees because it was represented on all those whose activities impinged on colonial matters. Hence the committees the CO served on were as varied as those on Colonial Policy, Africa, Book Exports, Common Market Negotiations, Economic Policy, GATT Policy, Raw Materials, Royal Visits, Territorial Waters, Cotton Imports, East/West Trade and Scientific Policy.[2] The CO also chaired some committees such as the official Oversea Defence Committee.[3]

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[1] Committee books are not available for 1951, 1953 and 1958.

[2] For a list of all the committees that the CO was a member of see Appendix One.

[3] See PRO, CAB 134/531. This is the file for 1946 and shows that the chairman at this time was Sir George Gater, Permanent Under-Secretary of the CO. In 1962 the chairman was still the Permanent Under-Secretary of the CO, at this time Sir Hilton Poynton. See PRO, CAB 134/2302, ODC(63)1, 16 April 1963, p. 1.

However, perhaps full membership was allocated in a rather indiscriminate manner, so that no department could complain it was not represented on a committee, that covered matters within its policy remit. This might be why the CO was a member of some committees to whose work it made little or no contribution. The CO was a member of both the ministerial and official committees on the Law of the Sea, but rarely attended their meetings.[1] The department was also a member of the official Atomic Energy Committee, but did not attend any meetings from 1957 to 1962.[2]

Another indication of the extent of the CO's involvement with the system was that it was frequently 'also present' at the meetings of committees of which it was not a member. The Colonial Secretary, for example, often attended meetings of the Defence Committee before he became a member of it.[3] The CO also occupied a halfway position with regard to some committees, being listed in a committee's terms of reference as one of those departments which would attend as necessary, such as in the case of the Balance of Payments Statistical Sub-Committee.[4] In the case of the Oversea Negotiations Committee, the CO was listed as a department that would attend when its interests were affected.[5]

Over the years, and especially after the Second World War, a large and complex bureaucratic structure developed, and it was one with which the CO was closely involved. Little attention has been paid to this structure, its activities and the impact it had on policy development. Having described the structure, growth and management of the system, and how it was supposed to operate, the rest of this study will examine certain aspects of colonial policy within the context of this neglected part of government, and by doing so will provide an analysis of how the system actually functioned.

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[1] See PRO, CAB 134/2187-2195.

[2] See PRO, CAB 134/1329-1333.

[3] See PRO CAB 131/12. The CO was also not a member of the Oversea Negotiations Committee but frequently attended its meetings. See PRO, CAB 134/1309.

[4] See PRO, CAB 134/779, BP(S)(55)1, 23 April 1955, p. 1.

[5] See PRO, CAB 134/2353, ON(60)3, 31 March 1960, p. 1.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COLONIAL POLICY AND EXTERNAL POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION

From the very start of the Conservative Party's period in office, Britain's economic ability to sustain its global commitments was in doubt, and as a result much of the debate on defence and foreign policy was concerned with how to solve the problem of the disparity between Britain's means and its overseas commitments.[1] In May 1952 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, R. A. Butler, solemnly warned his Cabinet colleagues, in a discussion about the causes of Britain's economic weakness, that one of the main problems which had to be solved was how to limit Britain's overseas commitments so that they corresponded to its economic strength.[2] Yet in 1961, at a meeting of the Defence Committee - one of the most senior Cabinet committees - it still had to be pointed out that Britain's overseas expenditure could not be maintained at its present level without serious strain on the economy, the effect of which might be to damage Britain's standing more seriously than a reduction in its military presence abroad.[3] When change occurred it was not in the size of Britain's commitments but in the intended means of fulfilling them. The 1957 Defence White Paper did not represent a hard-headed reappraisal of commitments; it simply sought to find a more economical way of carrying them out.

This chapter will concern itself with a general examination of the development of external policy in the committee system, and will analyse the connections between colonial policy and broader external policy issues, both to see to what extent the latter determined the former, and to see if the latter was ever influenced by the former. An examination of specific policy areas will then be made. Firstly, the case of the British Cameroons will be looked at; this territory illustrates the difficulties and expense of disengaging from empire. Secondly, Greater Malaysia will be examined; it provides one of the clearest instances of the connection between

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[1] This difficulty was not the ever-present one faced by all countries of how best to apportion finite economic resources. It was, rather, the more particular problem of a country whose continued global commitments were out of line with its economic resources. The crux of this dilemma was pointed out in 1960: Britain's political commitments would not necessarily reduce concurrently with its military and economic ability to discharge them, and so positive steps needed to be taken to reduce those commitments. See PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)5th, 15 July 1960, p. 1.

[2] CAB 128, CC(52)55th, 22 May 1952, p. 129.

[3] PRO, CAB 131/25, D(61)2nd, 26 January 1961, p. 5.

colonial policy and broader concerns, as well as the casual way in which colonial considerations could be ignored when they clashed with more general aims. Lastly, Aden will be examined; as well as being one of the most frequently debated issues in the committee system, it also provides an example of the way in which colonial issues and defence concerns became inextricably intertwined.

External policy, that is Britain's overall global policy, encompassing both its foreign policy aims and its defence policy means, was dealt with by a large number of committees which were divided into two separate substructures in the committee system. Appendix Two reproduces the committee structure diagram from one of the committee organization handbooks. As this shows, the structure for defence was large and complicated, even more so in fact than this diagram suggests, as it does not include any of the many *ad hoc* committees. A memorandum on defence organization circulated to the Cabinet said that the supreme responsibility for defence lay with the Cabinet, but that 'subject to this defence problems which engage the collective responsibility of the Government - especially those which are related to the Commonwealth and to Foreign and Colonial Policy - are normally handled on the Cabinet's behalf by the Defence Committee'.[1] The reality of how defence issues were dealt with, however, was a lot more complicated than this memorandum suggests. Defence was the largest of all the committee system substructures and at one time consisted of six ministerial committees, sixteen official committees (three of which were parallel to ministerial committees), nine official sub-committees and three official working parties. This section of the committee system had the largest proportion of official committees, many of which existed in their own right. As can be seen from the diagram, like the rest of the system the defence substructure was basically, but not entirely, hierarchical. Out of the total of thirty-four ministerial and official bodies the CO was a member of eight.[2] This may seem a surprisingly small proportion, but one reason for this was that a considerable part of the defence structure dealt with purely domestic concerns, such as the five bodies dealing with home defence.

Overseas policy had a far simpler structure. At the top were five ministerial committees, three of which had identically named parallel official committees. Also forming part of this group, but not linked in any hierarchical relationship to the other committees, were six official

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[1] CAB 129, C(58)147, 11 July 1958, p. 1.

[2] These were: Defence, Strategic Exports, Frequency, Joint Civil and Services Telecommunications, Oversea Defence, Oversea Defence Evacuation from Abroad Sub-Committee, Oversea Defence Stockpiling Working Party and Atomic Energy (official). Some time between August 1962 and January 1963 the CO also became a member of the Communications-Electronics Committee. See PRO, CAB 161/15. The CO may also have been, and probably was, a member of the Evacuation from Abroad Working Party and the Oversea Defence Working Party. However, no papers are open for the former and the only file open for the latter, PRO, CAB 134/2312 gives no indication of membership.

committees. The CO was a member of all fifteen committees; every aspect of overseas policy was held to have significance for colonial policy, and equally colonial policy was felt to be strongly connected with all other aspects of overseas policy. In consequence, the CO had the potential to influence overseas policy, but at the same time its activities could be constrained by the concerns of the other departments that were interested in external policy.

Although the system was constantly changing, the diagram does provide a representative snapshot of the committee structure. Mostly any changes, such as when the Oversea Policy Committee was created and took over the functions of the CPC, were not major structural ones. One major structural change did occur, however, when both the Oversea Policy and Defence Committees were abolished and replaced by just one body, the DOPC.[1] This was the first time that both those policy areas were dealt with by the same substructure and was a change which reflected Britain's altered position and demonstrated, even if only tacitly, an acknowledgement of Britain's reduced international stature.[2]

II. COLONIAL POLICY AND EXTERNAL POLICY STUDIES

Although future policy was, of course, discussed in the Cabinet and its committees, it was not until 1956, when the Policy Review Committee was established, that this topic was dealt with on a more methodical basis by the committee system. The origins of this committee seem to lie in a memorandum sent by Macmillan, then Minister of Defence, and Sir Walter Monckton, Minister of Labour and National Service, to Eden, suggesting that there should be a 'reappraisal at the highest level of the whole basis on which our defence policy should rest'.[3] The review which ensued studied changes in domestic and foreign policy and the defence programme, taking into account Britain's economic and financial circumstances.[4] Although the CO was not a member of the committee itself, it was a member of three of the *ad hoc*

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[1] Both committees were dissolved on 2 October 1963. See PRO, CAB 131/28, D(63)32, 2 October 1963, p. 1 and PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)18, 2 October 1963, p. 1.

[2] The White Paper on this change said that major questions of defence policy could not be discussed in purely military terms, and needed to be examined in relation to foreign and economic policy. See F. M. G. Willson, 'The Organization of British Central Government: January 1962-October 1964', *Public Administration*, Vol. 44, Spring 1966, p. 93.

[3] CAB 134/1315, PR(56)2, 20 March 1956, in D. Goldsworthy, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire, 1951-1957*, Part I, *International Relations* (1994), p. 60.

[4] CAB 134/1315, PR(56)1, 4 June 1956, in *ibid.*, p. 61. This memorandum, by Norman Brook, also stated that the review was to be undertaken because of recent changes in the international situation, in particular changes in the methods, if not the objectives, of the USSR.

committees established to examine particular topics on behalf of the committee, and so had a chance to contribute to the development of policy.

The *ad hoc* Eastern Asia Committee's task was to explore non-military ways of counteracting communism and increasing British influence in this area.[1] The CO used its membership of this committee to push colonial interests. For example, when the committee discussed a CO note on the financial situation and needs of colonies in East Asia, the CO representative pointed out the impact that reductions in colonial expenditure were having, and took care to relate this to broader concerns by pointing out that communists were making political capital out of the housing shortage in Hong Kong.[2] The imprint of the CO lay on a suggestion in the draft report that the physical and social development of Hong Kong, North Borneo and Sarawak would directly promote Britain's aims in this area.[3] This study was, in a narrow sense, a success from the CO's point of view because the committee's final report emphatically stated that much needed to be done to improve the security and welfare of the colonies in this area, and that any reduction in British military strength there would make it all the more necessary to increase Britain's information and cultural activities in the region. The report also recommended that the Policy Review committee should approve the general line of additional expenditure outlined in the report.[4] There was, however, an important omission in the work of this committee, because at no stage were the ramifications of colonial constitutional development for external policy considered.

The CO also used its membership of the *ad hoc* Middle East Policy Committee to promote colonial concerns. This committee's discussions were of a broader nature than those of the Eastern Asia Committee. The main reason for this was that these committees interpreted their terms of reference in different ways. The Eastern Asia Committee interpreted them strictly, whereas the Middle East Policy Committee took a more liberal approach to its remit which was:

> To examine the political, economic and information measures for the maintenance and promotion of United Kingdom interests in the Middle East, and to report to the Policy Review Committee through the Foreign Secretary.[5]

In preliminary discussions, the committee decided that although it was not directly concerned with military expenditure, defence policy had a bearing on what sort of non-military

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/118, GEN 538/1st, 3 July 1956, p. 1. Although the members of this committee were all officials, its chairman was a minister, Lord Reading, Minister of State at the FO.

[2] PRO, CAB 130/118, GEN 538/2nd, 6 July 1956, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 130/118, GEN 538/9, 11 July 1956, p. 7.

[4] PRO, CAB 130/118, GEN 538/10(Final), 13 July 1956, pp. 3-5.

[5] PRO, CAB 130/119, GEN 540/1, 5 July 1956, p. 1. This committee was also chaired by a minister, A. D. Dodds Parker, the Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Its members were officials from the Treasury, CO, FO and the Ministry of Defence.

measures would be needed, and therefore the MoD was asked to keep the committee informed of the review of military commitments. Such a flexible approach made it more likely that a committee could contribute to the coordination of policy; in contrast, the Eastern Asia Committee did not deal with strategic considerations and their impact on non-military expenditure because its chairman accepted its remit at face value. Significantly, for the amount of attention that would be paid to colonial affairs, the Middle East Committee agreed that the territories it would deal with would include Somalia. The degree of interlinking in the committee system is shown by the point made in discussion that a working party had already been set up under the official Middle East Committee to prepare proposals to strengthen Britain's position in the Middle East, and that these proposals should be incorporated into the report of this committee. Furthermore, although a committee had already been established to examine overseas broadcasting expenditure, this committee decided that it should deal with the question of improved broadcasting to the Middle East in its report.[1] All this suggests some problems with the management of the system, leading to a needless duplication of work. Another shortcoming was that a comprehensive study was not carried out because the committee was unwilling to discuss the counterbalancing of reductions in military expenditure by further non-military expenditure, on the grounds that this was a job for the Policy Review Committee.[2]

As it did in the Eastern Asia Committee, the CO pushed colonial interests. During a discussion of the committee's draft report, the point was made that in British Somaliland and the Aden Protectorate, the rate of development was less than was politically desirable because the local administrations were too small to carry out larger programmes, and therefore more money for administration should be provided. The Committee agreed that this point should be made in the final report. At the end of the discussion the CO and the Ministry of Fuel and Power representatives were asked to get their ministers' approval for the proposals because these ministers were not members of the Policy Review Committee.[3] This convention meant that the committee system could help ministers to monitor matters affecting their departments, even if they were not members of the particular committees whose discussions impinged on their departmental interests.

The final report of the committee stated that Britain should make clear its intention to maintain and secure its position in the British and British protected territories in the region. The relationship between colonial policy and broader concerns, and the fact that colonial matters

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/119, GEN 540/1st, 6 July 1956, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 130/119, GEN 540/2nd, 13 July 1956, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 130/119, GEN 540/3rd, 18 July 1956, pp. 1-2.

could not be dealt with in isolation, is underlined by the observation that coordination between the FO and CO would be important in order to keep developments in the Gulf States in step with those in the colonies. The report also said that economic aid should be provided to assist the development of British colonies and protectorates, especially the Aden Protectorate and Somaliland, and repeated the CO's point about local administrations.[1]

An earlier report by this committee touched on what was to be a regularly debated issue over the next eight years: whether guaranteeing oil supplies was something that could now be better achieved by securing the friendship and cooperation of the producing and transit countries, which could be achieved by ensuring their external defence and providing economic and technical assistance, rather than by deploying physical strength. However, there seems to have been a mental block which prevented this line of thought being properly followed up, because the report then went on to stress that there could be no question of reducing the size of the British force in the Persian Gulf, although commitments in the Middle East should be reviewed.[2] It is difficult to see how an outright rejection of any alteration in the size of British forces could justify a review of commitments. Furthermore, the unspoken logic of this report seems to require an overall increase in funding, rather than simply a reallocation of funding. The committee's report seems unhelpful, given the concern expressed by Macmillan and Monckton in their memorandum to Eden that 'we are placing so heavy a burden on our economy that defence may well be a cause of weakness rather than of strength'.[3]

Suez saw an abrupt cessation of the discussions on transferring resources from military to non-military measures in the Middle East. However, further consideration of Eastern Asia took place because ministers felt that the balance there between the two types of expenditure (£51 million military expenditure and £9.5 million non-military expenditure for the current year) was inconsistent with the present assessment that the threat there was political and not military. The Policy Review Committee established the Working Party on Expenditure in Eastern Asia, chaired by the ubiquitous Brook, to produce a report on how 'within the net reduction in total expenditure which ministers wanted to achieve, adjustments might be made in the balance of expenditure in Eastern Asia'. This work needed to be done because although the Eastern Asia Committee had proposed increases in non-military spending, the question of whether any savings could be made in military expenditure had been considered separately.[4] Most of the discussions covered minor matters, such as the teaching of English in the colonies, but as far as

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/119, GEN 540/3(Final), 18 July 1956, p. 2.
[2] PRO, CAB 130/119, GEN 540/2, 5 July 1956, p. 1.
[3] CAB 134/1315, PR(56)2, 20 March 1956, in Goldsworthy, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire*, Part I, p. 60.
[4] PRO, CAB 130/121, GEN 557/1st, 26 October 1956, pp. 1-2.

the general issue of the balance of expenditure was concerned, the CO felt that that development and other colonial needs were more pressing in other areas. The CO representative argued that expenditure in Eastern Asia should not be considered in isolation because any savings made in military expenditure there might be better used to increase non-military expenditure in other regions. After some discussion the committee agreed that the claims for extra expenditure from other areas would need to be taken into consideration.[1] Clearly, the CO was determined to use the system to ensure that any savings on military expenditure were targeted as effectively as possible.

The fact that the CO was not a member of the Policy Review Committee suggests a flaw in the system and that such faults could in a sense be self-replicating; the CO was not represented on this committee because the ever closer connection between colonial matters and broader external policy matters was not yet fully recognised, and because it was not a member it had no way of getting this connection recognized - assuming that the CO was itself aware of the link and wanted it recognized. Thus the very nature of the system, in particular its hierarchical aspect and the hiving off of very narrow aspects of questions to specialist committees, could have important implications for policy development. As far as the impact of the work of the Policy Review Committee is concerned, its affect on colonial policy appears to have been negligible, not least because Africa does not seem to have been covered by the review, indicating a lack of awareness of the impact constitutional development could have on strategic concerns.

The most extensive external policy review was the one established in 1959. It had, however, been preceded by an abortive study initiated at the end of 1957 when an official committee chaired by Brook, Future Policy, was established. Macmillan obviously felt the need for a major reappraisal of policy early on in his premiership - which suggests the Policy Review Committee achieved little - and asked officials to investigate Britain's position in world affairs with a 'view to ensuring that the best use was made of available resources, both military and economic, in the light of a reassessment of our essential interests'. One of the tasks of this study was to define Britain's principal aims in the world, and how they would be affected by the reduction in military strength planned to take effect by 1962. This seems a curious way to plan and shows a lack of coordination between defence policy and foreign policy. Rather than the Sandys doctrine being based on a changed conception of Britain's global aims, defence policy was actually changed before those aims had been reconsidered. This back to front approach

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/121, GEN 557/2nd, 7 December 1956, p. 3. The committee's report stated that any extra money for colonies in Eastern Asia should be weighed against the developments needs of colonies elsewhere, which for economic reasons had better claims to such help. See PRO, CAB 130/121, GEN 557/4(Second Revise), 30 January 1957, p. 5.

suggests that the Sandys doctrine was more about financial expediency than anything else; nuclear weapons seemed to provide a convenient answer to the problem of the imbalance between Britain's resources and commitments. The other element of the study was an examination of how Britain's resources could be redeployed, including how they should be allocated between domestic consumption and supporting overseas interests.[1]

The first part of the study involved a joint review by the FO, CRO and CO of British aims region by region, and the resources available to meet them. Importantly, the basis of this work was to be the recent studies made of future colonial constitutional development.[2] It therefore appeared that in contrast to the earlier review, the links between colonial policy and broader policy were fully recognized, and the increasingly intertwined nature of all aspects of external policy explicitly acknowledged.

In discussions, however, little attention was in fact paid to the colonies. The debate centred on, as it would continue to do for many years, whether Britain had any alternative to remaining a power with global interests and the ability to defend those interests. Significantly, even after Suez there was no suggestion made that Britain no longer had that ability. A picture starts to emerge of an unwillingness or inability to recognize decline and its implications. However, it was tentatively proposed that an examination should be made of the assumption that Britain had no alternative but to remain a power with global interest and the ability to defend and promote them, and that it should be considered whether it would be better to maintain British influence by increasing economic strength rather than by maintaining a global military presence.[3]

Even though a number of colonies had already been scheduled to become independent in the next few years, the implications of this for external policy do not seem to have been considered, and so the CO seems to have been able to go ahead with various colonial constitutional developments, unhindered by other departments' concerns about how such developments could affect their own interests. This suggests that the committee system was not contributing to the coordination of policy. It also suggests that the CO, presumably to keep what autonomy it enjoyed, did not want to draw attention to the links between colonial and broader concerns. Interestingly, given that one of the underlying concerns in both this review and its predecessor was the damage excessive overseas expenditure was doing to Britain's economy, any suggestion of reducing colonial commitments was quickly shrugged off. Although it was admitted that the likes of British Honduras had no economic or strategic value, it was argued

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/139, GEN 624/1st, 6 December 1957, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] PRO, CAB 130/139, GEN 624/2nd, 4 February 1958, p. 1.

that British withdrawal would lead to a vacuum, and create a feeling of instability in other colonies.[1] The logic of this would seem to be that there could be no question of Britain giving up any colonies whatsoever; yet Britain was already planning to do so. This suggests that the committee system was not succeeding in pulling the various strands of policy into anything approaching a coherent whole. Further evidence for this is that although the committee later agreed that their report should emphasize the importance of the Commonwealth in maintaining Britain's world position, no reference was made to the impact of colonial constitutional development on Commonwealth cohesion and strength.[2]

There was another tentative attempt to question standard assumptions during a discussion of a draft outline report to ministers, when it was suggested that this document took for granted that Britain should maintain its present position in world affairs, without considering if doing so was a necessary precondition for Britain's prosperity.[3] This suggests that some members of the committee were frustrated by what they saw as a failure to question standard assumptions. The response, however, was that Britain could not cut itself off from the Commonwealth, or abandon its interdependent relationship with the US, and still expect to maintain its worldwide trading position and the international status of sterling.[4] This type of attitude made new thinking impossible; strategic matters were seen to be so important to Britain's economic position by this logic that any reconsideration of the former was quickly ruled out, even though overseas expenditure was damaging the economy. The discussion thus reflected the general and continuing problem that two mutually contradictory positions were being held.

The general impression given by this study is of officials gingerly edging their way round standard policy assumptions, for the most part reluctant to question them. The tough, uninhibited analysis that a thorough and meaningful policy review needed was lacking, and as a result the committee system was not really providing the sort of ground-clearing work that it should have done, in that it was not clarifying matters or providing ministers with a full list of policy alternatives. More importantly, there seems a general unwillingness to face up to how Suez might have changed Britain's position. Certain assumptions were repeated, as if it was thought that if they were stated often enough then they must be true. For example, at the committee's next meeting the value of the Commonwealth was again emphasized when it was

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/139, GEN 624/2nd, 4 February 1958, p. 3. For an example of the arguments about the dangers of having too many commitments see CAB 134/1315, PR(56)3, 1 June 1956, in Goldsworthy, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire*, Part I, p. 61.

[2] PRO, CAB 130/139, GEN 624/4th, 3 March 1958, p. 1.

[3] Another radical suggestion was that Britain's military commitments in Cyprus, Hong Kong and Singapore might not be strategically worthwhile, and therefore an examination should be made of whether these commitments were justified on any other grounds, such as prestige, or trade. See PRO, CAB 130/139, GEN 624/3rd, 18 February 1958, p. 3.

[4] PRO, CAB 130/139, GEN 624/3rd, 18 February 1958, p. 1.

stated that without it Britain's position in the world could not be maintained, and that as long as the Commonwealth connection existed Britain would remain indispensable to the US.[1]

Membership of the study group enabled the CO to highlight the colonies continuing need for money to fund their economic development. The group's report stated that the main requirement of the colonies was more loan finance for development, that the London market could not provide sufficient capital, and that there was no doubt that Britain was not providing sufficient funding for some of the poorer colonies. The report also pointed out that Britain had an economic interest in the continued stability and development of the colonies, a political interest in their constitutional development within the Commonwealth and a strategic interest in maintaining bases and staging rights, particularly in the African colonies.[2] However, no consideration seems to have been given to whether there was a potential conflict between colonial constitutional development and Britain's continued need for bases in the colonies. Again there was a failure to coordinate policy.

The CO would have been pleased with the conclusion in the report that it would be wrong to give overseas, Commonwealth and colonial commitments less priority than they currently had, and that what was actually needed was to give these commitments higher priority.[3] This conclusion suggests, however, that certain committees were incapable of taking a fresh look at a matter because its members wanted to protect the vested interest of their departments. The fact that departments made use of the committee system to promote their own interests could undermine its value. In essence the CO succeeded, and the tone of the report suggests that so did the other overseas departments, in hijacking the committee for its own purposes, but its success in doing so was one reason why the committee failed in its stated objective. Protecting and promoting departmental interest inevitably constrained the nature of the discussions and meant that a full range of policy alternatives was not given to ministers, even though this was clearly what Macmillan wanted.

The report was discussed by ministers at the one and only meeting of an *ad hoc* committee convened for this purpose.[4] This committee showed an equal inability to break with standard ideas. In discussion of the report's suggestion that there should be some immediate but limited expenditure in support of overseas policy, there was general agreement that this would be justified by the need to safeguard any large British financial interests, especially those in the

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/139, GEN 624/4th, 3 March 1958, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 130/139, GEN 624/10 (unnumbered and undated), p. 2.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 5 and p. 7.
[4] This committee was called the Position of the United Kingdom in World Affairs. Macmillan was its chairman and its members were the Home Secretary, Chancellor, Foreign Secretary, Commonwealth Relations Secretary, Defence Secretary and Colonial Secretary. Norman Brook and Sir Frederick Hoyer Millar of the FO were 'also in attendance'.

Middle East. Macmillan was in the chair and, given his previously voiced concerns, it is surprising that he did not contest the recommendations by officials that a degree of extra expenditure on overseas policy was needed, and that in any redistribution of total national resources civil expenditure at home should be reduced, rather than overseas and defence expenditure. The Chancellor, Derick Heathcoat Amory, provided the only dissenting voice when he pointed out that there was a steady increase in Britain's financial commitments, that total government expenditure would need to be reduced if tax reductions were to be possible, and that Britain was trying to do too much in too many directions.[1]

The only other named contribution to the discussion was from Lennox-Boyd, who drew attention to the dangers of premature withdrawal from the colonies, and said he would be examining separately with the Chancellor their need for special sources of loan finance. The committee did not discuss the latter issue - it seems pointless then for the official committee to have spent time on it - and simply noted that the Chancellor and the Colonial Secretary would discuss this matter.[2]

The committee did not really seem to reach any firm conclusions at all, and as a result it is difficult to see what the report of the official committee, and the ministerial discussion of it, contributed to policy development. To this extent the committee system could be little more than a time-wasting talking shop, involving no more than the restating of views and positions that were already known. As far as the broader strategic picture was concerned, all the committee did was to invite the Chancellor to examine the possibility of making savings in civil expenditure in the longer-term, and to consider the extent to which such savings would reinforce Britain's external financial position.[3] There seems to have been a general reluctance to face up to the problem of the imbalance between commitments and resources. Overall, the study looked like a positive result for the CO, but on a broader level it was a failure because there was no study made of the impact of colonial constitutional development on defence and external policy concerns. In many ways this seems the most serious and inexplicable failure of all. As a whole the study was a damp squib, which did little more than give lukewarm support to the status quo.

Policy reviews were not only carried out by committees established specifically for that purpose. The official Africa Committee carried out a study entitled 'The Next Ten Years in Africa' because it was felt that Africa was likely to be the next target of Soviet pressure, and

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/153, GEN 659/1st, 7 June 1958, pp. 1-2. Extra overseas expenditure was thought to be necessary in order to allow greater tactical flexibility and more funding for development, technical assistance, and information and cultural activities. Presumably this reflects the changed nature of the threat from the USSR now that nuclear weaponry was felt to have ruled out any all-out war.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

that it was therefore necessary to clarify Britain's interests in the continent and decide how they could best be defended. It was hoped that such a study would help departments to formulate policies in the context of a comprehensive policy for Africa, which suggests some awareness that there were shortcomings in policy coordination.[1]

Although much of this committee's discussions concerned economic matters - particularly the issue of funding for colonial economic development - and the likely course of constitutional development, there was also some discussion of the impact of colonial constitutional development on defence concerns, and of the general strategic significance of Africa. In defence terms, the main importance of Africa was the need to have a strategic reserve in Kenya and overflying and air-staging rights in various territories, so that Britain could safeguard its interest in the Middle East, especially its oil supplies. The committee's discussions on oil were, however, constrained by the fact that ministers were currently discussing the question of the extent to which Britain would in the long-term be prepared to use force to safeguard those supplies. As a result the committee could not fully investigate a matter that was relevant to its task. But the committee did not seem at all anxious to consider if there was a way around this, and whether it was possible to give some consideration to this matter. There seems to have been a reluctance to re-examine the basic assumptions underlying policy. The only comment on this issue was made by the MoD representative who felt that provided Aden was available, Britain could meet its requirements in the Persian Gulf and safeguard its interests in the Far East by other means, although it would be very expensive to do so.[2]

At a later meeting it was pointed out that the committee could only proceed with its study within the framework of Britain's current policies in the Persian Gulf and South-East Asia, and the need for defence facilities in Africa produced by these policies, and therefore all the committee could do was point to the consequences which could be produced by these policies.[3] Clearly there was a strong link between colonial policy and defence policy when it would appear that the most important factor in African policy was Britain's interests in the Gulf. However, the logical conclusion of this, that Britain's colonial policy in Africa should be determined by its strategic concerns in the Middle East, was not acknowledged, and so the committee failed in its stated aim of coming up with a comprehensive background policy for Africa, against which departments could develop their own specific policies. The committee also demonstrated the existence of bureaucratic inertia in that it made no allowances for the possibility of change, whether in British policy or in the global situation. Operating only within

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)1st, 14 January 1959, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4. The minutes do not record what these other means were.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)8th, 7 April 1959, p. 3.

the framework of current policy meant that there was a danger of the study being self-limiting and uninnovative.

On occasions there was explicit acknowledgement of the link between colonial policy and defence concerns, such as during a discussion of colonial constitutional development, when the point was made that any premature withdrawal from East Africa would produce a vacuum into which anti-Western influences might move.[1] This worry was not limited to East Africa because in a discussion about Sierra Leone, a colony which was considered to be of limited strategic importance, it was suggested that it might be the next target for Soviet penetration.[2]

Some committee members felt that too much prominence was being given to defence interests, and that more emphasis needed to be laid on the importance of ensuring that African countries were stable, free from external interference and friendly, or at least neutral, towards the Western world. Presumably the CO was worried that it would lose control over developments in the colonies if defence concerns were given too high a profile and became the determining factor in African policy, hence the remark that it should be recognized that the adoption of certain policies by Britain could produce outcomes which would be more detrimental to Britain's interests than giving up its defence facilities in Africa.[3] Other members of the committee were anxious to counter such suggestions, and at a later meeting it was argued that although keeping a strategic reserve in Kenya might give rise to political difficulties there, these would be countered to an extent by the economic benefits Kenya received from the military presence, and this should be mentioned in the report.[4]

The final report reflected most of the concerns expressed in the discussions. The worry about Soviet pressure was a concern that was advantageous to the CO because the report stressed that if newly emerging states were not given sufficient economic assistance, there was a danger that they might turn to the USSR for help. This worry was also why the report emphasized that it was essential that there should be no premature removal of British authority; the internal chaos which would result from this would leave the territories concerned vulnerable to 'the hostile external forces which are now trying to penetrate the continent'.[5]

The report emphasized that Britain's global strategy required the ability to use armed force in Arabia and the Persian Gulf, which 'given present logistic possibilities' meant keeping an element of the strategic reserve in Kenya and retaining the naval facilities at Mombassa. In addition, the Middle East air barrier meant that various overflying and air-staging rights were

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)1st, 14 January 1959, p. 3.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)5th, 20 February 1959, p. 6.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)8th, 7 April 1959, p. 3.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)12th, 8 May 1959, p. 1.
[5] PRO CAB 134/1355, AF(59)28(Final), 3 June 1959, p. 29 and p. 22.

needed in Africa so that reinforcements could be sent to South-East Asia. This all suggests a reliance on air power which could reduce the CO's freedom of action because certain territories would be of greater general concern than would otherwise be the case. However, the report also added that the aims of goodwill, commercial and economic security, and the exclusion of Soviet influence might more likely be achieved if Britain did not demand or use certain defence facilities in African territories, and found another way of meeting its defence needs.[1] Unfortunately the report was unable to suggest how this could be done. This last suggestion seems no more than a token attempt to come up with a policy option, rather than a serious reconsideration of policy.

Brook wrote to Macmillan the following year, saying that the review had not led to any radical reassessment of external policy, partly because the report was not as good as it might have been, and suggested that a fresh study should be made. Yet again Brook was the one taking the initiative in reviewing external policy. He clearly took a close interest in this area and was an influential figure who was behind many of the initiatives supposedly taken by Macmillan. Macmillan had, in any case, felt that 1958 was not a good year to take any far-reaching decisions but, as Brook reminded him, had felt that a new government should be in a position to take such decisions in 1959.[2] This suggests that Macmillan was unwilling to take any radical action, especially on such matters as external policy, including colonial policy, until he had won an election victory. Macmillan obviously agreed with Brook's suggestion because during a meeting at Chequers in June 1959 he said that after the General Election he wanted the ministers of the new administration to have 'an up-to-date and comprehensive forecast of the main economic, diplomatic and military developments in world affairs over the next decade', and an analysis of how policy could be adapted to enable Britain to play a significant role in world affairs, and added that Britain's aims should be commensurate with its resources, of which the best use had to be made. [3]

An annex to the minutes of this meeting stated that the main trends of development in the Far East, the Middle East and Africa should be examined, including what changes could be foreseen in the cohesion of the Commonwealth, and that in the light of all this an examination should be made of what policy objectives should be, including colonial policy. In particular, the study should consider the extent to which Britain should reassess its essential interests in those areas, how they should be maintained and - a point which earlier studies did not address - how

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[1] PRO CAB 134/1355, AF(59)28(Final), 3 June 1959, p. 21.
[2] PRO, CAB 21/3840, Brook to Macmillan, 20 February 1959.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1929, record of a meeting at Chequers on 7 June 1959. The meeting was attended by Brook, various other officials, and senior members of the Air, Naval, Defence and Imperial General Staffs.

far Britain could rely on conventional bases, and whether they could be replaced by other means.[1] This all seemed to signal an intention to make a robust examination of standard assumptions and policy.

The review which was established, 'Study of Future Policy for 1960-1970', involved a ministerial committee, an official steering committee (chaired by Brook) and an official working group (also chaired by Brook). One reason why Brook felt that a wide-ranging examination of future policy was needed was because in 1958 when ministers had examined the major issues of strategic policy created by the nuclear deterrent, they had been unable to make a final decision on many of these. Brook also felt that because fundamental questions needed to be asked which went beyond the area of responsibility of the CoS, the CoS should not be asked to reassess the report they had produced in 1952 on global strategy.[2]

The problem with such studies, and in many ways with the committee system itself, was, as has been seen, that departments sometimes did little more than defend their own interests, which made fresh thinking impossible. Some officials were, however, aware of this problem. At the first meeting of the Working Group the chairman, Sir Patrick Dean of the FO, standing in for Brook, pointed out to its members that although they represented their departments, they had been selected as individuals to take part in work which would go beyond the limit of immediate departmental policy. Hence, it was hoped, 'they would be able to think ahead and...would not be too closely bound to current doctrine on present problems'.[3]

One discussion of the Future Policy Steering Group began with the complacent assertion that 'with hard work, skill and ingenuity the United Kingdom should be able to maintain an influence in world affairs greater than that arising from material factors alone', a statement that suggests the chances of a realistic study being made were low.[4] The fact that British Honduras and British Guiana had no economic value was mentioned.[5] But an earlier study had also noted this and had nevertheless concluded that Britain could not withdraw.[6] To some extent, therefore, policy discussions which were intended to establish a new direction ended up going round in circles. The committee decided that the report should show that the Commonwealth would lose some of its military value as its colonial character lessened.[7] This was a significant conclusion,

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1929, Annex A, undated, p. 2.
[2] PRO, CAB 21/3840, Brook to Macmillan, 20 February 1959, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 21/3840, FP(B)(59)1st, 24 June 1959, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1930, FP(A)(59)2nd, 20 October 1959, p. 1.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1930, FP(A)(59)3rd, 27 October 1959, p. 2. The committee did suggest, however, that the possibility of getting these territories to join the West Indies Federation might be discussed.
[6] PRO, CAB 130/139, GEN 624/2nd, 4 February 1958, p. 3.
[7] PRO, CAB 134/1930, FP(A)(59)2nd, 20 October 1959, p. 2.

and if no notice was taken of it there was a danger that Britain would be relying on a prop which part of the government itself had identified as being of decreasing value.

One of the closest links between colonial issues and broader policy was the question of overseas bases, and obviously a global strategy which relied on the use of such bases needed to take colonial constitutional development into account. In 1961 Macmillan suggested that the bases could be divided into two categories: those which could be used unrestrictedly for any purpose, and those where freedom of action could be hampered by 'local susceptibilities'. Gibraltar, Malta and Singapore fell into the first group, as did Aden, but only until about 1970; Kenya, up to independence, and Cyprus, were in the second group. The case of Singapore was complicated by the possibility that it might become part of a Greater Malaysia, and Hong Kong was regarded as a doubtful case.[1] As far as the Kenya base was concerned, it was only now, very late in the day, that it was proposed that capital expenditure on it should be restricted to the minimum possible.[2]

Unlike the 1956 study, some attention was paid to Africa because the continent had moved up the political agenda. The main concerns were the problems that could arise with African nationalists in Central and East Africa because of the time it would need for multiracial societies to develop, and what defence rights and facilities were likely to remain over the next decade.[3] It was also pointed out, in one of the few mentions of America during a committee discussion of colonial policy, that Africa had implications for the special relationship because of the possibility that Britain's handling of African problems could revive US anti-colonialism.[4]

One indication of the slightly ramshackle nature of the committee system was that the Future Policy Steering Committee outlived the study itself; it met in 1962 to discuss a report prepared by the CoS on British strategy in the 1960s.[5] This discussion showed that the question of what British strategy should be was still undecided. For example, the possibility of moving to a mobile strategy based on naval and air support was dismissed as being too expensive, and it was suggested that Britain might simply have to accept that the loss of bases in certain areas would involve a loss of influence there, and that as a result Britain might become a European rather than a major world power.[6] This all seems a more realistic assessment of what Britain could actually afford to do, what the implications of savings in overseas defence expenditure

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1929, FP(61)1st, 6 October 1961, pp. 2-3.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1929, FP(61)2nd, 10 October 1961, p. 2.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1930, FP(A)(59)3rd, 27 October 1959, p. 2.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1930, FP(A)(59)4th, 13 November 1959, p. 1.
[5] Brook chaired this meeting which was attended by officials from various departments, including the overseas ones, the MoD and the Treasury, and senior defence staff, including the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the First Sea Lord.
[6] PRO, CAB 134/1933, FP(A)(62)1st, 4 January 1962, pp. 1-2.

would entail and what the implications of decolonisation could be for Britain's standing as a power. It also contrasts greatly to the complacent statements made at the start of the study about Britain's ability to remain a major world power.[1] However, this assessment does not appear to have influenced thinking because there seems to have been a reluctance to face up to statements that involved a recognition of British decline: they were not refuted, they were just ignored.

One aspect of the connection between defence and colonial policies was highlighted by Lord Mountbatten, the Chief of the Defence Staff, who pointed out that for political reasons economic aid would be required for certain territories in which defence expenditure was to be reduced. His reason for making this point was his concern that such aid should not come out of the defence budget. Clearly, this study had failed, as all the others had, to deal with the resource/commitments equation, because Mountbatten argued that the savings which would result from the revised strategy would not meet the full reduction being asked for, and that it would not be possible to make any further reductions unless the armed services were relieved of part of their commitments.[2]

Yet again the establishment of another body suggested that its predecessor had failed. In 1962 a new group, the Future Policy Working Group, was set up and given the task of reviewing certain aspects of Britain's present and future external policy, and was asked to report its findings to Brook.[3] The chairman interpreted its remit as meaning that the committee should, in broad terms, make recommendations on how Britain should make better use of its limited influence, limited because of political factors and the level of economic resources that could be spent on the means of influence.[4] All this was in effect what the Study of Future Policy should have achieved.[5] Little that was said was new, and there were few mentions of colonial policy. Both these facts suggest either bureaucratic inertia or an inability to grapple with core issues. The discussions showed little awareness of the fact that an increasing number of colonies were becoming independent, or were due to become independent, with consequences for the value of the Commonwealth. Perhaps the problem was that if there was a misunderstanding about

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[1] See for example PRO, CAB 134/1936, FP(B)(59)46, 15 December 1959, p. 1. It was confidently asserted in this memorandum that Britain still had the capacity to play a worldwide role if it devoted its efforts and resources to that purpose.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1933, FP(A)(62)1st, 4 January 1962, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 130/188, GEN 774/1, 5 October 1962, p. 1.

[4] PRO, CAB 130/188, GEN 774/1st, 12 October 1962, p. 1. The chairman observed that to decide how Britain should best use its influence, the committee would need to decide the relative priorities of Britain's medium-term external policy objectives.

[5] One of the main tasks of the Study of Future Policy had been to examine how Britain could make the best use of the resources it devoted to its global role. See PRO, CAB 134/1929, record of a meeting at Chequers on 7 June 1959.

Britain's present position - exemplified by the suggestion that Britain could not *in future* have a largely independent overseas policy - then it was even more difficult to work out future policy.[1]

The few discussions that dealt with the colonies suggest that there was a growing frustration with having to take them into account in policy development; what had once been seen as an asset was increasingly being seen as a needless distraction, an unwanted burden that could not easily be shed. For example, Malta was seen as a territory to which Britain was obliged to give more aid than its needs required because of the historical base of British commitments to the island, and the Falkland Islands were regarded as a colonial entanglement that Britain could not escape from, even though retaining them might not be in Britain's interests.[2]

For an *ad hoc* committee this body was long-lived, perhaps due to the lack of urgency of its discussions, and it did not submit its report until June 1964. By that time discussions on the colonies reflected recent developments; practically the only mention of colonial matters was in connection with aid for colonies obtaining independence. It was agreed that Britain's responsibility for the colonies was a reason for giving greater help to them than to other backward countries, and that such aid could not end immediately on independence.[3] No mention was made of any strategic concerns or of the implication of colonial independence for Britain's international standing. The overall view regarding the colonies that emerged in the final report was that it had to be accepted that Britain's pattern of aid was determined by its colonial past, that the colonies needed further help after independence lest they descend into chaos, and that Britain's pattern of overseas aid was therefore inevitably not in line with the relative importance of its interests in the third world.[4]

This committee's discussions provide evidence that it repeated the mistakes of its predecessors; many standard assumptions were not challenged, the impact of colonial policy on broader concerns was not properly considered and radical ideas were not channelled upwards through the system. Overall this committee does not seem to have reached any conclusions that could not have been reached by earlier studies. As with the previous studies, the CO could be satisfied with the outcome, in this case over the question of development aid. However, for the government as a whole the situation was unsatisfactory; the remnants of responsibility for the colonies meant that Britain was not entirely free to choose how it could best use its economic resources to finance external policy.

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/188, GEN 774/1st, 12 October 1962, p. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, and PRO, CAB 130/188, GEN 774/6th, 29 May 1963, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 130/188, GEN 774/15th, 27 April 1964, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 130/188, GEN 774/21(Final), 2 June 1964, p. 10.

The final study of the period under investigation took place in 1964 when the official DOPC set up a Long-Term Study Group. This body's task was to consider Britain's interests and commitments in the Middle East, the Far East and Europe, how far Britain could continue to protect and maintain those interests and discharge its commitments, and how far present interests and commitments would have to be contracted or modified. As a starting point, it was assumed that by 1970 and 1975 respectively, Britain would no longer have use of the Aden or Singapore bases.[1] Apart from Aden, which will be dealt with later, Hong Kong was the only colony of which any significant mention was made, reflecting Britain's contracting colonial commitments. Concern was expressed that without the Singapore base, Hong Kong would be in greater danger of being taken over by the Chinese. The acerbic response of a MoD official to this was that losing the Singapore base would not 'make the defences of Hong Kong less credible, because they were already wholly incredible'.[2] The report of this body concluded that withdrawal from Singapore would not have any affect on Britain's military position in Hong Kong but could affect Britain's political position there because Hong Kong's confidence that Britain intended to stay there would be eroded, and this would encourage China to think that Hong Kong could be easily seized if desired. The general impact on the colonies would be that the speed with which reinforcements could be sent in an emergency would be reduced and this might encourage dissidents to create trouble.[3]

The few mentions of colonies in this last study contrasts with the numerous mentions of colonies in the earlier studies, and reflects the rapid discharge of Britain's colonial commitments which had taken place over the previous few years. This study also contrasts with earlier ones in its acknowledgement that Britain could not hope to remain indefinitely in its overseas bases, no matter how strategically important they were.

III. THE BRITISH CAMEROONS

The independence of Nigeria in October 1960 had implications for the British Cameroons. Up until this time both the Southern and the Northern Cameroons had been administered as part of the Federation of Nigeria, but its independence meant that the two protectorates had to be administered directly by Britain, until plebiscites were held to decide whether they would join Nigeria or merge with the Cameroun Republic. Between Nigeria

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[1] PRO, CAB 148/8, DO(O)(S)(64)1st, 8 June 1964, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 148/8, DO(O)(S)(64)7th, 31 August 1964, p. 2.
[3] PRO, CAB 148/7, DO(O)(64)70, 9 October 1964, p. 2.

gaining independence and the holding of the plebiscites there would be a gap of nine months. During this period it was feared that security problems would arise, because after independence Nigeria would not keep any of its troops in the Southern Cameroons, and because there would be an increasing flow of refugees seeking to escape from the political chaos of the Cameroun Republic. This problem was one that was discussed as much by the Cabinet as it was by its committees, a surprising fact given that in itself it did not appear to be that important an issue, and that the committee system was intended to filter out such minor matters before they reached Cabinet level.

When the Defence Committee dealt with this problem, the Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, the Earl of Perth, told ministers that this issue had been discussed by the CoS and by the departments concerned, and that he believed the only solution was to have a British battalion stationed there for the nine-month interim period. In response, it was pointed out that one battalion could not be effective in such a large area. After further discussion Macmillan, in the chair, said that British forces should not become tied up in a commitment of unknown size, and so the Nigerian government should be re-approached to see if it would take on the responsibility for security, and the UN should be asked again if it would allow the date of the plebiscite to be changed. In addition, however, the extra information that would be needed in case a battalion was sent should be obtained.[1] The issue was not discussed again by this committee. The next time the question of sending a battalion was discussed it was the CPC which dealt with this issue. This seems one of the problems in the system - that there was no consistency in what committees dealt with which types of issues. As a result committees did not always follow them up.

The following year the CPC was told that in the plebiscite the Northern Cameroons had voted to join Nigeria - which presented no problems for Britain - and the Southern Cameroons had voted to join the Cameroun Republic. This was a problem because the federal structure of the new Cameroon Republic had not yet been worked out, the country was not financially viable, and without the help of British officials the administration of both countries would collapse. In contrast to other cases, the Treasury seemed relatively understanding, and agreed that financial help should continue, not only until the end of trusteeship but also for some time afterwards, although American, UN and French help should also be sought. Macmillan finished the discussion by asking Macleod to report on the matter to the Cabinet at an appropriate stage.[2]

A few weeks later Macleod briefed the Cabinet on developments. He told ministers that it would be best if the transfer of the Southern Cameroons could be completed as quickly as

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[1] PRO, CAB 131/23, D(60)4th, 13 April 1960, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)3rd, 2 March 1961, pp. 1-2.

possible, but that great care would be needed to avoid a breakdown of administration which could lead to a Congo-type situation. The Cabinet asked Macleod to consult with the Secretary of State for War and bring before the Defence Committee proposals for reducing Britain's military commitment in the Cameroons.[1]

The CPC dealt with the question of whether the British battalion, which had been stationed there for the interim period, should remain after the Southern Cameroons merged with the Cameroun Republic. Macleod argued that the security situation would probably deteriorate if these troops were withdrawn. He suggested that to prevent this happening a local *gendarmerie* should be established and a substantial number of British troops should be retained for security duties. However, the committee only agreed to the first suggestion because the government was anxious to avoid being drawn into an open-ended commitment.[2]

Further discussion of the problem took place in June when Macleod proposed that the government should speed-up the training and increase the size of the *gendarmerie*, and should consider mounting an operation against terrorists before the ending of trusteeship and retaining a battalion afterwards. In addition, he told ministers it was vital that British officials should remain for the first two years after independence in order to avoid an administrative breakdown, and therefore an aid mission, costing £500,000 per year, should be set up. It was suggested that unless these actions were taken there was a real danger that the Cameroons would become a communist dominated state, a development which would threaten not only Nigeria, but also Britain's future interests in West and Central Africa. Other ministers argued that the suggested measures would cause financial and manpower difficulties. Macmillan's view was that there were less political objections to the proposals than had been thought, mainly because the Southern Cameroons and Cameroun Republic governments wanted the forces to stay, but that they required further study because of the military and financial strains they could produce.[3]

At its next meeting the CPC discussed reports by the CoS and the official Africa Committee. Macleod repeated his arguments, and in response the Secretary of State for War, John Profumo, said it would not be possible to reinforce the troops in the Southern Cameroons if the situation worsened because it had been agreed to deploy an extra battalion in Kenya. In effect, the overstretch of military resources was such that Macleod was being asked to choose which colony was the most important. Another minister warned that if a battalion was left behind, it could be sucked into a commitment that could increase in size and duration, and British investment in the Southern Cameroons was not large enough to justify such a

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[1] CAB 128, CC(61)15th, 21 March 1961, pp. 5-6. No record of a discussion of the Cameroons can be found in the Defence Committee minutes of 1961.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)6th, 16 May 1961, pp. 3-4.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)7th, 2 June 1961, pp. 1-2.

commitment. Ostensibly summing up, although in fact making new proposals, Macmillan suggested that there were two alternatives. Firstly, to withdraw the battalion, but offer the Southern Cameroons financial aid to help it overcome its initial budget deficit. Secondly, to agree to leave a battalion for a strictly limited period, such as six months, on condition that the Southern Cameroons and Cameroun Republic governments took on, with French backing, responsibility for setting up the *gendarmerie*. In addition Britain should send an aid mission for the same limited period. Macmillan said he would circulate a paper on this to the Cabinet so that it could decide which alternative was best.[1] This shows the extent of Macmillan's concern with this problem because normally Macleod would have been asked to circulate such a memorandum. Colonial matters were clearly of considerable concern to Macmillan when they had wider significance.

One reason that this issue was referred to the Cabinet was to bring the Chancellor into the discussions; the only Treasury representative at the above meeting was an official, Burke Trend. However, although the Cabinet had to decide the issue, as a result of the CPC's discussions the parameters of the debate had been pre-set by Macmillan, which shows that he would, when necessary, use committees as a way of controlling Cabinet discussions.

This problem was also discussed by the official Africa Committee. It had been asked by the CPC to prepare a memorandum on the political and economic implications of keeping British troops in the Southern Cameroons and sending an aid mission. In discussion it was pointed out that after independence the *Armee de Liberation Nationale Kameroonaise*, a terrorist group, would probably mount a major offensive, which could lead to administrative collapse in both the newly merged countries. However, it was argued that there was no reason to think that a British battalion could prevent this happening, and that retaining British troops would encourage those in the Southern Cameroons who opposed the merger - a merger which was in Britain's interests. The chairman summed up that any military assistance should be limited to providing military training, and added that any further involvement would risk Britain being pulled into a commitment of unknown size and duration. However, if it should be recommended that a battalion should be kept on to help with training, the danger that it might have to become involved in security operations should be stressed.[2] The committee was obviously anxious to make clear to ministers exactly what the consequences of taking such a decision would be.

When the committee later discussed a draft report prepared on the basis of these discussions, an intractable disagreement ensued. Attention was drawn to the view of the CoS

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)8th, 9 June 1961, pp. 1-3.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1357, AF(61)6th, 5 June 1961, pp. 1-3.

that the retention of a battalion would mean that the two countries would have no incentive to make their own forces self-sufficient. Furthermore, if the seriousness of the situation had been properly assessed, the only alternative to pulling out the battalion would be a prolonged operation which would need at least two battalions. Even leaving one battalion for training would cost £2 million in the first year, at the very time when an attempt was being made to reduce overseas expenditure. In response it was suggested that withdrawing the battalion would leave a security gap and would mean that the aid mission would have to be abandoned, leading to the local administration being damaged, and the *Armee de Liberation Nationale Kameroonaise* would take advantage of this. The end result would be damage to Britain's reputation, the creation of an opportunity for communist penetration in West Africa and the creation of a potential threat to Nigeria. The chairman summed up that it was obvious that it would not be possible to make an agreed recommendation to ministers on security, and therefore the report to ministers should set out the pros and cons of the two courses of action.[1]

The committee system was obviously not always able to fulfil one of its functions of making policy recommendations to ministers when required. This, however, only usually happened when dealing with a situation where all the alternative courses seemed to have equally unpalatable consequences. But in many ways it seems appropriate that rather than suggesting a particular course of action, an official committee should just lay out the pros and cons of various alternatives because then there would be no danger of official committees foreclosing policy options. The matter was not, however, resolved by the CPC and does not appear to have been discussed again by the Defence Committee. Instead the problem had to go all the way up to the Cabinet. Although the matter was obviously a difficult one to deal with, it seems odd that the matter could not have been resolved by either of these committees, given that they were both senior bodies chaired by Macmillan. In addition, the Chancellor was a member of the Defence Committee, and so the matter did not need to be referred to the Cabinet because it involved expenditure.

When the Cabinet discussed the future of the Southern Cameroons, ministers had before them the memorandum Macmillan had earlier said he would circulate. He told ministers there was a danger that subversive forces organized by Chinese communists would start a campaign of terror when the territory became independent. If internal security broke down British personnel would leave, and the result could be a communist regime which would endanger Nigeria. However, retaining the battalion there and sending an aid mission would cost £2 million a year, and if the situation deteriorated more troops would need to be sent. The general

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1357, AF(61)7th, 5 June 1961, pp. 1-2.

agreement was that it would not be justifiable to undertake such commitments and so the troops should be withdrawn.[1]

Despite this decision, the CPC had to discuss the Southern Cameroons again. The problem had become more complicated because of a disagreement between the leaders of the Southern Cameroons and the Cameroun Republic over the arrangements for the transfer of sovereignty. The latter insisted that sovereignty could only be transferred to a federation, whereas the former maintained that in accordance with a UN resolution, the federation could not be formed until the Southern Cameroons had first joined the Republic. The Lord Chancellor, in the chair, told ministers that an additional difficulty was the refusal of the Southern Cameroons government and British residents to accept that Britain really would withdraw the battalion in October. When it eventually became accepted that this was going to happen many officials and expatriates would leave, and so there could be no question of an aid mission. It was therefore probable that the administration would collapse, opening the way for the establishment of a communist regime. On the other hand, if the battalion remained, it would almost certainly require reinforcement, and there was a danger it could become involved in internal squabbles between the two units of the future federation. A British delegation which had recently visited the Southern Cameroons had recommended confining the battalion to the coastal district for a twelve-month period as an alternative to withdrawal. The committee felt that the decision to withdraw should be adhered to because the latter suggestion was not practicable and because there were strong military and financial objections to retaining the battalion.[2]

The Cabinet discussed the Southern Cameroons several days later - the matter going to and fro between the CPC and the Cabinet even though decisions appeared to have been made. Macleod told the Cabinet that although it was very likely that the withdrawal of the battalion and the departure of expatriate officials and employers would lead to the collapse of the administration there, giving an opportunity for communist exploitation, there seemed no alternative but to accept these risks in view of the serious objections to a continued British presence. The Cabinet agreed with him.[3]

Unlike more significant cases of overstretched resources, when the matter did not concern its core interests in an important way, Britain was able to recognize that sometimes it did not have sufficient resources to do all it might want to do. In the case of the British Cameroons, Britain had to, as it would have to do more and more frequently, give in to the inevitable.

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[1] CAB 128, CC(61)31st, 13 June 1961, pp. 6-7.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)9th, 23 June 1961, pp. 1-2.
[3] CAB 128, CC(61)36th, 29 June 1961, pp. 6-7.

IV. GREATER MALAYSIA

The possibility of a merger between Malaya, Singapore and the Borneo territories (North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei) had been under consideration for some time. Since 1945 it had been CO policy that there should be a merger between Malaya and Singapore, and between the Borneo territories, and it was hoped that ultimately there would be a union of these two groupings.[1] In 1954 the official Commonwealth Membership Committee had forecast that the course of constitutional development in the colonies would probably produce an independent Malayan federation, including Malaya and Singapore, and possibly North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei.[2] Similar statements were made in the following years, such as in a report by the Working Party on Smaller Colonial Territories, circulated in 1959, which suggested that Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak might enter 'some Malayan Federation'.[3] In 1960 the Future Developments in South-East Asia Committee also discussed the possibility of a federation of Singapore and the Borneo territories.[4] There were a number of reasons why what was referred to as a Greater Malaysia was attractive to Britain. As a CO report of 1957 pointed out, any premature withdrawal from Singapore could lead to communists who were sympathetic to China gaining control; in effect the power vacuum would be filled by China, and Malaya would not be powerful enough to prevent this happening. As for the Borneo territories, premature withdrawal could lead to serious disorder and leave a vacuum which would be filled either by a communist power or by Indonesia.[5] The Greater Malaysia project therefore seemed to offer Britain a way of reducing its commitments in South-East Asia without any damaging consequences.

The proposed establishment of a Greater Malaysia was discussed by a wide range of committees.[6] The way this issue was dealt with demonstrates how the system adjusted itself to deal with new issues. Certain committees were already dealing with more general or related issues which would feed into the discussions, but although they continued to discuss Greater Malaysia on occasions, much of the work was done by committees specifically set up to deal with this matter.

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[1] CO 1022/86, minute by J. J. Paskin, 10 December 1952, in Goldsworthy, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire*, Part II, p. 377.

[2] CAB 129, C(54)307, 11 October 1954, Appendix, para. 3.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/2505, SCT(59)15, 12 June 1959, p. 10.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)2nd, 21 June 1960, p. 2.

[5] 1957 CO report reproduced as PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)2, 6 January 1959, p. 50 and p. 55.

[6] These were: Greater Malaysia (GEN 754), Defence, Greater Malaysia, Greater Malaysia Discussions, CPC (ministerial), Future Developments in South-East Asia, Study of Future Policy, Study of Future Policy Working Group, Study of Future Policy Steering Committee, Oversea Coordinating, and Oversea Policy.

During the 1950s there had been growing pressure in Singapore for self-government. In 1955 an election was held under a new constitution, and a new government was formed from a coalition of the Labour Front and the Alliance Party. The leader of the former, David Marshall, demanded immediate self-government, and in 1956 a constitutional conference was held, which broke down over the issue of responsibility for internal security after self-government had been granted.[1] The difficulty British policy-makers had to deal with was reconciling Singapore's desire for self-government with Britain's need to secure its base there, a problem made all the more difficult by the worry that Singapore would be vulnerable to communist penetration.[2] As a result the issue of the control of internal security continued to be a major stumbling block in negotiations on constitutional advance.[3] The government felt it was essential that Britain kept control over internal security, both to protect Singapore and to ensure that Britain could fulfil its wider defence obligations in South-East Asia.[4] In the end, however, Britain had to moderate its stance because of broader security concerns. As a memorandum by Lennox-Boyd forcefully pointed out, Britain could govern in Singapore by consent or force, but defeating communism in Singapore could only be achieved with the cooperation of an elected government.[5] When Singapore achieved internal self-government in 1959 an internal security council was established with three British, three Singaporean and one Malayan representative, a compromise which gave Malaya the casting vote in internal security matters. That same year the first elections under the new constitution were won by the People's Action Party, led by Lee Kuan Yew, which wanted independence in the form of a merger with Malaya.[6]

The situation in Singapore had worried Lennox-Boyd for several years because there was no stable government and a danger that communist influence would increase; because of all this he had concluded that independence could only be achieved by the colony becoming part of a larger whole, and therefore the ultimate objective should be an association of Singapore with Malaya.[7] If this did not happen Singapore would become 'an independent Chinese outpost at the

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[1] For background information see *The Colonial Territories, 1955-56.*

[2] For background information on Singapore and its strategic significance see P. Darby, *British Defence Policy East of Suez, 1947-1968* (1973) and N. Tarling, *The Fall of Imperial Britain in South-East Asia* (Oxford 1993).

[3] See for example CAB 128, CC(57)27th, 28 March 1957, pp. 3-4. Ironically enough, in view of future developments, the proposal that changes should be made to the Singapore Internal Security Council was objected to on the grounds that it would give the Malayan representative effective control over the Council, which would mean that effective control over Britain's last major base in the Far East would depend on the continuance of a sympathetic government in Malaya.

[4] CAB 128, CM(56)36th, 15 May 1956, p. 7.

[5] CAB 129, C(57)78, 26 March 1957, p. 3.

[6] *The Colonial Territories, 1959-60*, pp. 50-51.

[7] CAB 128, CM(56)25th, 27 March 1956, p. 6.

strategic heart of South-East Asia'.[1] However, opinion in Malaya was deeply opposed to a merger. Not only was it was feared that Malayan supremacy would be threatened by the sheer number of Chinese in Singapore, many Malayans also thought that any political association would delay Malayan independence, and there was concern that Malaya would be infected by communism from Singapore. This last fear had made *Tunku* Abdul Rahman, the leader of the Alliance Party, and from 1957 the Malayan Prime Minister, even more anti-communist.[2] The CoS agreed with Lennox-Boyd that Singapore was too small and vulnerable to lead a separate existence, and pointed out that its importance as a naval base was increasing, and would continue to do so, given that for financial reasons it would probably be necessary to merge the Far East and East Indies fleets, and Singapore was the only base from which both these areas could be adequately covered.[3] Britain also had to take into account its responsibilities towards Australia and New Zealand, as well as American opinion, which would feel let down if Singapore became independent on its own.[4]

The other part of the Greater Malaysia project involved North Borneo and Sarawak. By 1957 the possibility of a closer association involving these two territories and the protected state of Brunei had been canvassed for a number of years, both in the territories themselves and in Britain. In discussion in the CPC Lennox-Boyd said that although he was worried that such a move might produce pressure for independence, he had been influenced by the fact that the governors of North Borneo and Sarawak, and the Commissioner-General in South-East Asia, all felt that such a move was the best way of Britain preserving its influence in this area. After some discussion the committee agreed that the best course would be to start talks on closer association.[5] These plans initially paid little attention to the proposals for Singapore's future, but in 1959 a report by the official CPC tentatively suggested that a possible end goal for the Borneo territories might 'lie in some form of wider association' with Malaya and Singapore.[6]

The Colonial Territories, 1961-62 records that in May 1961 *Tunku* Abdul Rahman, 'raised the possibility of an association between the Federation, Singapore, North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei'.[7] However, according to a memorandum by Macleod which was circulated to the CPC, Abdul Rahman informally raised the possibility of an association of the Borneo

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[1] CAB 129, CP(56)85, 23 March 1956, in Goldsworthy, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire*, Part I, p. 394.

[2] CAB 129, CP(56)97, 14 April 1956, in Goldsworthy, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire*, Part I, p. 399.

[3] CAB 128, CM(56)29th, 17 April 1956, p. 5.

[4] CAB 129, CP(56)97, 14 April 1956, in Goldsworthy, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire*, Part I, p. 400.

[5] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)14th, 4 December 1957, p. 2.

[6] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)8, 7 July 1959, p. 4.

[7] *The Colonial Territories, 1961-62*, p. 26.

territories with Malaya and Singapore during a visit to London in the summer of 1960. In conversation with Perth, he suggested that Malaya might take over Brunei and Sarawak and that Britain could retain North Borneo for defence purposes. Macleod considered that although the possibility of a base in North Borneo, to guard against the use of the Singapore base being restricted or lost, was currently under consideration, it would be unrealistic to think that North Borneo could be retained as a colony after Sarawak either got its independence or merged with Malaya.[1]

Various discussions about these territories and the possibility of a Greater Malaysia therefore took place before Abdul Rahman's public proposal in May 1961. During discussions on how long Britain could retain the Singapore base, the Future Developments in South-East Asia Committee, an official body, considered the possibility of establishing a new base elsewhere, and North Borneo was one of the sites suggested. The fact that the possibility of North Borneo joining an enlarged Malaya had already been considered was not mentioned. This suggests a lack of coordination in the system, with committees going off at tangents on the same subject. Later on in that same meeting it was suggested that retaining Borneo could not be guaranteed indefinitely, although Britain's tenure there was likely to be longer than anywhere else in the area. Some degree of constitutional advance would, however, be needed and the committee would need to consider how long any base there could be retained.[2]

In other discussions it was suggested that there might be slow progress towards closer economic and political ties between countries in South-East Asia, and that this process would be accelerated if Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, North Borneo and Brunei federated. In response it was observed that such groupings might not be welcome to neighbouring countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, and could lead to the formation of hostile coalitions.[3] This argument against an enlarged Malayan federation was not used again in later discussions; presumably the enthusiasm for the proposal meant that neither ministers nor officials wanted to hear any inconvenient counter-arguments.

In October 1960 Lord Selkirk, the Commissioner-General for South-East Asia, discussed the association of the Borneo territories with Malaya and Singapore at the Borneo inter-territorial conference at Kuching, and in the light of these discussions recommended that association should be the ultimate goal of British policy, and that a statement should be made to

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1559, CPC(60)17, 15 July 1960, p. 1 and p. 3.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)4th, 8 July 1960, p. 2 and p. 4.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)2nd, 21 June 1960, p. 2.

the effect that such a merger had great possibilities for the future of the area, provided it was acceptable to the peoples concerned.[1]

As far as Singapore itself was concerned, when it was discussed by the Future Developments in South-East Asia Committee it was suggested that the economic pressures caused by its rapidly increasing population could produce anti-British feeling, and lead to restrictions being placed on the use of the base there. In response it was argued that any hostility would be muted because of the wealth the base brought to Singapore.[2] One thing no doubts were expressed about was the value of the base. It was essential to the safeguarding of Britain's strategic and political concerns in South-East Asia, an area of conflict between East and West, and its possession gave Britain influence over American policy, enabling Britain to act as a restraining influence, especially on US attitudes towards China.[3] However, it was felt that the practicality of using Singapore as an operational base would become increasingly doubtful, and that Britain could no longer assume it would have a base there indefinitely because of the external and internal threats to Singapore.[4] The committee therefore concluded that the problem of Singapore was complicated and other factors, such as its proposed federation with Malaya, would have to be taken into consideration.[5] This 'decision' suggests that Cabinet committees were often more like talking shops than decision-making bodies.

This committee seemed on the verge of going beyond standard policy assumptions about a matter which exemplified Britain's overseas commitments dilemma, because it was suggested that action should be taken to reduce British commitments, even to the extent of granting Singapore independence on its own, which would give Britain greater prestige than merely waiting until it was forced out.[6] However, such radical thinking does not seem to have fed up to ministerial committees or to the Cabinet, and as a result the system failed to provide Cabinet committees with innovative policy suggestions and a full range of policy options. In some ways the system seems to have done little more than provide a way of letting off steam; radical suggestions could safely be aired in the more junior committees with little danger of them influencing policy. There are two explanations for this situation: the conventional majority may have succeeded in stifling more radical ideas at birth; alternatively, officials could have been

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)4th, 18 April 1961, p. 1. *The Colonial Territories, 1960-61* makes no mention of Selkirk's discussions. All it says about the conference is that it was agreed that Sarawak and North Borneo should start a joint investigation into the desirability of establishing a customs union. An agreement to establish this by January 1962 was eventually signed on 19 December 1961.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)2nd, 21 June 1960, p. 2.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)4th, 8 July 1960, p. 1.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)5th, 15 July 1960, p. 1.

[5] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)4th, 8 July 1960, p. 2.

[6] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)5th, 15 July 1960, p. 1.

self-censoring, unwilling to circulate to ministers ideas which they knew ministers would be unhappy with or be certain to reject.

In a memorandum on the Greater Malaysia proposals, Macleod pointed out that Britain's stated policy for the Borneo territories was that they would ultimately be given self-government if this was the wish of the inhabitants. However, given the vulnerability of the territories, caused by their geographical position and social make-up, he felt that such a merger would be one ultimate solution for them provided that their peoples favoured this course. It is difficult to judge whether this qualification was no more than Macleod going through the motions of protecting the interests of these territories, or whether he genuinely believed that the wishes of the inhabitants would really be a deciding factor, even though major defence and foreign policy issues were involved. If the former was the case, it would suggest that often the committee system did not produce real debate because supposed discussions were often no more than recapitulations of departmental positions. As for Singapore, he had by now concluded that he would like to see the closest possible cooperation, short of political union, with Malaya, and probably political union once the Singapore base was no longer needed. He ventured the very cautious opinion on the Greater Malaysia proposal that on balance it would be 'as likely to provide the least unsatisfactory solution for them and for us, but there are too many imponderables for us to be certain about this'.[1]

Other ministers were equally cautious. When this memorandum was discussed by a meeting of ministers, at which Brook and the Commissioner-General for South-East Asia were present, doubt was expressed about the desirability of including Singapore in an enlarged federation. It was felt that the rest of any future federation would be threatened if a communist dominated government emerged in Singapore. The danger of communists gaining power in Singapore was, of course, the very reason why many considered that a merger should take place. As far as the Borneo territories were concerned, it was felt that there should be an attitude of benevolent neutrality, a convenient stance that saved any decision having to be taken. Overshadowing these discussions was, as always, the burden of Britain's overseas expenditure. Not only did the committee discuss a possible approach to the US to try and persuade America that the Singapore base should become a South-East Asia Treaty Organization responsibility - in which case Britain would only have to pay a share of its costs - it also considered whether Britain should reappraise its NATO commitments, especially the size of the forces stationed in

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1559, CPC(60)17, 15 July 1960, p. 2 and pp. 3-4.

Germany.[1] As these discussions all took place in the CPC they provide the strongest possible indication of the extent of the link between colonial concerns and broader policy.

Despite the fact that Macleod and his officials had dismissed the idea of a base in North Borneo, this proposal was discussed the following month by the Future Developments in South-East Asia Committee. It concluded that the expense of establishing a base there could not be justified because Britain's tenure could not be guaranteed.[2] Yet at the committee's next meeting it was suggested that although security of tenure in Borneo could not be guaranteed, it was likely that Britain could use facilities there for as long as it remained in Hong Kong, and that these facilities did not need to be as large as those in Singapore.[3] This seems not only inconsistent with plans for Malaysia but also with the committee's earlier discussion. The arguments against a Borneo base were not countered - they were simply ignored. The committee also seems to have ignored a paper circulated to them by the CO some weeks earlier, which had concluded that it was not realistic to consider building a base in North Borneo because of the Malaysia proposals.[4] This all suggests that there was sometimes a lack of coordination in the policy development process.

In April 1961 the CPC considered a memorandum by Macleod in which he endorsed the Malaysia proposals, but with the qualification that Britain should not appear to be imposing a political settlement. The committee gave its general agreement to the proposals.[5] No mention was made about any clashes with the plans the CO had had for the Borneo territories, or about the suggestion of building a base in North Borneo.[6] In this respect one committee did not seem to be building on, or even taking into account, the work done on the same policy area by other committees, suggesting that the activities of the less important committees were sometimes quite futile and did not contribute to the efficient functioning of government.

Early in 1961 the Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for War and the Chief of the Defence Staff all made visits to Malaya and Singapore, which, it has been suggested, shows how anxious Britain was to see the merger of Singapore with Malaya.[7] Although in March 1961 Abdul Rahman was not in favour of Singapore being included in any association, because he felt that the Chinese majority there might threaten the political stability of Malaya, the possibility of getting the Borneo territories and his worry about communist influence in

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1559, CPC(60)20, 28 July 1960, p. 2 of the record of a meeting held on 27 July which is attached to this memorandum.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)9th, 31 August 1960, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)15th, 29 September 1960, p. 1.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1644, DSE(60)10, 18 August 1960, p. 1.

[5] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)4th, 18 April 1961, p. 1.

[6] The CO's plan involved building up local government and very gradually introducing constitutional change. See the various *Colonial Territories* reports.

[7] Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization*, p. 284.

Singapore led him to change his mind.[1] Presumably the prospect of getting the Borneo territories and the danger of communism spreading to Malaya would have been used as carrot and stick by his British visitors. However, he made it clear that although he was willing to include Singapore in a Greater Malaysia, the addition of a large number of Chinese voters would only be acceptable if the Borneo territories joined Malaysia.[2] Abdul Rahman was determined to ensure that the racial balance of any enlarged federation favoured the Malays.

By the autumn of 1961 the Greater Malaysia proposal was frequently discussed in the committee system. It was discussed by the Study of Future Policy Steering Committee, showing that at least some of the time study groups were aware of the latest developments and took them into account in their deliberations. This committee concluded that UK interests would be better served by establishing a Greater Malaysia than by Singapore becoming independent separately. In contrast to earlier concerns about internal security, and indicating the extent to which defence concerns determined colonial policy, it was suggested that responsibility for this could be handed over to the Malayan government before Greater Malaysia was established. Although this change would not lead to any immediate reduction in the number of units based in Singapore, it would give Britain greater freedom to use these troops for SEATO purposes.[3] This proposal suggests that the government was already firmly in favour of a Greater Malaysia. SEATO commitments were clearly of considerable concern to policy-makers, because only about a month later the Future Policy Working Group expressed concern about the amount of troops used for internal security purposes; out of the eighteen major units stationed in the Far East, sixteen were used primarily for such purposes, while only two were available for the external defence of Malaya and SEATO commitments. Transferring responsibility for the internal security of Singapore was therefore also seen by this body as one of the advantages of creating Malaysia.[4] There was obviously some poor organization in the committee system; two different committees were considering the same topic in the same way, and reaching similar conclusions, in a pointless duplication of work.

An official committee was set up in September 1961 to examine the Malaysia proposals and make recommendations to ministers.[5] This body discussed a wide range of issues and showed an awareness of the complexity of the whole issue. This contrasts with the ministerial discussions which, although sometimes somewhat hesitant, took a more straightforward

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)4th, 18 April 1961, p. 1.
[2] H. Macmillan, *At the End of the Day 1961-1963* (1973), p. 249.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1932, FP(A)(61)2nd, 7 September 1961, p. 5.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1938, FP(B)(61)2nd, 21 September 1961, p. 4.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1949, GM(61)1, 21 September 1961, p. 1.

approach, giving the impression that the scheme was so obviously advantageous that ministers were not interested in carefully scrutinizing it.

Chaired by a CRO official, this committee drew its members from the CO, FO and CRO. In addition the Treasury and the MoD received copies of all its papers, and were represented as necessary at meetings.[1] Britain's favourable attitude to the proposals was well established by this time, and as a result the committee's work did not involve recommending whether or not the proposals should be accepted. Instead, the committee was concerned with examining what difficulties the proposals might involve and how they could best be dealt with. The government had two central concerns, one of which was the question of timing. Although it was felt best to move quickly to meet Abdul Rahman's wishes, and to anticipate any further weakening of Lee Kuan Yew's position, time was needed to 'carry the Borneo territories with us' and to avoid the impression that they were being forced into a merger.[2] The other concern was the implications of the proposals for Britain's strategic interests in South-East Asia and the Far East. However, these defence matters were currently under 'radical examination' and no decision on them was likely before October. The MoD representative pointed out that the assumption that Britain should maintain unchanged its present rights and facilities in Singapore and Malaya was now under review, because of economic pressures and the shortage of military manpower.[3] The problem of economic pressures was not a new one; it had existed ever since the Conservative Party regained office, yet a decade later the government had still not fully faced up to this problem.

Some of the points made in discussion were conventional ones, such as the advantage of Britain not having responsibility for internal security in Singapore. Others, however, were more radical, such as the suggestion that Britain should try and divest itself of its responsibility for the external defence of Malaya.[4] It was even proposed that Britain should use the creation of Greater Malaysia to get out of its SEATO commitments, using the pretext that although the creation of the new state would reinforce the general security of South-East Asia, it would not be possible for Britain to retain the Malaysian bases needed for its present SEATO obligations. This proposal was not, however, mentioned again, presumably because, as was pointed out, Britain could not afford to overlook the American desire that Britain should retain a significant

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1949, GM(61)1, 21 September 1961, p. 1. 'Represented as necessary' meant that officials from these departments would attend meetings whenever anything relevant to their departments was discussed.

[2] At the next committee meeting the CRO emphasized that Britain had to avoid it appearing that Britain was proposing to commit the territories to joining Greater Malaysia without proper consultation. See PRO, CAB 134/1949, GM(61)2nd, 2 October 1961, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1949, GM(61)1st, 27 September 1961, p. 2.

[4] Britain had assumed this responsibility in return for Malaya agreeing to stay in the Sterling Area.

military presence in the Far East.[1] This suggests that there was unlikely to have been any straightforward American pressure on Britain to decolonize in South-East Asia, because a complete British withdrawal could lead to a reduction in Britain's military presence that would damage American interests.

The CO was asked to spell out 'the broad situation from which arose the urgency of the whole matter and the differences of view between Abdul Rahman and ourselves regarding the Borneo territories'.[2] Departments were, therefore, expected to make contributions to the work of a committee outside of their narrow departmental interests, and be aware of the broader issues involved. This instruction to the CO could also have been a tactic by the chairman to ensure that the CO had to acknowledge that its own concerns had wider ramifications, and that its departmental interests had to be viewed within the context of broader policy concerns. If the CO did not show an understanding of the broader issues it would look incompetent, although by showing such an understanding it was acknowledging the importance of other concerns, and was in effect undermining its own position. A committee chairman could therefore force departments to think on a broader basis, rather than pursuing their own blinkered agendas.

The question of timing was discussed on several occasions. It was felt that if the opportunity offered was not quickly seized the project would not go ahead for some time, but handing over the Borneo territories without getting the agreement of its inhabitants, and before they could hold their own as part of Greater Malaysia, would be undesirable. Indeed, one official complained, seemingly unaware of the irony of his remark, that it looked like Abdul Rahman expected to run these territories as if they were colonies. The committee, however, acknowledged that if the scheme was delayed, Abdul Rahman might turn against it and Lee Kuan Yew's government might fall, and therefore on balance failure to create Greater Malaysia would have more serious consequences for Britain. The CO had to recognize that British interests overrode colonial concerns, and so suggested as a compromise that Abdul Rahman should be assured that he would get the accession of the Borneo territories after a fixed period, such as five years.[3] As for Singapore, it was agreed that the Greater Malaysia proposals would not make the position of Singapore any worse because Britain's bases there were already of doubtful value for carrying out SEATO operations, and their value would be further threatened

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1949, GM(61)1st, 27 September 1961, p. 3.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[3] The CO later suggested that North Borneo and Sarawak should continue to be run by British administrators for some years. The other members of the committee did not express outright opposition to this proposal, but they did point out that ministers would find it difficult to persuade Abdul Rahman to agree to them. See PRO, CAB 134/1949, GM(61)4th, 13 October 1961, p. 2.

if the Malaysia proposals failed.[1] The impression given by this discussion is that the advantages of the scheme for Britain were such that no one was interested in rigorously examining it.

In October the Defence Committee considered a report by the official Greater Malaysia Committee. The Commonwealth Secretary, Duncan Sandys, said that Abdul Rahman now favoured a merger with Singapore because of the increasing strength of the left there. Much of the subsequent discussion covered old ground, such as the Borneo territories not being ready for such an association - although this consideration never had any real impact on the government's attitude. It was emphasized that the burden of maintaining internal security in Singapore needed to be reduced because there was a pressing need to use the troops tied up in this elsewhere.[2] The Secretary of State for Air, Julian Amery, argued that Britain's whole position in the Far East depended on the maintenance of its present rights in Singapore and Malaya. However, it was suggested that because Abdul Rahman seemed so determined to ensure that a Greater Malaysia was created, Britain would be able to insist that its defence requirements were met. The whole matter was regarded as so important that any decision on it could not be rushed. Macmillan said that the whole issue was a very difficult one, and Britain would be faced with grave problems whether or not Greater Malaysia was created; the matter therefore needed further consideration.[3]

The following month an *ad hoc* ministerial committee was established to deal with Greater Malaysia. This committee spent far less time on the problem of the Borneo territories than the official Greater Malaysia committee, indeed, so little time that it almost appears as if ministers and officials had different agendas, with the result that the work of officials on Borneo was completely pointless. Macmillan, in the chair, informed ministers that the Defence Committee favoured the principle of a Greater Malaysia. He cautioned that in dealing with Abdul Rahman Britain should not appear to be too enthusiastic for tactical reasons, and should make clear the difficulties with the Borneo territories, and the importance of a satisfactory defence agreement. Although he uttered the usual platitudes about the need to consult the peoples of these territories, his real concern was that the government should remove Abdul Rahman's suspicion that Britain wanted to keep the Borneo territories while getting Malaya to take on responsibility for Singapore, but should remove this suspicion without making any hasty or deep commitment over the Borneo territories. The possibility of a North Borneo base was raised again, although this time it was suggested that Britain's main base should be in Australia,

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1949, GM(61)3rd, 6 October 1961, pp. 1-2.

[2] More efficient use of troops became a more pressing necessity when Macmillan asked at the end of that year for the Minister of Defence to secure a reduction of £35 million a year in Britain's overseas defence expenditure in all areas apart from Germany. See PRO, CAB 131/25, D(61)17th, 6 December 1961, p. 3.

[3] PRO, CAB 131/25, D(61)14th, 25 October 1961, pp. 5-7.

with a forward base established on Labuan, an island just off the coast of North Borneo. However, even this less ambitious suggestion still runs counter to all the earlier discussions about a Borneo base. The discussion as a whole shows that Britain's main concern was its military base in the Far East and that colonial concerns came a distant second. In general, there was far more emphasis than there was in the official committee on how essential it was to get a suitable defence agreement. Greater Malaysia not only shows how reactive British policy was, it also shows that the committee system failed to coordinate policy. Although the idea of a Greater Malaysia had been floating around for a number of years. Britain had still not considered how such a development would affect its defence posture in the Far East. It was even suggested that Britain should start planning a radical change in its military presence there - a proposal which came very late in the day.[1] All this suggests not only a lack of policy coherence, it also suggests that the committee system did little to prepare Britain for change because contingency planning seems to have been conspicuous by its absence.

When the committee next met it was clear that the real concern over the Borneo territories was not that they should not be press-ganged into Greater Malaysia: it was that Britain should not be seen to be doing so. Although the committee agreed that a small UK commission of enquiry should be established, this move was obviously little more than a cosmetic exercise, because the committee agreed that 'we might have to press North Borneo and Sarawak into it more urgently than we should ideally want', and that 'it was important to retain flexibility in our position in relation to the views of the local peoples, and the commission should not be unduly formal in its constitution'. At the end of his summing up Macmillan said that although Malaysia had been considered on a number of occasions it had not yet been raised in the Cabinet, and therefore the next Cabinet meeting should consider the matter.[2] So, although considerable discussion could take place in a senior ministerial committee, the issue still had to be brought before the Cabinet. Macmillan presumably wanted to ensure that if any decision was taken it had the full backing of the Cabinet.

Discussions with the Malayan government started in London in November 1961.[3] Macmillan told the first meeting that there were compelling reasons for bringing about a merger

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/179, GEN 754/1st, 9 November 1961, pp. 1-4.

[2] PRO, CAB 130/179, GEN 754/2nd, 15 November 1961, p. 3. The records of the Cabinet discussions of Malaysia are not yet open.

[3] The records of these discussions can be found among Cabinet committee papers, specifically PRO, CAB 134/1952 and PRO, CAB 134/1953, Greater Malaysia Discussions. This was not a committee as such; rather the papers are the records of meetings between Malaysian politicians and British ministers and officials, as well as various related memoranda. Presumably these discussions were classified as a Cabinet committee because the secretariat for the meetings was provided by the Cabinet Office. By the time these discussions started Malaya and Singapore had negotiated heads of agreement for a merger in which Singapore would become a state within the Federation, but on special conditions and with a

during the present opportunity, and that achieving this was a matter of urgency because the situation in Singapore was so precarious. Abdul Rahman said that he had now been convinced by Lee Kuan Yew that if Singapore became independent separately it might fall under communist control. Macmillan said it was important that Britain satisfied itself (pious but untrue) and the world at large (true but cynical) that any change was being made with the agreement of the Borneo territories' inhabitants. The main issues under discussion, however, were defence concerns, particularly the future of the Singapore base. Abdul Rahman said that he could not agree to the base being used for SEATO purposes because SEATO was so unpopular in South-East Asia. Macmillan responded that it would be difficult for Britain to accept a defence agreement which imposed any new restriction on the use of the base, and that Britain could not renege on its SEATO commitments.[1]

At the next meeting the British representatives made their token show of concern about North Borneo and Sarawak by agreeing that a committee of enquiry should be set up, pointing out that Sarawak had been given assurances that its sovereignty would not be transferred without its inhabitants being consulted.[2] The issue of the Borneo territories having been sidelined by the standard bureaucratic technique of establishing a committee of enquiry, the remaining meetings could now be devoted to defence matters. The use of the Singapore base for SEATO purposes was the main difficulty. Malaya did not object to this as such, but wanted any agreement on this kept secret, whereas Britain wanted it made public that SEATO obligations could still be fulfilled, so that the deterrent value of SEATO was not undermined.[3] Abdul Rahman rejected a draft statement of understanding on defence because he felt it could be interpreted as an agreement that the Singapore base could be used for SEATO purposes. After discussion it was agreed that the draft should be amended to say that Britain was allowed 'to make such use of these bases and facilities as they consider necessary for the protection of the territories of Malaysia and other Commonwealth countries, and the preservation of peace in South-East Asia'.[4] The main change seems to have been dropping the sentence which originally followed on from this which said that Britain 'may authorise the use of those bases and facilities by the forces of other countries which are cooperating with them for the above mentioned purposes'.[5]

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substantial measure of autonomy. See *The Colonial Territories, 1961-62*, p. 50. This suggests that the talks were a formality to some extent.

[1] PRO, CAB 134/1953, GMD(B)(61)1st, 20 November 1961, pp. 1-4.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1953, GMD(B)(61)2nd, 20 November 1961, p. 3.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1953, GMD(B)(61)3rd, 21 November 1961, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1953, GMD(B)(61)4th, 21 November 1961, p. 1.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1952, GMD(61)3, 21 November 1961, p. 1.

At a meeting the following day the Commonwealth Secretary argued that it was essential that any defence statement should make clear that Britain would be able to continue to use its forces in Singapore for activities outside of South-East Asia, without the prior agreement of the Federal government being required. Abdul Rahman responded that any agreement which seemed inconsistent with the future sovereignty of the federation over Singapore was unacceptable, but that as the movements of forces anticipated by Britain could be interpreted as a withdrawal of forces from Malaysia they would be acceptable. Clearly, both sides were intent on reaching agreement and the discussions have more than an element of ritualistic haggling about them. A draft joint statement was agreed which would make clear that after the creation of Malaysia, Britain would be free to use the Singapore base as it considered necessary for the defence of Malaysia, for Commonwealth defence, and for the preservation of peace in South-East Asia.[1] This was a valuable outcome for Britain, given that the government considered that the Greater Malaysia project 'seemed to offer the only reasonable prospect of maintaining the integrity of Singapore and maintaining the British position there'. In addition, the government felt that if the project succeeded Britain would be relieved of its most difficult responsibilities in the area, whereas if it failed then after the next elections in Singapore most of the British troops there could end up spending their time defending their own bases.[2]

The official Greater Malaysia Committee failed to reach any conclusion on the Borneo territories and was unable to offer policy recommendations to ministers, with the CO continuing to insist that British staff should remain for a transitional period.[3] In the end neither the CO's views nor the discussions in this committee mattered. Basically, this committee had been assuming that Britain had some policy options, but in fact it had none. As the committee was later told, the report had been considered by the Oversea Policy Committee which decided to assure Abdul Rahman that Britain did not want to retain authority in the Borneo territories during the transitional period.[4]

When the official Greater Malaysia Committee discussed the work of the Cobbold Commission, its chairman, Sir Saville Garner of the CRO, sanctimoniously cautioned his

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1953, GMD(B)(61)5th, 22 November 1961, p. 1. This statement also said that the inclusion of North Borneo and Sarawak in the proposed federation was in the interests of the inhabitants of these territories, and that it had been decided to set up a commission to establish the views of the inhabitants and to make recommendations in the light of its findings. The statement also said that the views of the Sultan of Brunei were being sought. The commission that was later established was the Cobbold Commission, set up in January 1962. Chaired by Lord Cobbold, who was appointed with the agreement of the Malayan government, it had two members nominated by Britain and two members nominated by Malaya. See *The Colonial Territories, 1961-62*, p. 26.

[2] PRO, CAB 130/179, GEN 754/3rd, 21 March 1962, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)1st, 31 May 1962, p. 2.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)5th, 6 July 1962, p. 1.

colleagues that when considering the report of the Commission, and advising ministers on it, members would need to keep before them the importance of creating Malaysia 'as a means of securing for a further period British interests in South-East Asia, but also the need to discharge faithfully British responsibilities to the people of North Borneo and Sarawak and to the expatriate officers'.[1] However, Rahman's opposition to any division of responsibility for North Borneo and Sarawak between Britain and the enlarged federation was so resolute that the chairman observed that it might be best if the commission made no detailed recommendations, so that Britain would be free to negotiate an agreement with Malaya.[2] Britain's desire to see Malaysia created manifestly overrode the CO's concerns about the Borneo territories. This is also shown by the suggestion that as Lee Kuan Yew had proposed that Singapore should join the federation on 3 June 1963, and as Malaya was unwilling to accept Singapore joining on its own, it might be best to merge the territories, including the Borneo ones, earlier than the proposed date of 31 August 1963.[3] Indeed, the concern about the situation in Singapore deteriorating was such that Britain had reached a private understanding with Malaya that the date for the creation of Malaysia could be brought forward if necessary.[4]

This committee's continuing deliberations on Borneo seem futile, given that the Oversea Policy Committee decision that Abdul Rahman should be reassured that Britain did not want to retain control of these territories during any transitional period. In addition, as the committee was later informed, the Oversea Policy Committee had concluded that because any delay in setting up Greater Malaysia could cause problems, especially given the claims of the Philippines and Indonesia to North Borneo, it was best to completely transfer responsibility for the Borneo territories when Malaysia was established.[5] Sometimes official and ministerial committees seemed to be moving on parallel courses, with official committees paying little or no heed to the discussions and decisions of ministerial committees.

That same month, the Oversea Policy Committee, with Macmillan in the chair, discussed an interim report by the Greater Malaysia Committee and a message to Macmillan from Abdul Rahman. The latter had written that he saw no point in coming to London for talks because Malaya could not accept Cobbold's view that British governors and chief secretaries should continue to be in charge of the Borneo territories during the transitional period. The Cobbold Commission was obviously of little value because it was pointed out that its view was not that of the government, who did not want to exercise authority in Borneo during the transitional

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)3rd, 27 June 1962, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)2nd, 7 June 1962, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)3rd, 27 June 1962, p. 5.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)8th, 2 October 1962, p. 1.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)5th, 6 July 1962, p. 1.

period, and were 'not in any way committed to the view's of Cobbold and would have an open mind in discussion'. Of course, open minds were the last things ministers would actually have. Macmillan finished by saying that he would bring the issue before the Cabinet the next day, and get its agreement that full responsibility for the Borneo territories should be transferred to Malaysia as soon as it was established.[1] This suggests that Cabinet time was wasted because it had to rubber-stamp decisions, but also suggests that Macmillan wanted to ensure that such decisions had the authority of the Cabinet, rather than that of one of its committees, behind it.

Malaysia was the only subject discussed at the next meeting of this committee. It considered a report by the chairman of the Greater Malaysia Committee on discussions that were due to be held with Abdul Rahman. The government's sole concern was to get an arrangement that would be acceptable to him. The committee felt that some qualified independence of a British governor in the Borneo territories was about the best Britain could hope to get, although it was added that if Abdul Rahman was not keen on this then Britain might have to make a determined effort to get a British official as the effective head of the administration. But it was accepted that in the end Britain might have no option other than to accept a modified version of the proposals of the Malayan members of the Cobbold commission, which involved a greatly reduced British role in the administration.[2]

That same month the Greater Malaysia Committee concentrated on producing a report for ministers on the transitional arrangements, the main stumbling block of which was the question of the right of expatriate officers to retire with compensation. This was the one issue on which the committee could not agree. It was felt by some members that to ensure an orderly transfer of power it was necessary to retain most officials, and to do so would mean not granting those officers a right to retire with compensation. However, other members felt that such an arrangement would not be acceptable to Abdul Rahman. It was felt that the committee had three courses open to it. Firstly, it could recommend that ministers insist on arrangements which would not involved granting a right to retire with compensation, although this could put the entire Greater Malaysia project at risk. Secondly, the committee could advise ministers to try to avoid giving this right, but grant it if this was the only was of ensuring that Malaysia would be established. Finally, ministers could be told that the committee was unable to agree on a policy recommendation. Much further discussion took place during which it was suggested that as the committee agreed about what choices were open to ministers, and only differed on which one

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2370, OP(62)2nd, 4 July 1962, pp. 1-2. This matter seemed finally settled because, as the committee was also informed, the Cabinet had agreed on 5 July that the negotiations should be speeded up so that Malaysia was set up as soon as possible. See PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)5th, 6 July 1962, p. 1.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/2370, OP(62)3rd, 12 July 1962, pp. 1-2.

should be recommended to ministers, the committee should list the choices available to ministers and leave them to decide which was the best one.[1] This is another example of a committee set up with the specific task of making policy recommendations to ministers failing to do so. But the fact that it failed to do so was because Britain had no range of options to choose from, something the committee were unable to recognize. The failure to recognize this suggests that the committee system was unable to come to grips with basic problems, and with the most basic problem of all, Britain's decline.

The retirement compensation issue was part of the broader question of a financial settlement with Malaya. Although the Greater Malaysia Committee considered the question of economic aid, the chairman felt that it could not work out detailed answers because that was a matter for the Oversea Coordinating Committee, one of whose functions was studying and making recommendations on independence aid settlements, although it could provide that committee with an analytical paper.[2] Clearly, committees were aware of the limits on their activities imposed by their terms of reference, but equally they were perfectly willing to try and influence another committee operating in the same area. The end result of this could be that policy was considered in a very fragmentary manner, which did not help produce coherent policy outcomes.

It is clear that Britain in effect wanted to use the financial settlement to buy off the Borneo territories so that the Greater Malaysia project could proceed. The Greater Malaysia Committee was told that although Sandys had hoped to use development aid as a bargaining tool with North Borneo and Sarawak, Lord Lansdowne, the Minister of State of Colonial Affairs, felt, and Sandys now agreed, that these territories needed to be given some reassurance or else they could become more intransigent and uncooperative. The CO suggested that the most effective way of reassuring them was to give development aid equivalent to their outstanding Colonial Development and Welfare aid and to promise further help.[3] In a memorandum to this committee, Lansdowne insisted that as Britain was giving up responsibility for those territories before they were ready to achieve independence, it had an obligation to help them and to continue to do so even after Malaysia had been created.[4] Clearly, the CO was far from happy that colonial interests had been ignored because the strategic advantages of Malaysia were so overwhelming. The Oversea Policy Committee eventually agreed on five-year development programmes of £30 million for Sarawak and £20 million for North Borneo.[5]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)7th, 10 July 1962, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)8th, 2 October 1962, pp. 5-6.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1950, GM(62)9th, 9 November 1962, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1951, GM(62)46, 11 December 1962, para. 14.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/2276, OC(O)(62)10th, 12 December 1962, p. 2.

The Greater Malaysia Committee was not actually wound up until October 1963. It produced three memoranda that year, but did not actually hold any meetings. This suggests there was a problem with the management of the committee system and also suggests a degree of either inertia or bureaucratic overenthusiasm, if departments produced memoranda for a committee that, although it was still formally in existence, no longer actually met. It suggests yet again that the work of officials could be quite pointless.

Because the creation of Malaysia had been agreed in principle, discussions in 1962 and 1963 in the Oversea Coordinating Committee mostly concerned the details of the Greater Malaysia scheme. These included the financial settlement with Malaya, including the question of compensation for overseas officers.[1] The Greater Malaysia Committee would seem to have been better suited to deal with this matter, given that it had already spent much time discussing this issue, and was therefore familiar with its details and implications. The fact that it did not deal with it suggests that there was not a rational assignment of work within the committee system, and that as a result there was no methodical processing of issues.

The work of the Oversea Coordinating Committee reinforces the impression that Britain was anxious not to find any difficulties with the Greater Malaysian proposals. For example, in response to the observation that Malaya was likely to press for more aid for the enlarged federation than Britain would want to offer, it was stated that although Malaya was a relatively rich country, Britain was in effect paying to get out of certain financial and political burdens in Singapore. The chairman therefore concluded, that paying £12.5 million for defence aid was quite a bargain.[2]

Greater Malaysia was also discussed by the Defence Committee during a consideration of Britain's commitments in the Far East. Britain's forces in Singapore had four main roles: defending Malaysia, carrying out SEATO commitments, discouraging Indonesian aggression and reinforcing Hong Kong. It was felt that none of these roles, except the Hong Kong one, could be abandoned without a fundamental change in British policy, and that withdrawing these forces would be seen as a major political defeat, which would encourage the spread of communism. The committee agreed that there could be no major reduction in Britain's forces in Malaysia without a reduction in political commitments. British policy-makers had spent most of the post-war period reaching similar conclusions about many overseas commitments, but had never seemed willing to face up to reducing these commitments. This fact demonstrates that there was either no awareness of Britain's reduced power, or an inability or unwillingness to

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[1] See for example PRO, CAB 134/2277, OC(O)(63)1st, 9 January 1963, pp. 1-5. This aspect of its work was so difficult, and took up so much of its time, that the committee established a working party on the financial settlement with the proposed federation of Malaysia. See PRO, CAB 134/2281.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/2277, OC(O)(63)11th, 6 May 1963, pp. 1-2.

face up to the implications of that decline. It was suggested that as the total cost of maintaining forces east of Suez had risen to £600 million a year, Britain should look realistically at the economic and political consequences of withdrawal. Doing so was all the more necessary given that the Chancellor had said that in the present circumstances defence expenditure should not amount to more than seven percent of Britain's GNP. However, what seems like an attempt to deal with Britain's diminished stature did not lead to anything real action being taken. The response of this committee was simply a standard one; it agreed to set up a study, part of which would examine 'the economic and political consequences of a withdrawal or substantial reduction of forces now based in Hong Kong and Singapore'.[1] Occasionally other more innovative suggestions were made during discussions, such as when Macmillan tentatively suggested several months later that perhaps Malaysia could in the long-term be more effectively safeguarded by a negotiated agreement with Indonesia.[2] But this hesitantly voiced opinion hardly amounted to a serious reconsideration of the east of Suez role, and did not lead anywhere.

There were no more discussions of the Greater Malaysia proposals. All that happened was that some weeks later Macmillan informed the Oversea Policy Committee that the negotiations between Malaya and Singapore had ended and a Malaysia agreement had been signed.[3] It is clear that in the end constitutional development was determined by defence considerations. The overwhelming reason for Britain's support of the scheme was that it safeguarded Singapore, while at the same time enabling Britain to give up responsibility for its internal security. Constitutional advance as an end in itself was of little significance.

V. ADEN

Aden provides one of the most striking examples of the extent to which strategic concerns and colonial policy were intertwined.[4] This colony had such strategic significance, and constituted such a difficult issue, that it was discussed frequently by a number of committees, and was also one of the most frequently discussed colonial topics in the Cabinet.[5]

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[1] PRO, CAB 131/28, D(63)3rd, 9 February 1963, pp. 5-6.
[2] PRO, CAB 131/28, D(63)8th, 19 June 1963, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)8th, 9 July 1963, p. 1.
[4] The official name of this territory was the Aden Colony. It will, given the nomenclature used in government papers, be referred to either as Aden or the Colony (as opposed to the Aden Protectorate).
[5] These included Africa (official), CPC (ministerial), CPC (official), Middle East (official), Study of Future Policy for 1960-1970 Working Group, Defence, Middle East Policy, Study of Future Policy Steering Committee, The Yemen, Oversea Coordinating, Oversea Policy, DOPC (ministerial), DOPC (official), DOPC Long-Term Study Group (official) and The South Arabian Federation.

In 1954 Aden was not discussed by any Cabinet committees, but was discussed twice by the Cabinet when ministers considered what action should be taken to end incursions by Yemeni raiders.[1] The following year rebels carried out subversive activities in one of the states of the Aden Protectorate. However, when Lennox-Boyd brought this matter to the Cabinet, Eden said that before it was discussed by the Cabinet, the Minister of Defence should discuss the military implications of the latest incident with the CoS.[2] This was the sort of necessary preparatory work that a committee should have carried out, and so the lack of use of committees meant that Cabinet time was being wasted.

When the Cabinet next met Lennox-Boyd told ministers that Yemen was helping dissidents in the Western Protectorate, and asked for approval of countermeasures prepared by the Governor, and £760,000 to strengthen the administrations of the poorer states of the Western Protectorate. The Chancellor supported the proposals because he considered that prompt action was needed, and presumably because Lennox-Boyd was asking for only a relatively small amount, and the Cabinet authorized them.[3] The problems with Yemen featured in one of the first committee discussions of Aden. At the end of 1955 the CPC discussed long-range policy in Aden and the Protectorate, the main issue of which was whether Britain should encourage the protected states to form a federation. Lennox-Boyd felt that such a development would help prevent Yemen or Saudi Arabia from absorbing or controlling them and should be encouraged. The Governor was currently having discussions with the rulers of the protected states and Lennox-Boyd felt that although these should continue, they should do so on the basis, not of trying to impose a specific type of federation, but of encouraging the rulers of the states to suggest themselves how federation might come about. However, as some members felt that a larger unit might try to throw off British control, it was agreed that the matter should be reconsidered after Lennox-Boyd obtained the views of the Governor of Aden on the committee's objections.[4] The whole question of federation was to become a major issue in the following years.

In January 1956 Lennox-Boyd told the CPC that the Governor had come up with some compelling reasons for going ahead with some form of federation, especially the argument that as nationalism already existed in the Protectorate, it would be best if Britain could 'guide it into

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[1] CAB 128, CC(54)45th, 1 July 1954, p. 3 and CAB 128, CC(54)48th, 8 July 1954, p. 3. The ruler of Yemen maintained a claim both to the Aden Colony and to the states of the Aden Protectorate. The latter consisted of various sultanates that had signed treaties with Britain.

[2] CAB 128, CM(55)16th, 21 June 1955, p. 4.

[3] CAB 128, CM(55)17th, 23 June 1955, p. 3.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(55)6th, 24 November 1955, p. 5. Lennox-Boyd also pointed out that the main strategic importance of the Aden Protectorate was the protection its independent existence gave the Colony.

the proper channels'. After discussion the committee agreed that the Governor should continue his talks with the Protectorate rulers.[1] By the time the CPC next discussed this matter broader concerns were having an impact. The issue was firmly linked to British policy in the Middle East, with the FO arguing that discussions with the rulers should not continue because of the unstable political situation there. Against this it was argued that if Britain appeared indecisive about a federation, the rulers would become suspicious of British intentions and this would encourage Saudi Arabian and Yemeni subversion. Although the general view of the committee was that the talks should continue, it was agreed that Eden should be informed of the FO's objection so that he could refer the matter to the Cabinet if he felt this was necessary.[2] The issue was raised in the Cabinet the following day and the two sides of the argument were recapitulated. The FO obviously had sufficient influence to ensure that a disputed issue was taken to the Cabinet even when it was the only dissenting voice. Eden said that the matter had been reported to him because the CPC had failed to reach agreement and that he agreed with the view of the majority of the committee. The Cabinet therefore authorized discussions with the rulers.[3] This was one of the relatively few times that the CPC failed to reach agreement and had to refer a matter to the Cabinet, suggesting that it did help reduce the Cabinet's workload.

Some issues seem to have bypassed the committees and gone straight to the Cabinet, even when issues of equal significance were discussed first, and often only, in committees. This is another sign that the system dealt with issues in an inconsistent manner, and as a result the Cabinet had its time wasted. In May the Cabinet discussed, and agreed to, the proposal that an early public statement should be made on Aden's political future.[4] The following month the Cabinet, apparently without any preliminary discussion in the CPC, considered whether the Governor should get the power to deport undesirable nationals of Aden and the Protectorate.[5] Other discussions on Aden were clearly about matters which had to be brought straight to the Cabinet because of their significance and implications, for example, at the beginning of 1957 the Cabinet dealt with the repeated incursions by Yemeni troops into the Protectorate and what Britain's response should be.[6]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(56)1st, 4 January 1956, p. 3.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(56)13th, 12 March 1956, p. 1.

[3] CAB 128, CM(56)22nd, 13 March 1956, p. 4.

[4] CAB 128, CM(56)36th, 15 May 1956, p. 8. The purpose of the statement was to check demands for further constitutional advance and to strengthen the position of the moderates. It would say that the government could not foresee any fundamental reduction of its responsibility for Aden, and that the pace of change would depend on the sense of responsibility shown by Aden's people and leaders.

[5] CAB 128, CM(56)46th, 28 June 1956, p. 3.

[6] CAB 128, CC(57)1st, 15 January 1957, pp. 4-5; CAB 128, CC(57)2nd, 21 January 1957, p. 4; CAB 128, CC(57)11th, 15 February 1957, p. 8; CAB 128, CC(57)13th, 22 February 1957, p. 7. At the last meeting the Cabinet agreed to authorize retaliatory airstrikes.

That year saw a change in the structure of the committee system, presumably in response to the Suez debacle. A ministerial Middle East Committee was established to 'review the objectives and methods of British Policy in the Middle East, and to submit proposals for consideration by the Cabinet'.[1] In addition, the existing official Middle East Committee was reconstituted and instructed to 'keep under review political and economic problems in the Middle East which raise important questions of policy and to report to the Middle East Committee'.[2] However, there was no significant discussion of Aden in the official Middle East Committee in 1957, and there was no discussion at all in the ministerial CPC or the ministerial Middle East Committee.[3] This again suggests a lack of logic in the allocation of work, and the fact that Aden was not discussed in the context of general Middle Eastern policy suggested that the Middle East Committee would not help coordinate policy.

A memorandum produced by the official CPC in 1957 suggested that Aden was one of the colonies where there would likely be significant developments in internal self-government during the next decade. In addition, Aden was categorized as one of the most important colonies for military reasons, and one whose significance for the protection of Britain's interests in Arabia, Somaliland Protectorate and the Persian Gulf had been increased by the air barrier, and by the growth of the threat from Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Nevertheless, the report concluded that although Britain's essential military requirements could not be guaranteed if Aden became independent, a degree of self-government might be acceptable providing suitable safeguards for these requirements were obtained.[4] In November the ministerial CPC agreed that further

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2230, ME(57)1, 7 January 1957, p. 1. The committee was chaired by the Foreign Secretary and its members were the Chancellor, Commonwealth Secretary, Colonial Secretary and Minister of Defence.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1299, ME(O)(57)6, 7 January 1957, p. 1. The Middle East, as a policy area, does not seem to have been well served by the committee system. An official Middle East Committee existed in 1952 and 1953, but it met only once each year and was abolished in August 1953. See PRO, CAB 134/1053. Another official committee for the Middle East was not established until 1956. It was given the task of keeping 'under review political and economic problems in the Middle East which raise important questions of policy calling for inter-departmental consultation'. See PRO, CAB 134/1298, ME(O)(56)1, 25 January 1956, p. 1. Strangely enough, as this memorandum shows, the CO was not a member of this committee. The only departments represented on it were the FO, Treasury, Board of Trade and Ministry of Fuel and Power. The CO was, however, a member of the reconstituted committee.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/2230 does not mention Aden in any of the minutes. Discussion seems to have been restricted to very broad and general matters such as countering Soviet influence in the Middle East. Nevertheless, this omission seems strange given the strategic importance of Aden. Another odd feature of the committee is that it did not meet at all in 1958 - a year of momentous events in the Middle East. It did meet in 1959, but the only thing of significance for this study about its discussions is that although the Foreign Secretary was officially its chairman, Macmillan often chaired its meetings, even when the Foreign Secretary was present.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1556, CPC(57)30(Revise), 6 September 1957, p. 2 and pp. 6-7. The problem of the air barrier, caused by the refusal of Egypt and Syria to let British planes use their airspace, had been discussed by an *ad hoc* committee on the Somaliland Protectorate the previous year. Suez had, the CoS believed, increased the strategic importance of this territory because overflying and air-staging rights there would be crucial for reinforcement of the Persian Gulf via Nairobi and Aden, if the direct route

constitutional changes would be made, and that these proposals, which would include the introduction of an elected majority in the Legislative Council, should be published in Aden.[1]

By the end of 1957 the CO was increasingly concerned about policy in the Protectorate. In a memorandum circulated to the official Middle East Committee at the end of that year, the CO emphasized that ministerial decisions were needed on important proposals by the Governor, which were supported by the Colonial Secretary, for the development of policy for the Protectorate. The new Governor, Sir William Luce, felt that as the rulers of the Protectorate states had not come up with any initiatives regarding federation, there was no point in pushing them in that direction, and therefore the best was of demonstrating the advantage of the British connection was by an enhanced programme of general development. In order to push this colonial concern the CO used the tactic of appealing to British self-interest, and of showing its awareness of broader matters - in this case Britain's economic position. It pointed out that although earlier that year the Cabinet had agreed that any new overseas expenditure required careful consideration, the development proposals for the Protectorate arose from Britain's defence and diplomatic needs in the Middle East. Britain needed to retain the Colony for strategic, commercial and diplomatic reasons, and controlling the Protectorate would help it do this.[2]

When the official Middle East Committee considered this memorandum, the nature of its discussions was far more straightforward than was the case when the CPC discussed the matter a couple of weeks later. The FO supported the proposals for an enhanced programme of development in the Protectorate on the grounds that such expenditure was needed to ensure that Britain maintained its position in Arabia and the Persian Gulf, showing that there were times when the linking of colonial matters to more general concerns could be of benefit to the CO. However, the Treasury reserved its position because it considered that all the recent proposals involving overseas expenditure should be examined together, so as to decide how Britain's limited resources could best be used, and that a mission should be sent to the Protectorate without any commitment having been made to an expanded programme. It did concede, however, that if this was unacceptable, some less specific agreement than the Governor's could possibly be made in principle. The committee agreed that the CO and the Treasury should have

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there was barred to Britain. See PRO, CAB 130/121, GEN 556/2nd, 23 November 1956 p. 1. These rights were also important in maintaining an alternative route from Britain to the Far East via Central Africa. See PRO, CAB 130/121, GEN 556/1st, 19 October 1956, p. 2.

[1] PRO, CAB 134/1556, CPC(57)31, 7 November 1957, pp. 1-2.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/2340, OME(57)73, 20 December 1957, pp. 1-3.

further discussions, and that subject to this and the Treasury reserving its position, the memorandum could be endorsed for submission to ministers.[1]

The ministerial discussion of the CO memorandum spent more time on the broader implications of the proposals, which Lennox-Boyd firmly linked to strategic concerns and the CPC's earlier conclusion that Britain had a strong interest in keeping control of Aden for an indefinite period. He emphasized that Britain needed to control the Protectorate because it provided a buffer between the Colony, and Yemen and Saudi Arabia. He told ministers that the new Governor was not in favour of the federal proposals, but felt it would be unwise to openly reverse them, and instead recommended an extended policy of social and economic development which would strengthen the position of the moderates. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury considered that although the proposals were acceptable, the scale of expenditure should be kept to the minimum because further development expenditure would be unlikely to yield an economic return. There was general support in the committee for expanding the development programme in the Protectorate, and for sending a mission there. The problem now was future political development, and the committee agreed that further consideration needed to be given to this matter, in particular whether economic aid should be coupled with a positive political policy for the protected states.[2] There appears to have been little sense of urgency about this matter, however, because the ministerial committee did not discuss Aden again until June. This lack of urgency was a common feature of the Cabinet committee system. Unless impelled by events, it was slow in moving matters forward.

In the meantime, the official Middle East committee dealt with Aden at three of its meetings. This body had to discuss the federal proposals because the Governor had changed his mind about them. Indeed, not only that, he had also moved far ahead of ministers and officials because he now advocated a policy of gradual disengagement from Aden. He felt that the government should strengthen those who were friendly to Britain in both Aden and the Protectorate, with the aim of creating a 'viable independent political structure with which we could enter into a new relationship'. As a means of doing, so he recommended that Britain should respond to an approach in February by three of the Protectorate rulers and create a federation of the Protectorate states. The CO was very cautious about all this and felt that the proposals went further than the situation in the area necessitated, and were based on some oversimplified premises. Indeed, it seemed uncomfortable with the very idea of the committee dealing with these proposals; at the very outset of the discussion a CO representative pointed out that because the proposals raised such wide issues, the committee's discussions could only

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2341, OME(58)1st, 1 January 1958, p. 4.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1557, CPC(58)1st, 2 January 1958, pp. 1-2.

be preliminary ones. This seems an overreaction because the committee had discussed other matters with wide implications without shying away from them, but the CO's reaction does suggest that it would have preferred this issue not to have been discussed in the committee system. This concern was pointless in any case because Britain had little choice in the matter; the government, as the CO official acknowledged, could not afford to take a negative attitude to the proposals in the present situation; to do so would mean that those friendly to Britain would lose the political prestige which they needed. There was general agreement with the CO's views.[1]

In discussion it was argued that because the proposals were likely to have serious implications for policy in the Persian Gulf, the CoS would need to deal with the crucial issue of whether the threat or use of military force was needed to maintain Britain's position there and, if so, whether Aden was required for this. It was even suggested that withdrawing from Aden could have a useful political effect if an economically viable state was left behind; but it was quickly added that any goodwill gained by this could be outweighed by a possible loss of prestige for Britain.[2] Yet again a committee discussion seemed on the verge of going beyond current policy and the assumptions on which it was based, but as usual a committee shied away from a radical proposal.

These discussions seemed to be of little value, not least because the whole question of the need for force in the Gulf was still under discussion years later. Of course it is not surprising that such a crucial issue should have been discussed frequently; it is significant, however, when evaluating the contribution of the committee system to the development of policy, that committee discussions do not seem to have helped move matters on, and that the more radical suggestions do not seem to have fed up through the system. There seems little point in officials discussing matters in this way if they were unwilling to communicate their ideas to ministers. Perhaps, therefore, the committee system had in some ways a conservative influence, helping to preserve the policy status quo by providing a controlled environment in which such ideas could be absorbed, rather than providing policy-makers with new approaches and ideas.

The following month the CO informed the official Middle East Committee that the Governor was having further discussions with the Protectorate rulers, and that as their reactions were more favourable than had been expected, proposals could be brought before the committee in about two weeks.[3] When the committee met to discuss these proposals, the CO argued that the rulers' suggestions should be encouraged, not just because Britain had in recent years

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2341, OME(58)6th, 10 April 1958, Confidential Annex, pp. 1-2.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 2-3.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/2341, OME(58)8th, 15 May 1958, p. 3.

promoted the idea of federation, but also because failure to support the rulers would undermine Britain's position in the Protectorate. Furthermore, federating was the best way of ensuring that the Protectorate states were able to withstand pressure from Yemen and Egypt. The CO appears to have accepted that Britain had no choice other than to accept these proposals. To ensure support for its latest position the CO was, as always, quick to appeal to British self-interest, pointing out that although the scheme would need considerable initial expenditure, if it was successful Britain would in the end need less troops to defend Aden and the Protectorate. The chairman of the committee, Sir William Hayter of the FO, sounded a warning note. He said that his department viewed the proposals favourably and felt they would improve Britain's relations with the Arab world generally. However, his one concern was the impact of the scheme on the future status of Aden; if the end result was independence for Aden as well as the Protectorate, this could seriously affect Britain's ability to carry out its defence requirements in South West Arabia. The rest of the committee shared his concern, and agreed that although Britain should be flexible in thinking about the future of Aden, no commitment on independence should be given at this stage.[1]

When the CPC discussed the issue in June, Lennox-Boyd proposed that Britain should agree to the rulers' proposals, and should establish a treaty relationship with the proposed federation and provide it with military and financial support; to do so would strengthen the rulers against Yemen and help them control Arab nationalism in their own states. The proposals had been agreed with the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of Defence, although discussions with the Treasury were still going on. The Governor of Aden considered that the proposals offered the best way of preserving Britain's interests in Aden for as long as possible. Aden would be the federal capital and it was hoped federal moderates would restrain Adeni extremists. Lennox-Boyd said it should be left open for Aden to join the federation later if this was thought desirable, but Britain should be free to prevent this happening if the federation was not developing in a desirable way, even though to do so might require military force. In discussion a number of ministers argued that creating a larger unit would lessen British control, and it was pointed out that Britain's experience of federations had not been happy ones. Most ministers felt, however, that repulsing the rulers would cause the movement for unity in the face of Yemen to fall apart, and that there would be political advantages in having a new pro-Western Arab state in this region.[2]

The Minister of Defence, Duncan Sandys, accepted the necessity of a new policy, but asked that no statement should be made at present implying that Aden would later join the

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2341, OME(58)9th, 30 May 1958, Confidential Annex, pp. 1-3.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1557, CPC(58)10th, 19 June 1958, pp. 1-2.

proposed federation, and suggested that the possibility of excising a strategic enclosure in Aden and keeping it under perpetual British sovereignty should be examined. The Chancellor, Derick Heathcoat Amory, took the usual Treasury stance; he was in general sympathy with the proposals, but reserved his position on the increased cost involved. The committee asked Lennox-Boyd to examine the excision proposals, to consult further with the Chancellor, and to submit his proposals, which they approved in principle, to the Cabinet.[1]

A week later Lennox-Boyd told the Cabinet that although in 1956 a federation of some of the protected states had been agreed in principle, the scheme had not been able to be implemented because of rivalries between the rulers of the states. However, these had now been overcome because of opposition to Yemen, and the rulers had now asked Britain to help implement the federal plan, and for financial and military help for a federation. In addition, they hoped that it would be made clear that independence would be given in due course. Lennox-Boyd also informed ministers that the proposals had been discussed and approved by the CPC.[2]

The Cabinet agreed to the proposals; presumably, having been approved by the CPC, and thus by those minister with departmental interests in this matter, the Cabinet would be unlikely to oppose them, not least because the Minister of Defence had admitted the inevitability of the proposed change. However, concern was expressed that a federal state might in certain circumstances be more damaging to British interests than a number of weak and divided states. It was also suggested that it should be made clear that Britain would not surrender control of defence and external affairs in the foreseeable future. The meeting ended with the Chancellor, who was not a member of the CPC, saying, as he so often did, that although he endorsed the proposals in principle, he would need to consider further their financial implications. The Cabinet asked Lennox-Boyd to hold discussions with him.[3]

At the end of 1958 the official Middle East Committee discussed the first draft of a CPC paper on future policy in Aden and the Protectorate, and the observations of the Governor. He seemed to have more insight than either the politicians or the Whitehall officials, suggesting that Britain should make it clear that the government would not prevent Aden joining a federation if both of them so desired, because the only alternative would be to hold Aden by force. He considered that Britain could best preserve its Middle East interests by coming to terms with

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1557, CPC(58)10th, 19 June 1958, pp. 2-3.

[2] CAB 128, CC(58)50th, 26 June 1958, p. 6.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7. In his memorandum on these proposals Lennox-Boyd argued that if Britain opposed the proposals this would make retention of sovereignty over Aden difficult. See CAB 129, C(58)131, 24 June 1958, p. 4. Aden was regarded, along with Hong Kong, Singapore, Kenya, Cyprus, Malta and Gibraltar, as one of Britain's 'fortress colonies'. See extracts from a speech made by Lennox-Boyd on 9 October 1958 in Porter and Stockwell, *British Imperial Policy and Decolonization*, Vol. II, p. 494.

Arab states, rather than by forcibly keeping this colony and thus creating a running sore in relations with them.[1] It seems that those outside the committee system were more able to come up with innovative proposals, suggesting that the system stifled radical thinking.

It was suggested that in finalising the paper, the CO should take into account the views of the CoS. It was also pointed out that if ministers favoured the Governor's proposals it would be necessary to re-examine Britain's entire strategy in the Middle East, which would take considerable time and so delay a final decision on future policy in Aden. The chairmen (two FO officials) summed up that as long as British policy in the Middle East required the use of force, Britain would need to keep Aden, but that the committee could not make any recommendations on this in advance of the views of the CoS.[2] The comment about re-examining Middle East strategy suggests that there was in the committee system a degree of bureaucratic inertia and a lack of initiative, and that official committees sometimes did not carry out assessments of policy unless there was a lead from ministers, and this was often not given.

Just over a week later Lennox-Boyd told the CPC that it had been decided to set up a federation and retain direct rule over Aden. However, in the light of events in the Middle East in 1958, the Governor felt that unless Britain was prepared to hold on to Aden by force, it would be best to follow a policy of disengagement over a ten-year period and allow Aden to join the planned federation. The Governor felt it would be appropriate to announce this intention at the inauguration of the Western Aden Protectorate Federation. However, Lennox-Boyd pointed out that there would be an advantage in deferring a final decision on this matter until the strategic implications had been studied in more detail.[3] Committee work quite often resulted in a reason being found for delaying taking a decision.

In discussion it was pointed out that although from the strictly military point of view it would be best to retain direct control of Aden, if this became politically impossible then the new proposals seemed the best possible solution. Because a review of policy in the Middle East as a whole was underway, Macmillan said that no final decision could be taken until it was finished.[4] Ministers now seemed more receptive to radical ideas, or at least were not rejecting them in a reflexive manner, but were less willing to make a decision.

At the start of the following year the official Africa Committee discussed British policy in the Persian Gulf. The MoD representative said that the need to have a strategic reserve in Kenya

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2341, OME(58)14th, 12 December 1958, p. 4.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1557, CPC(58)16th, 22 December 1958, p. 4. The main events in 1958 were the creation of the United Arab Republic, the overthrow of the pro-Western monarchy in Iraq, and unrest in Jordan and the Lebanon. The Federation was officially established in February 1959. In 1962 it was renamed the Federation of South Arabia.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

depended on to what extent Britain would be prepared to use force to protect oil supplies in the Gulf, and that this issue was presently being discussed at the highest level. He suggested that as long as Britain kept control of Aden it would be possible to safeguard British interests without keeping a strategic reserve in Kenya, although this would be very expensive.[1] So at the very time that the suggestion was being made in one committee, however tenuously, that Britain should pull out of Aden, it was in effect being argued in another committee that keeping Aden was now even more essential; the interconnections between various issues meant that they could be discussed in a number of different committees which could result in contradictory positions being taken. Yet again the committee system was failing to coordinate policy.

In 1958 Lennox-Boyd circulated a memorandum to the CPC which reported that although the federal rulers wanted Aden to join the Federation, they wanted the Federation consolidated and extended first. The Governor now felt that if Britain continued to say that Aden could not expect any more than internal self-government, the position of the moderates would be undermined and the federal rulers would be alienated. The Governor had also reported that the rulers admitted in private that it was in their interest for Britain to retain the Aden base, and that there was no doubt they would agree to a treaty guaranteeing Britain's defence requirements, although he did not know how long they would respect such a treaty.[2]

Lennox-Boyd said that because the ministerial Middle East Committee had recognized that Aden was of great importance to Britain, he would assume, when planning policy, that Britain would continue to require unrestricted use of its facilities there. He identified the fundamental problem as devising a policy which not only took this into account, but also took into account the pressures building up in the Federation and in Aden for a merger followed by independence. He did not favour a merger because the risk to defence interests would be too high, and suggested that the best course would be to play for time and avoid defining government policy more clearly.[3] He later told the Cabinet that he would not make a statement on the future of Aden and the Federation for some time to come.[4]

A year later the Defence Committee asked Macleod to submit a memorandum on the probable course of constitutional development there, a request which indicates the wider interest in certain colonies, and also suggests that he was unlikely to enjoy a free hand over this colony. His memorandum outlined recent developments such as the introduction of a new constitution

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)1st, 14 January 1959, pp. 3-4.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)12, 14 August 1958, pp. 1-2.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 2. For the Middle East Committee's discussions see PRO, CAB 134/2230, ME(M)(59)4th, 11 March 1959. This memorandum was not discussed by the CPC; presumably it was only a briefing document.

[4] CAB 128, CC(59)51st, 8 September 1959, p. 3.

in January 1959, which provided for significant participation in government by elected members, some of whom had been given departmental responsibilities, and the growth of public interest in further constitutional development caused by the grant of self-government to other colonies. The moderates in Aden had suggested that from 1963 Aden should become responsible for its own domestic affairs, and as the nationalists wanted to drive Britain out of Aden, Macleod felt it was desirable to agree to the moderates' request. However, there was a danger that if constitutional development proceeded along normal lines - that is a larger elected membership and a widened franchise - the nationalists would strive for a majority and could well succeed. What was needed was some particular arrangement to satisfy the moderates and, if necessary, an improvement of police and security forces.[1]

During a Defence Committee discussion of Aden, Macmillan said that in promoting constitutional development Britain also had to safeguard its defence interests there. For some reason, however, he added that although at their last meeting the committee had discussed some of the steps to be taken if Britain lost the use of Aden as a base (the minutes of this have still not been released), no further detailed examination of this contingency should be undertaken at present.[2] This epitomises one of the major shortcomings of the committee system: its constant failure to make contingency plans.

In 1961 Macleod told the CPC that following discussions in the Defence Committee the previous October, he had undertaken to examine the problems of constitutional development in Aden, taking into account the importance of retaining military facilities there for as long as possible. Both he and the Commander-in-Chief Middle East supported the Governor's proposals for new franchise arrangements for Aden which would keep the moderate leaders in power. Both Macleod and the Governor felt that this would make it more likely that Britain would be able to retain its defence facilities there for a number of years. Macmillan suggested that a constitutional conference should be held in London, and that to keep the friendship of the Protectorate rulers, a public announcement should be made that Britain favoured the eventual union of Aden and the Protectorate. The Minister of Defence, Harold Watkinson, responded that because it was essential to retain Britain's defence facilities in Aden for a considerable time, he would prefer no changes, but if this was not possible he would like the rate of constitutional advance to be as slow as possible.[3] Other ministers were now starting to accept, however reluctantly, that there was no alternative to constitutional advance.

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[1] PRO, CAB 131/24, D(60)53, 27 October 1960, pp. 1-2.
[2] PRO, CAB 131/23, D(60)11th, 2 November 1960, p. 4.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)5th, 5 May 1961, p. 1. The Governor was now Sir Charles Johnson who felt that a merger between Aden and the Protectorate was desirable. See G. Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East* (Cambridge 1991), p. 74.

In further discussion there was agreement that the franchise would need to be changed, but disagreement about a merger. Some ministers felt that a merger was necessary in order to retain the support of the Protectorate rulers, and to tie the nationalists in Aden into a larger grouping dominated by more stable elements. In addition, a merger would also help preserve internal security, which would in turn ensure that Britain could make better use of the base than would be the case if Aden was given self-government and Britain kept responsibility for internal security. The sole but powerful argument against all this was that creating a new state by such a merger would increase pressure for independence. Britain's use of the base would depend on a treaty if independence had to be given, and Britain might not be allowed to use the base for operations against other Arab states. Macmillan 'summed up' the discussion, but in the way he so often did by introducing new elements that had not actually featured in the discussions. He said that two alternative plans should be prepared for further discussion by ministers. The first should be based on the Governor's proposals. The second should be based on delaying the merger of Aden and the Protectorate for the time being, but restructuring the franchise in Aden and transferring responsibility for its internal affairs, other than internal security, to elected representatives. Ministers would then consider which options would preserve Britain's defence facilities for the longer time.[1] It is clear that by this time constitutional advance in Aden had nothing to do with colonial policy: it had everything to do with trying to make sure that Britain could retain the Aden Base for as long as possible.

At the next meeting of the CPC, Macleod continued to push for a merger because he felt there would otherwise be a danger that Britain would be forced to resume direct rule, which would have undesirable political and security consequences. However, in order to meet some of the apprehensions expressed at the previous meeting, he now agreed that there should be no initial public statement, and that a decision should be deferred on the place and chairmanship of the constitutional conference. Discussion revolved around whether Britain should take the initiative regarding the merger, or whether it would be best to wait until the Protectorate rulers or Aden moderates raised the matter. It was again argued in favour of the latter course that a merger would increase the demand for independence, which would put defence facilities at risk. Against this it was now argued that the rulers were in favour of Britain retaining military facilities, and that they regarded the Britain presence as providing protection against Yemen. Macmillan suggested that the best course would be to invite the rulers to London to see if they favoured an early merger; if they did the government should arrange for one. Macleod was asked to examine, with the Minister of Defence, the possibility of keeping defence facilities

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)5th, 5 May 1961, pp. 2-3.

sites under British sovereignty.[1] Matters had now gone as far as they could at committee level and any further decisions needed to be made by the Cabinet.

When the Cabinet discussed the matter Macleod repeated his earlier arguments. He also said that although the rulers of the federal states were interested in a merger, they feared the development of nationalism in Aden and wanted Britain to maintain its authority there, and if necessary use it to force a union in which their position would be dominant. The Secretary of State for Air repeated the argument about the dangers of creating a larger unit. In contrast, Watkinson was more pragmatic, saying that although it would be better if the situation did not change, some degree of constitutional advance was inevitable in order to retain the support of the moderates, and because the support of the rulers would be lost if Britain did not encourage a merger. The Cabinet agreed that if the rulers decided to pursue a merger the government should welcome the decision.[2] Much of the discussion was simply a repeat of what had been said in the CPC and so the Cabinet discussion does not seem very productive, and yet again the government was avoiding taking the initiative.

At the end of the year the CPC considered a memorandum by Maudling which recommended that arrangements should be made for a merger before the next election, which would take place under the new constitution. Maudling began by stating that when considering constitutional development in this area, the government had to be guided by the overriding importance of defence interests. He said that although he had not at first favoured a merger, he now felt that this course of action would be better than sustaining the assumption made in a minute from Macmillan to Watkinson, that Britain could count on having unrestricted use of its military facilities in Aden until 1970. The usual arguments were made against a merger. In addition, a minister suggested that Britain should do all it could in advance to ensure that Britain retained sovereignty over the base areas after independence; if they were lost, a change to an extremely costly mobile strategy would be necessary. The committee was, however, in general agreement with Maudling's proposals. The committee does not appear to have moved matters on much though, because yet again it was agreed that Maudling and the Minister of Defence should consider what sort of agreement on the bases should be sought, and that this should be done before Maudling submitted a paper to the Cabinet on constitutional development in Aden.[3]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)6th, 16 May 1961, pp. 1-2.

[2] CAB 128, CC(61)29th, 30 May 1961, pp. 8-9.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)13th, 20 December 1961, pp. 4-5. It appears to have been early in 1956 when the issue of a mobile strategy was first seriously discussed by ministers in Cabinet committees. When the Defence Committee discussed a memorandum by the CoS on British strategy in the 1960s, Watkinson pointed out that the central problem was the difficulty of devising an affordable strategy due to the assumptions made about the security of Britain's overseas bases, which meant that there had to be greater flexibility in the use of Britain's forces. He said he could see no alternative other than taking the first steps towards relying more on seaborne and airborne forces which would use small

When the CPC first discussed Aden in 1962, Perth told ministers that it was now proposed that Britain should arrange for the merger of Aden and the Federation before further elections were held in the Colony. Watkinson explained the practical difficulties involved in retaining sovereignty over British military installations, such as the vulnerability of some bases to attack, and said he agreed with the CoS that the only practical course of action was to retain control over the whole territory. The main point made in discussion was that under the present defence plans it was essential to retain facilities at Aden and Singapore for at least ten years. After that time it might be possible to have a strategy based on large seaborne forces and facilities in strategically placed islands. After this short discussion Perth gave details of the constitutional proposals and commented that their whole object was to strengthen the support Britain was receiving from Adeni moderates, and that an early election might result in a nationalist majority.[1] Watkinson failed to explain how control could be retained and did not refute the arguments of CO ministers.

The general assumption now was that the Aden base could only be relied upon until 1970 and so the issue now was how much money should be spent on it given its finite lifespan.[2] The Defence Committee was informed that it was now assumed that British forces would have to be withdrawn from Kenya, and that half of them should be based in the Middle East, mostly at Aden where the accommodation would need to be improved and enlarged. In discussion the point was made that it was not possible to affirm with certainty that security of tenure in Aden could last beyond 1970, and therefore spending £11 million on the base was unsound financial planning. The discussion ended with the suggestion that it might be possible to negotiate indefinite continuation of British sovereignty over an enclave.[3]

When Sandys briefed the Cabinet on the political implications of the merger and the safeguarding of Britain's military facilities, he told ministers that the majority of Aden's population opposed a merger; the proposals only had the support of the Aden Legislature because the elections to that body were based on a limited franchise, and in consequence had been widely boycotted. The government must therefore assume that a merger would create unrest and even disorder. Nevertheless, the Legislature had requested a merger and Britain had decided that this was in its best interests, and so Sandys felt it should go ahead, although he

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forward operating facilities, rather than bases in the traditional sense. See PRO, CAB 131/27, D(62)1st, 12 January 1962, p. 3.

[1] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)4th, 16 February 1962, pp. 1-2.

[2] In a discussion in the Study of Future Policy Steering Committee, the CO said it could endorse the assumption in a report to the committee that the facilities in Aden would be available until 1970, although it could not confirm at present the apparent assumption of the CoS that the base would still be available until the mid-1970s. See PRO, CAB 134/1933, FP(A)(62)1st, 4 January 1962, p. 2.

[3] PRO, CAB 131/27, D(62)8th, 16 May 1962, p. 3.

considered it was best to warn the Cabinet that the result could be serious political difficulties.[1] This statement was less about contributing to policy-making and more about a minister covering his own back.

Sandys added that although Britain would retain sovereignty and remain responsible for defence, foreign affairs and internal security, there would be increasing pressure for a transfer of sovereignty and it was unlikely that this could be resisted beyond the late 1960s. If a merger did not take place, independence would probably have to be given by 1965 at the latest. British defence interests could be protected either by a treaty or by keeping sovereignty over those limited areas where defence installations were concentrated. Sandys recommended the latter because Britain's position under a treaty would not be that secure.[2]

The new Minister of Defence, Peter Thorneycroft, shared his predecessor's doubts about the sovereign base scheme. He thought it would be unlikely to be effective, not only because of practical difficulties such as the military installations not forming a coherent whole, but also because he had been advised that this proposal would make negotiations for a merger more difficult. Thorneycroft was intruding in Sandys' own territory and using colonial policy concerns against him. Nevertheless, Sandys was authorized to proceed with negotiations for a merger, but was asked to consult with the Minister of Defence and the Lord Chancellor on safeguarding military facilities.[3] Sandys later circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet informing ministers that an agreement for the accession of Aden to the Federation had been concluded, and that the draft treaty maintained full Britain sovereignty over Aden, and gave Britain the right to withdraw at any time from the Federation any areas in Aden that were required for military purposes.[4]

Britain now faced further difficulties because of the overthrow of the new *imam* (ruler) of Yemen and the establishment of a republican regime there. The initial attitude of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, was that a policy of non-involvement was best and that recognition of the new regime should be delayed. Macmillan's worry was that the regime would be bound to work actively against the merger of Aden and the federation, and the end result could be damage to Britain's position in the Persian Gulf. However, active support of the reactionary royalists would be politically distasteful and so he felt there was no alternative to Home's suggestion.[5]

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[1] CAB 128, CC(62)52nd, 1 August 1962, p. 3.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
[4] CAB 129, C(62)133, 21 August 1962, p. 1.
[5] CAB 128, CC(62)59th, 9 October 1962, p. 4.

As Sandys later reported to the Cabinet, the rulers of the federal states were worried that if the republican regime in Yemen established itself, their own armed forces would be the target of subversion. If this happened Yemeni influence would be extended to the borders of Aden, so undermining Britain's position there.[1] Despite this warning it was decided at the next Cabinet meeting to recognize in principle the new regime because although, as Home admitted, this would have repercussions in Aden, withholding recognition would incur the hostility of the new government in Yemen which claimed to be well disposed towards Britain.[2]

An *ad hoc* committee, consisting of both ministers and officials and chaired by Macmillan, was established to deal with the problem of Yemen.[3] Recent Yemeni attacks on the Federation led the committee to agree at its first meeting that the date of recognition would have to be postponed.[4] Macmillan, briefing the members rather than Sandys - an indication that Aden was not really being treated as a colonial matter - told the committee's next meeting that the Governor now considered it was unlikely that the rulers would accept British recognition of the new Yemeni regime. It was pointed out that failure to grant early recognition would lead to the expulsion of the British Ambassador to Yemen, which would mean there would be no chance of influencing the new regime in a way favourable to Britain's interests in Aden. However, Britain's position in Aden was of paramount importance, and Britain's whole position in the area would be jeopardized if recognition resulted in the collapse of the rulers' morale. Macmillan decided that Yemen should be told that recognition could only be considered if something was done about Yemeni agitation in Aden.[5]

Despite the establishment of an *ad hoc* committee, the matter was still debated by the Cabinet because ministers were still uneasy about the repercussions in Aden. Macmillan told ministers that the Governor of Aden considered that recognition would harm British supporters in the Federation, exacerbate political agitation in Aden, and could undermine Britain's whole position in the region. However, Macmillan pointed out that failure to grant recognition would mean Britain would have no hope of influencing the new regime, and the new regime would intensify the traditional Yemeni policy of subversion.[6]

Matters were made more complicated by the possibility that America would recognize the new regime. Sandys told the Cabinet that this would have serious consequences for Aden,

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[1] CAB 128, CC(62)60th, 15 October 1962, p. 3.
[2] CAB 128, CC(62)61st, 23 October 1962, p. 8.
[3] Those present at its first meeting were Macmillan, Sandys, R, S, Crawford of the FO, W. H. Formoy of the CO and Sir Dick White, the head of MI6. See PRO, CAB 130/189, GEN 776/1st, 26 October 1962, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 130/189, GEN 776/1st, 26 October 1962, pp. 1-2.
[5] PRO, CAB 130/189, GEN 776/2nd, 31 October 1962, pp. 1-3.
[6] CAB 128, CC(62)66th, 6 November 1962, pp. 3-4.

especially now that the regime had publicly announced their intention to subvert the authority of the rulers of the protected states, because US recognition would encourage subversion and dishearten Britain's supporters. Macmillan and Home said they would consider what further representations could be made to America.[1] Sandys felt that it would be better to lose diplomatic recognition with Yemen than to weaken Britain's position in Aden, whereas Home felt that once America recognized the republican regime Britain would soon have to follow suit.[2] The Cabinet was later informed that America had decided to grant recognition.[3]

At the beginning of 1963, Macmillan summed up the government's dilemma as being a conflict between short-term and long-term interests. In the short-term, consolidation of the merger between Aden and the Federation was crucial, but in the long-term Britain's interests would suffer if relations with the Yemeni regime were permanently damaged.[4] When the problem was discussed by the Oversea Policy Committee, Home announced that the government had been overtaken by events because the regime had publicly demanded that Britain withdraw its representative in Yemen. It was agreed that Britain should refuse to recognize the new regime.[5] This issue epitomises the sort of reactive policy-making that often happened, which consisted of the committee system being used as a talking shop instead of a decision-making apparatus, until events ensured that the government no longer had a choice of policies to decide upon.

At about the same time the importance of Aden was seriously questioned. In a Defence Committee discussion it was pointed out that although Aden had originally been important because of the need to protect the route to India, it was still considered to be of value because Britain needed to protect its oil interests. However, it was argued that the economic rationale behind this could be flawed because it was possible that the earnings from Britain's interests in this area were actually less than the cost of maintaining forces there. The oil exporting countries would still need to sell their oil, of which there was surplus production, whether or not Britain still had the Aden base.[6]

In response, the traditional litany was intoned: Britain's military presence in Aden and in Cyprus had a stabilising influence in the Middle East and sustained Britain's continuing role as a world power, and Britain's prestige would be damaged if it were thought that Britain had withdrawn troops because it could not afford to maintain them. It was then suggested that any

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[1] CAB 128, CC(62)68th, 13 November 1962, p. 4.
[2] CAB 128, CC(62)73rd, 6 December 1962, p. 5.
[3] CAB 128, CC(62)75th, 20 December 1962, p. 7.
[4] PRO, CAB 130/189, GEN 776/3rd, 5 February 1963, p. 3.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)1st, 13 February 1963, p. 4.
[6] PRO, CAB 131/28, D(63)3rd, 9 February 1963, p. 4.

withdrawal should be coupled with an attempt to come to an accommodation with Arab nationalists, rather than supporting the autocratic regimes where Britain's economic interests were concentrated. In the end it was decided that a study should be made of the cost of maintaining the Aden base in comparison to the value of the interests it protected.[1] Once again a committee had evaded decision-making by establishing a study, and as has been seen such official committee studies generally had little impact.

Sandys seems to have had little faith in his predecessors' assumption that constitutional advance was the only way to secure retention of the base, or was more realistic about the long-term effects of such change. He told the Oversea Policy Committee that when the Federation became independent there would be considerable pressure to withdraw from the base, even though it was of considerable economic value to Aden. He therefore suggested that Britain should appear to be considering withdrawing by acquiring sufficient land at Little Aden for an alternative base, even though there was no intention of building one. He hoped such a move would force the Aden government to realistically face the economic consequences of British withdrawal, and in consequence agree that Britain should remain. This scheme suggests a degree of desperation, and the general view of the committee was that it was too risky because the Aden government might call Britain's bluff, and because it might arouse as much political hostility as remaining in the Aden base. The committee decided that Sandys should arrange for the High Commissioner and the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East to re-examine the scheme.[2]

That a more critical view was now being taken of certain standard assumptions was shown when, at a later meeting of the Defence Committee, Macmillan said that although it could be maintained that the main reason for keeping troops in Aden was to protect British oil interests, it could be argued that the threat of force would be less and less effective in doing so.[3] However, Macmillan's comments stopped at this. Whatever new ideas were being voiced were being done in a very tentative way; Macmillan seemed less concerned with creating a sustained argument than with seeing what ripples would be created by the occasional questioning of received ideas. In general the committee system did not give any serious consideration to radical suggestions and did not consider the implications of such ideas. And certainly by being so tentative Macmillan was not putting any pressure on the system to do so.

One reason for Britain's reluctance to withdraw from Aden was its obligations to Kuwait. Britain wanted to continue to be able to protect Kuwait because of the importance of oil supplies from there. The need to do so, and to do so from Aden, had been demonstrated in 1961

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[1] PRO, CAB 131/28, D(63)3rd, 9 February 1963, pp. 4-6.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)1st, 13 February 1963, p. 2.
[3] PRO, CAB 131/28, D(63)8th, 19 June 1963, p. 1.

when troops sent to Aden from Britain, in response to a public claim made by Iraq to Kuwait, had problems acclimatizing. Therefore if the troops in Kenya were not redeployed to Aden, Kuwait could not be properly defended. Although troops were transferred Macmillan decided that no further married quarters should be built in Aden because of Britain's uncertain tenure there[1]

Confirmation that constitutional change in Aden was completely determined by strategic considerations is provided by a memorandum produced by the CO itself. This paper stated that the aim of the constitutional development in recent years in both Aden State and Aden Protectorate was to secure the use of Aden until at least 1970, and that the only way of ensuring this, short of using military force, was to foster an alliance between the moderates in Aden and the traditional rulers in the western half of the Protectorate. The enlarged Federation, which Aden had joined in January 1963, required additional economic aid, and the CO said that funding needed to be increased from the 1962-63 total of £7.55 million to a minimum of £11.12 million for 1963-64.[2] The importance of Aden was therefore a double-edged sword for the CO; although the CO lost authority over policy for Aden, its strategic value made it more likely that the CO could get increased financial aid for it.

The question of excising the bases was now examined more carefully. The official DOPC concluded that the minimum area needed to meet defence requirements would be half of Aden's habitable land. It was pointed out that in any case, whether excision or a defence treaty was chosen, Britain's ability to mount operations from Aden ultimately depended on the goodwill of the local population.[3] At the committee's next meeting it was suggested that sovereign bases would offer greater security because any treaty would have to be ratified after independence, and could be disowned by Aden as soon as it was politically convenient. Against this it was pointed out that the inhabitants generally favoured British troops staying, both as a source of income and as a defence against Yemen. It was also suggested that although it was theoretically possible to give independence in April 1964, there were strong arguments for proceeding more slowly.[4] No conclusion was reached on whether sovereign bases or a defence treaty would be best. In this instance, discussions did not lead to a recommendation to be given to ministers, or even to a clarification of the arguments for and against either alternative. Discussions seemed to be going round in circles. The comment about independence was not repeated in any other committee or in the Cabinet, and all other discussions proceeded on the assumption, which was not challenged in this committee, that progress should be slow.

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[1] PRO, CAB 131/28, D(63)12th, 31 July 1963, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/2278, OC(O)(63)33, 20 August 1963, p. 3 and p. 9.
[3] PRO, CAB 148/3, DO(O)(63)1st, 23 October 1963, p. 2.
[4] PRO, CAB 148/3, DO(O)(63)2nd, 6 November 1963, p. 1.

By the time the *ad hoc* Yemen committee held its last meeting in December 1963 Home was Prime Minister. Some of this meeting deal not with Yemen but with internal developments in Aden. Sandys said that in forthcoming talks with Aden's ministers, it would need to be made clear that Britain was not considering withdrawing from the Aden base, and suggested that Britain should excise the military bases when Aden's status changed. Ministers did not discuss his statement; instead, the committee asked him to submit his proposal to the DOPC.[1] Sandys clearly did not miss any opportunity to push his concerns, and was exploiting the committee system and wasting ministers' time by doing so. The fact that he was able to attempt to do so suggests that Home's chairmanship of committees was less effective than Macmillan's.

Aden was discussed frequently at the end of 1963 because of a forthcoming constitutional conference, and the declaration of a state of emergency after the attempted assassination of the UK High Commissioner for South Arabia. Sandys told the DOPC that it was desirable that the present moderate government was re-elected, and that the chances of this happening would be improved if the moderates could show they had gained substantial constitutional advance, namely 'independence' in the form of Aden becoming a protectorate within the Federation. This would be to Britain's advantage because the Federation would become responsible for internal security, and would be able to use greater severity in enforcing order than would be politically possible for Britain to do. In addition, such 'independence' would forestall any demands by extremists for genuine independence outside the Federation. Before giving 'independence', Britain would excise the military base areas from the Federation and keep them under direct colonial rule. A minister argued that such changes might make it more difficult for Britain to retain its military presence in Aden and protect its Middle East interests; if the Federation abused its responsibility for internal security this would rebound on Britain, and excising the base areas would lead to criticism from the Arab world. Home decided that because the proposals involved such substantial issues they needed to be discussed by the Cabinet. He finished by stressing that whatever decision was taken, Britain had to emphasis that it intended to stay in Aden indefinitely.[2]

The following day Sandys repeated to the Cabinet what he had told the DOPC. The only difference was that he added that, so far as excising the base areas was concerned, it would at present probably be sufficient to indicate that Britain retained the right to do so. It was suggested that the bases were so intermingled with the rest of the territory that it would be impracticable to excise them. A minister expressed the concern that if Britain appeared to be surrendering control over the Colony, this could lead Egypt to believe that the Gulf States might

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/189, GEN 776/5th, 2 December 1963, p. 3.
[2] PRO, CAB 148/15, DO(63)3rd, 4 December 1963, p. 6.

be attacked by Saudi Arabia, and Egypt might therefore intervene itself. Home finished the discussion by saying that the matter should be further considered by the DOPC.[1] This decision not only suggests how difficult this matter was, it also shows a degree of inefficiency in the committee system; a decision should have been referred to the Cabinet when a committee could not reach agreement, not the other way round. This issue appears to have been taken to the Cabinet prematurely, and in consequence there was a duplication of work which achieved nothing, providing further evidence that Home ran a less efficient ship than Macmillan.

When the DOPC next discussed Aden, a minister argued that the proposals offered few advantages and considerable dangers, because there was nothing to prevent an independent and nationalist Aden government subsequently withdrawing from the Federation, and another minister added that it would be best from a military point of view if the status of Aden did not change. In response it was argued that to maintain Britain's position it was essential to keep local goodwill and ensure the re-election of the moderate government. The debate was going round in circles and yet again no agreement was reached. Home simply said that on balance it was best to postpone the constitutional talks.[2]

Despite the comment that from a military point of view it would be best if Aden's status remained unaltered, Thorneycroft supported Sandys' proposals. In a memorandum to the DOPC Thorneycroft said that although it would be best if Aden remained a colony, this would be pointless if so much friction was generated by doing so that the benefits of retaining sovereignty were negated. As the Aden base needed the goodwill of the local population to operate efficiently, he therefore felt that some political advance was necessary, and that Sandys' proposals would best serve British defence interests.[3]

Sandys now reconsidered his proposals, and suggested a range of measures that would result in Britain only retaining powers to give mandatory advice to the governments of the Federation and its constituent states on external affairs, defence and internal security. These proposals would not affect British sovereignty over Aden, which would remain a colony. The DOPC agreed to these new proposals but, showing some wariness about them, insisted that when they were announced, it should also be made clear that Britain intended to maintain a military presence in Aden indefinitely.[4]

However, Sandys altered his proposals because the High Commissioner for South Arabia now felt that the extremists would win the forthcoming election. Surprisingly, he decided to give away more of Britain's powers, and proposed that Britain should only retain control over

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[1] CAB 128, CM(63)9th, 5 December 1963, pp. 5-6.
[2] PRO, CAB 148/15, DO(63)4th, 11 December 1963, pp. 3-4.
[3] PRO, CAB 148/15, DO(63)10, 10 December 1963, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)5th, 29 January 1964, pp. 3-4.

internal security to the extent necessary for defence of the military bases. Although this would increase the powers of an extremist Aden government, security throughout the Federation would be the responsibility of the Federal government, which could also take over control of the Aden police in an emergency. The High Commissioner for South Arabia, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, who was present at the meeting, argued that extremists in Aden would be less likely to cause trouble if they knew that the Federal government was responsible for internal security.[1]

In discussion it was emphasized that if Britain ignored pressure for constitutional advance, the result would be serious political trouble which would eventually force Britain to give way. The counter-arguments did not deal with this point. Instead, it was suggested that Adenis might not like coming under the control of the Federation, that Adeni control of the police and port could threaten Britain's control of the military base, and that the proposals could be presented as Britain intending to withdraw completely in the near future. In addition, if a compensation scheme for British administrators was established, as Sandys had suggested, this would encourage them to leave, leading to a fall in the standard of administration which would mean that Britain would not be able to resume control of Aden.[2]

Sandys changed his plans yet again in response to these concerns. He said that only a limited scheme would be necessary, to enable those officials whose position became intolerable because of the actions or policies of Adeni or federal ministers to retire, and to make sure that ministers knew he was willing to compromise, he pointed out that the High Commissioner would prefer a full-scale scheme. Following a discussion in which all the usual arguments were repeated, the committee agreed to Sandys' modified proposal.[3]

An additional problem for the government in 1964 was an uprising by rebel tribesmen in the Radfan area of the Federation, whom Sandys said were being helped by the USSR.[4] As a result of this tribal revolt Sandys decided to visit Aden. In telegrams he informed the Cabinet he had agreed that the constitutional talks could now take place, and had decided that if the rebel tribesmen could not be persuaded to stop harbouring Yemeni agitators then air power would need to be used. The Cabinet agreed in a pointless debate that further constitutional advance would need to be discussed very carefully - something they had been doing anyway.[5] Sandys later told the Cabinet that the measures taken to suppress the revolt were gradually succeeding.[6]

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[1] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)10th, 26 February 1964, pp. 5-6.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
[3] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)11th, 28 February 1964, pp. 3-4.
[4] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)17th, 8 April 1964, p. 4.
[5] CAB 128, CM(64)27th, 12 May 1964, pp. 3-4.
[6] CAB 128, CM(64)29th, 26 May 1964, p. 3.

Britain's quandary over constitutional advance was encapsulated at a meeting of the DOPC, when it was agreed that while it was politically inevitable that constitutional progress had to be made, this involved serious risks to British defence interests.[1] Aden, as Thorneycroft had earlier emphasized to the Cabinet, was the focus of Britain's arrangements to protect its interests and discharge its commitments in the Middle East, and was an essential link in the chain of communications with Singapore. Withdrawal from Aden would mean that Britain would be unable to hold Singapore and would leave a vacuum which the Soviet bloc would try to fill, hence US concern about Britain retaining both bases.[2] Clearly then, Cold War concerns meant that there was no indiscriminate anti-colonial pressure from America for Britain to withdraw from all of its colonies.

Sandys told the Cabinet that he felt the postponed constitutional talks should be held in June, and that at this conference the government would probably be pressed to commit itself to a date for Federal independence, possibly one five years hence. He added, in one of his few mentions of colonial welfare, that Britain needed to promote the economic development of Aden and the Federation, pointing out that to be generous in this respect would in the end be more economical than attempting to hold down the territories by force.[3] What was unusual in the case of Aden was how infrequently Sandys attempted to get more aid. Unlike other Colonial Secretaries, who made efforts to stand up for the interests of a colony, Sandys was more concerned with broader British interests, and clearly saw constitutional advance not as an end in itself, but as a means by which Britain could retain the base.

As well as tension between the CO and other departments when it came to the economic needs of the colonies, there could also be tension between the CO and the 'men on the spot', as shown when the High Commissioner requested an extra £3 million a year for the Federation. A team of CO officials had visited the Federation to examine this request, and Sandys informed the DOPC that they had recommended £1.29 million a year of additional funding. In discussion the committee was told that the High Commissioner felt this amount was totally inadequate, especially the allocation for agriculture and roads. Showing that defence matters were never far from mind, a minister pointed out that the team's report did not take full account of the defence implications of civil development expenditure, and that there was a special need for substantial expenditure on road building. The committee compromised by approving Sandys' proposals, but agreeing to consider whether or not additional money was required after further discussion with the High Commissioner.[4]

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[1] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)25th, 3 June 1964, p. 6.
[2] CAB 128, CM(64)28th, 14 May 1964, p. 4.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
[4] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)25th, 3 June 1964, pp. 4-5.

After this discussion Sandys outlined possible developments at the forthcoming constitutional conference. He argued that the rulers of the federal states needed to be able to present themselves to the Arab world as not being British puppets and therefore required the prospect of independence. His line at the conference would be that Britain would be ready to give independence when the Federation felt ready for it, and that a conference to discuss independence would be held in two years time. The logic of Sandys' position was so strong, not least because Britain had little choice, that Thorneycroft was unable to come up with a convincing argument against it. He recognised the inevitability of change, and said that he saw the political and international advantages of Sandys' proposals, but feared they might undermine Britain's position and so felt that constitutional development should take place as slowly as possible.[1]

The committee had to discuss this matter on two more occasions because ministers found it difficult to make a decision or, more accurately, to recognize that there was no alternative policy. This was a general feature of the system - a delusion that Britain had various viable options to choose from. At its next meeting, showing the way opinion was shifting, the committee agreed that in view of Arab nationalism Sandys' timetable was not unreasonable, but that any formal undertaking should be coupled with a statement by Federal ministers that they wished Britain to continue to occupy the base after independence. The committee authorized Sandys to say at the conference that a further constitutional conference would be considered in two or three years time, as a preliminary move before independence in five years time.[2] Despite this agreement the matter was raised at the committee's next meeting; a minister felt it necessary to emphasize that the conference needed to make explicit the link between independence and the conclusion of a defence agreement allowing Britain to retain the Aden base.[3]

When the DOPC discussed the outcome of the conference it agreed, with the exception of the compensation scheme for British administrators, that the terms proposed by Sandys were satisfactory. However, Home said that he would nevertheless like them to be considered by the Cabinet before an agreement was reached.[4] The Cabinet did not in fact discuss this matter. Instead, an *ad hoc* committee met later that same day to deal with the conference's outcome. Butler, now Foreign Secretary and who had not been at that morning's meeting of the DOPC, and the Chancellor were both members of this committee, as were two other Treasury ministers.

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[1] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)25th, 3 June 1964, pp. 5-6.
[2] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)26th, 12 June 1964, p. 9.
[3] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)27th, 22 June 1964, p. 4.
[4] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)30th, 3 July 1964, p. 3. It was thought a full compensation scheme would set an undesirable precedent and encourage officers to leave the Overseas Civil Service.

Other ministers appear to have sat on this committee because they were regarded as disinterested parties who were not pushing the particular concerns of their own department and so could be more objective, such as the Secretary of State for Scotland, and the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Welsh Affairs.[1]

Sandys outlined the background to the situation and told ministers that it was proposed to convert Aden into a protected state within a protectorate. In discussion there was general agreement that Sandys' proposals would improve Britain's chances of retaining the Aden base and of allaying criticism in the UN, although it was felt that care would be needed with the public presentation of the proposals. The committee also agreed that independence should be granted to the Federation in 1968.[2] In contrast to the tortuous discussions in the Cabinet, the discussions in this committee went smoothly, and the matter appears to have been resolved in a straightforward manner. Perhaps those disinterested ministers were able to see more clearly that there was no option to Sandys' proposals. However, the fact that this decision was made by a committee rather than by the Cabinet suggests that Home used the committee system in a less astute way than Macmillan. The latter would have ensured that the final decision was made by the Cabinet so that all Cabinet ministers were identified with it.

In the month before this discussion a Long-Term Study Group had been established by the official DOPC to examine Britain's interests and commitments in the Middle East, Far East and Europe, and to do so on the assumption that the bases in Aden and Singapore would no longer be available to Britain by 1970 and 1975 respectively.[3] The assumption regarding Aden was that although the Federal and Aden governments would not want Britain to withdraw, the pressures of Arab nationalism would grow to the point at which Britain would be forced to leave.[4]

This new body prepared a report on the political preparations for withdrawal from the Aden base, which stated that the internal situation in Southern Arabia was favourable because only external pressures existed, mainly Egyptian propaganda and subversion, and political pressure at the UN. In contrast to the considerable concern there had been about internal unrest in Africa, there was little concern about this in the case of Aden. This seems strange given that there had been more unrest in the Federation, some of it fomented and funded by Yemen, than there had been, for example, in Tanganyika. Yet for some reason at no time was much made of the nationalist threat in Aden. There seems to have been a selective perception at work here, as in other areas of colonial policy where if the realities of a situation did not clash with Britain's

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/200, GEN 871/1st, 3 July 1964, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
[3] PRO, CAB 148/8, DO(O)(S)(64)1st, 8 June 1964, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 148/8, DO(O)(S)(64)8th, 4 September 1964, p. 2.

intention they could be acknowledged. However, if the realities clashed with Britain's aims they were ignored, or at least played down, and this happened most of the time with Aden.[1] The main concern was the political implications of withdrawal. The report said, showing that decolonization was not an immediately economically advantageous move, that to pacify the rulers of the Federation's states, who would be dismayed by Britain withdrawing, expenditure in South Arabia would have to be increased considerably. This needed to be done to ensure that a Congo type situation of economic and political collapse did not occur, and to guard against the danger of the rulers turning to Egypt and Yemen.[2]

A report by the official DOPC pointed out that Britain's responsibility for law and order in the High Commission Territories, Mauritius and the Seychelles could not easily be met without the Aden base. This report concluded that the decision to withdraw voluntarily from Aden depended on a decision that the defence of Kuwait was no longer necessary or possible, or could be provided for in some other way. The report went on to warn that if Britain stayed in Aden, relations with the major Arab countries might remain strained, and there would be continued subversion in the Federation, perhaps even a hostile government, and possible sabotage in Aden itself. If Britain was forced out the result would be a perceived victory for Arab nationalism and a severe blow to Britain's prestige.[3]

In this instance the views of officials were far more realistic than those of ministers. Sometimes officials could be more rigid and narrow-minded in their views than ministers, and less able to think radically or innovatively, but in this case it was the other way round. Ministers had complacently assumed that the new constitutional arrangements and the economic benefits of the base would assure Britain's position there. As subsequent events were to show, ministers had badly misjudged the situation in Aden, and officials had been more realistic in their assessment of the situation there.

VI. CONCLUSION

It is clear that colonial policy was in certain cases strongly influenced by wider policy concerns, especially strategic considerations. In the case of Malaysia constitutional advance as an end in itself was of little significance in its own right compared to the desire to safeguard

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[1] One of the few exceptions was the suggestion made in the official DOPC that Britain should seek to come to terms with the nationalist forces in South Arabia. See PRO, CAB 148/8, DO(O)(S)(64)8th, 4 September 1964, p. 2.

[2] PRO, CAB 148/9, DO(O)(S)(64)15, 2 September 1964, pp. 1-2.

[3] PRO, CAB 148/7, DO(O)(64)73, 12 October 1964, p. 2 and pp. 5-6.

Singapore, and in Aden constitutional advance was entirely determined by strategic concerns. The papers of the Cabinet committee system also make it clear that independence was not necessarily the long-term goal of British colonial policy, and consideration of the various policy studies shows that Britain did not come to decide to change its conception of its global role.

The CO did its best in the committee system and was an able player in the bureaucratic game, using various tactics to push colonial concerns, such as appealing to British self-interest, both economic and political, and framing its arguments in wide terms, for example linking colonial issues to broader strategic considerations. These cases show that the CO had a clear idea of its place in government and realized when the primacy of British interests over colonial concerns had to be acknowledged. Macmillan was also a very adept player and used the committee system to maximize his control and supervision of issues.

The Cabinet committee system as a whole was somewhat erratic in its functioning. Greater Malaysia shows the system working effectively by reducing the Cabinet's workload; Malaysia was rarely discussed by the Cabinet and there appears to have been no Cabinet discussions at all about the whole thorny issue of the Borneo territories. Perhaps the system worked effectively here because the politicians were giving a lead, not in terms of taking a policy initiative, but rather in seizing an initiative offered to them which seemed obviously advantageous. However, the system was not as successful in the other cases. The policy studies do not appear to have achieved much, with one openly or tacitly acknowledged failure succeeded by another. The Cabinet committee system provided a forum for a great semblance of activity but very few decisions resulted from all this work. The studies offered no answers to the resources/commitments imbalance and they mostly failed to examine the implications of colonial policy for external policy. Aden produced many discussions that often went round in circles and failed to clarify matters or produce a decision. One success of the system might be thought to be the fact that in the case of this colony, the government did not pursue defence policies that were inconsistent with colonial policy. However, this seems less to do with the committee system operating successfully as a policy coordinating device, and more to do with the fact that the CO allowed policy for this colony to be completely determined by strategic concerns. The Southern Cameroons shows that the system could merely act as a way of delaying recognition of the inevitable, until eventually some difficult decisions had to be made.

Overall, the system seemed to be a conservative influence, not just because the committees rarely produced radical ideas, but also because when they did these ideas were not usually transmitted to ministers. In addition, the system was poor at coordinating policy, and did not often consider the implications of change in one policy area for related areas. Furthermore, the policy effect of the system was limited because policy was affected by so many factors, such

as economic problems and defence dilemmas, with which the system did not really get to grips. Above all the system was unable to deal with the big issue of British decline and the implications this had for policy. Although various arguments and suggestions were put forward that recognized decline, they were proposed at different times and in different committees, and so the effect of them was diffused, with the result that they could be ignored. One aspect of this failure to deal with the implications of decline is that is that over a long period the committee system never properly faced up to the imbalance between resources and commitments.

The committee system seemed to lack any internal dynamic. One indication of this is that in the absence of a lead from politicians, official committees engaged in some fairly futile activity. Few discussions produced decisions and the committees could frequently appear to be little more than talking shops. In addition there was a duplication of work, and a lack of even-handedness in discussions because favoured policy options were not that carefully scrutinized. All things considered, the committee system seemed to generate a lot of work without actually achieving very much.

CHAPTER FOUR

COLONIAL CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

Shortly after the Conservatives came to power in 1951, Oliver Lyttelton resoundingly declared to the Commons that the aims of colonial policy were to help the colonial territories to attain self-government within the Commonwealth, and to pursue their economic and social development so that these kept pace with their political development.[1]

This chapter will focus on the political developments in East and West Africa and the colonies in the Caribbean region, including the two mainland ones of British Guiana and British Honduras. The latter group will be studied because they provide an example of the difficulties Britain faced in trying to come up with a viable future for the smaller colonies, and because of the specific interest America had in the future of some of these territories. Africa will be studied in order to provide an analysis of the larger picture - whether there was any coherent plan for the colonies there - and because this continent provided examples of every type of British colony: the strategically valuable and worthless, the economically valuable and worthless, the tiny and large, the relatively constitutionally developed and constitutionally underdeveloped, and the multiracial and racially homogenous. Thus the widely varying types of colonies which Britain possessed in Africa posed a problem for policy-makers; how, if at all, there could be any such thing as an overall plan for them. An account will firstly be given of the studies of colonial constitutional advance, followed by information on the committees that dealt with constitutional advance in the Caribbean region and Africa, after which an analysis of the constitutional development of the Caribbean and African territories will be made.

II. CONCEPTIONS AND ESTIMATES OF INDEPENDENCE

Lyttelton's Commons statement suggests that Britain had no intention of giving independence to all its colonies. That this was the case can be seen in the various discussions of future Commonwealth membership. The whole question of the nature of colonial constitutional advance was steeped in verbal ambiguity, to such an extent that it is not always clear if the

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[1] O. Lyttelton, *The Memoirs of Lord Chandos* (1962), p. 356.

policy-makers themselves knew what they had in mind. When there was talk of self-government it was not always clear what was meant by this; sometimes it sounded as if full independence was meant, at other times it seemed that what was meant was no more than full internal self-government, with Britain still having control over foreign policy and defence. There was even fear of using the very word independence. In one Cabinet discussion of constitutional development it was stated that it was best to use the term full self-government rather than independence, as the latter term implied that colonial constitutional development involved the probability that colonies would secede from the Commonwealth, and could even encourage this idea.[1]

Shortly after he became Prime Minister, Macmillan wrote to the Lord President of the Council, Lord Salisbury, who was chairman of the CPC, asking this body to submit to the Cabinet an estimate of the likely course of colonial constitutional development over the coming years. Macmillan wanted two particular aspects of this to be clarified. Firstly, he wanted ministers to know which colonies were likely to become ready for independence over the next few years, or even if not ready would demand independence so insistently that it could not be denied, and when this stage would be reached. Secondly, he wanted this study to distinguish between those colonies that would qualify for full membership of the Commonwealth and those that would not. He also requested that there should be some indication of what the constitutional future of the latter would be.[2] After he received a copy of Macmillan's memorandum, Lennox-Boyd told Salisbury that when a draft paper had been prepared, he would like it to be considered by the official CPC before going to the ministerial CPC. He also added that he assumed that when Macmillan talked about those colonies which may attain independence but not full Commonwealth membership, what Macmillan actually meant was self-government.[3]

This was not the first time that an attempt was made to come up with some kind of timetable of constitutional advance. One of the earliest efforts was made in a memorandum circulated to the official Commonwealth Membership Committee by the CO in 1953. This paper had a rather cumbersome birth. In November 1952, after discussing a letter from the Sudan Party which expressed the hope that the Sudan would eventually join the Commonwealth, the Cabinet asked the Commonwealth Secretary to consult with the Foreign Secretary and Colonial Secretary on the problems involved in giving full Commonwealth membership and report back to the Cabinet.[4] When the Cabinet discussed the resultant memorandum, ministers agreed to the Commonwealth Secretary's suggestion that a committee should be formed to discuss this

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[1] CAB 128, CM(55)44th, 1 December 1955, p. 7.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)6, 25 February 1957, Annex A, 28 January 1957, p. 1.
[3] PRO CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)6, 25 February 1957, Annex B, 15 February 1957, p. 1.
[4] CAB 128, CC(52)93rd, 6 November 1952, p. 2.

problem, and so in May 1953 the Commonwealth Membership Committee was established.[1] Committees could therefore be set up on the individual initiatives of ministers to examine an issue in which they had a departmental interest. At its first meeting Brook, who as has been noted took a close interest in colonial affairs, was asked to arrange, in consultation with the CRO, CO and FO, for studies to be made of the attributes which self-governing countries that were not full members of the Commonwealth might have, and the practical problems involved in the proposal that such countries should not conduct their own foreign affairs.[2] He was also asked to study the approximate times when colonies might be expected to attain full self-government.[3] As a result the official Commonwealth Membership Committee was established in order to carry out an initial examination of this matter for ministers, an arrangement that was a fairly common feature of the committee system. The CO produced a paper for this body entitled 'Prospects of Independence of Certain Colonial Territories', the main feature of which was the CO's obvious reluctance to make any forecasts about when colonies would become self-governing. The only colonies for which a date was mentioned was the Gold Coast, which the CO suggested might achieve complete self-government between 1956 and 1958, and Malaya, which the CO considered might wish to claim Commonwealth membership by 1958 or 1960.[4] The official committee produced a report, 'The Future of Commonwealth Membership' for the ministerial committee.

As far as the general shape of constitutional development was concerned the report was clear-sighted.

> This process cannot now be halted or reversed, and it is only to a limited extent that its pace can be controlled by the United Kingdom Government. Sometimes it may be possible to secure an acceptance of a reasonable and beneficial delay in order to ensure a more orderly transition. But, in the main, the pace of constitutional change will be determined by the strength of nationalist feeling and the development of political consciousness within the territory concerned....Any attempt to retard by artificial delays the progress of Colonial peoples towards independence would produce disastrous results.[5]

The report went on to divide the colonies into three categories and suggested what the pattern over the next ten to twenty years might be. The Gold Coast, Nigeria, the CAF, a

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[1] CAB 128, CC(53)26th, 14 April 1953, p. 14. For Swinton's memorandum see CAB 129, C(53)122, 8 April 1953. For the terms of reference and composition of this committee see PRO, CAB 134/786, CCM(53)1, 4 May 1953, p. 1.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/786, CCM(53)1st, 7 May 1953, p. 3.

[3] PRO, CAB 130/87, GEN 435/1st, 15 May 1953, p. 1.

[4] PRO, CAB 130/87, GEN 435/3, 27 June 1953, p. 3 and p. 5. As far as the Gold Coast was concerned, when Britain talked of independence that was exactly what was meant. In a discussion in this committee Brook said that the Gold Coast would soon advance further and become fully independent with the constitutional right, which it must be expected to exercise, to conduct its own foreign affairs. See PRO, CAB 130/87, GEN 435/2nd, 17 July 1953, p. 5.

[5] PRO, CAB 130/87, GEN 435/6, 15 January 1954, p. 1.

Malayan federation and a West Indian federation would all have achieved independence and be candidates for full Commonwealth membership. The future course of political development in Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda and Sierra Leone was uncertain. Sierra Leone might develop along the lines of the Gold Coast, and the East African ones might form an East African federation, if the interests of the Africans, Asians and white settlers could be reconciled. As for all the other colonies, they might be or might become capable of managing their own internal affairs, but were never likely to achieve full independence and full Commonwealth membership.[1]

Although the report by the official committee was produced in January 1954, the ministerial committee did not consider this matter until July. Furthermore, when they had the report before them they did not actually discuss it; instead, at the suggestion of the Commonwealth Secretary, Lord Swinton, they discussed a memorandum he had prepared, in which he had summarized the position and suggested what he thought the conclusions of the committee should be. This was an attempt by Swinton, who chaired the committee, to stifle debate and assert his own views, and it may be because of this that many of the broader issues covered by the report were not discussed by ministers. Either way it suggests that ministers did not build on the work of officials and that ministers' actions could undermine the working of the committee system. In contrast to the realism of the official report, Swinton said that one of the principles that consideration of the Commonwealth's future membership should be based on, was that it was for Britain to decide how far and how quickly a colony should advance towards independence. Furthermore, perhaps because of the way Swinton was trying to control the discussion, there was no consideration of the value and accuracy of the categories of colonies outlined in the report of the official committee, and most importantly the ministerial committee ignored the official committee's attempt to emphasize the inevitability of constitutional change.[2]

The report of the ministerial committee was not issued until October and was not discussed by the Cabinet until December 1954 - over two years since the problem had first been raised - showing how slowly the committee system could work. Attached to this paper was the official committee's report, including the warning that Britain could only control the pace of constitutional development to a limited extent.[3] Significantly, Brook sent Churchill a brief on Commonwealth membership a few days before the Cabinet was due to discuss the ministerial report. This action shows Brook's concern about colonial matters, the way he used the influence he had, not least from his close involvement in the committee system and his chairmanship of so many committees, and suggests that he seems to have viewed Churchill as somewhat

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/87, GEN 435/6, 15 January 1954, pp. 2-3.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/786, CCM(54)1st, 5 July 1954, p. 1.
[3] For the report of the ministerial committee see CAB 129, C(54)307, 11 October 1954.

reactionary, inflexible and unsympathetic on colonial matters. In addition Brook might have sent Churchill this brief because he was not happy with the report of the ministerial committee because it had taken so little notice of the findings of the official committee. In his note Brook observed that Churchill would probably find unpalatable the conclusion of the ministerial report that on independence a colony must either be admitted to full membership or allowed to pass out of the Commonwealth. Brook said he hoped that Churchill would read the report of the official committee if he had serious doubts about this recommendation. Emphasising that this was the only policy that would preserve the strength and influence of the Commonwealth, Brook pointed out that the only alternative was for the Commonwealth to suffer 'death by a thousand cuts' as colonies left the Commonwealth on gaining independence. He finished by suggesting that this issue was too important to be fitted into a crowded Cabinet agenda, and that it should be discussed at a separate Cabinet meeting.[1]

As a result the Cabinet held a special meeting on 7 December to discuss Commonwealth membership. Although in discussion there was general agreement that a two-tier system was impracticable, several ministers objected to the course of Commonwealth development proposed in the report of the ministerial committee. One unnamed minister observed that it was 'unfortunate that the policy of assisting dependent peoples to attain self-government had been carried forward so fast and so far'.[2]

In discussion there was no mention of the categorization of colonial development proposed in the official report, and Brook's argument that Britain could only control constitutional development to a limited extent, a crucial matter for the development of colonial policy, was completely ignored. It seems to have been with a sense of relief that Churchill concluded that there was no need to take any executive decision at the present time.[3] The government had therefore avoided having to make some broader evaluation about the future of the colonies, and to an extent had been able to do so by Swinton's exploitation of the committee system, in which he used his position as chairman of the ministerial committee to narrow the scope of the debate - not that any other committee members seemed to have objected to this. Furthermore, thanks to the fact that the findings of the official committee did not go straight to the Cabinet but were first considered by the ministerial committee, all Brook's warnings, which he had placed at the beginning of his report, were relegated to the appendix of the report submitted to the Cabinet.

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[1] PREM 11/1726F, brief by Brook for Churchill, 1 December 1954, in Goldsworthy, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire*, Part II, p. 43.

[2] CAB 128, CC(54)83rd, 7 December 1954, pp. 2-3.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

The whole way in which this issue was examined, the setting up of committees, the discussion of memoranda and so on, was an extremely long and cumbersome process, partly because of the complicated nature of the problem. Nevertheless, the way the government dealt with this issue suggests a lack of focus and coordination in the committee system.[1]

One report on the constitutional future of the colonies was produced in 1955 and another in 1956, but neither seem to have made much impact. The first report was a by-product of a CO memorandum circulated to the ministerial Malta Committee, and subsequently revised by the CO in consultation with the Treasury. The resultant report was discussed by both the official CPC and the ministerial CPC. It was basically an analysis of which colonies would be attracted to the idea of statehood, a proposed status between that of a dependency and an independent member of the Commonwealth for territories that had achieved full self-government, but whose foreign affairs and external defence were the responsibility of Britain.[2] The report concluded that the colonies which could aspire to full independence (although in the case of Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, Singapore, Malaya, and various West Indian islands as part of federations) were the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Singapore, Malaya, Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Leeward Islands, Windward Islands, Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. All the other colonies, with the exception of British Guiana and British Honduras which might join a Caribbean federation, were not thought to be capable of becoming fully independent and seemed appropriate for the status of 'statehood'.[3]

The problem of the constitutional future of the smaller colonies was one on which ministers seemed reluctant to take a decision. When the ministerial CPC discussed the report, the only decision made was that a committee of senior officials, chaired by Brook, should further examine the statehood proposals before final recommendations were considered by ministers.[4] This reluctance to make a decision, and instead to set up a study was endemic in the committee system. Established in January 1956, the official CPC discussed the report at its first meeting. Neither the CO nor the CRO were particularly keen on what appears in some ways to have been a pet project of Brook's. The CO felt that the only colony ready to achieve statehood was Singapore.[5] Brook's reason for pushing this proposal was his opinion that it was necessary to have a policy which recognized the fact that some colonies could never be fully self-

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[1] Furthermore, although the Attlee government had already examined this issue little or no use seems to have been made of this earlier study. (Arthur Creech-Jones, Colonial Secretary from 1946 to 1950, established a committee in 1949 to consider the constitutional problems of the smaller colonies. This committee issued its report in August 1951. For further information see W. D. McIntyre, 'The Admission of Small States to the Commonwealth', pp. 251-252.)

[2] For the details of the scheme see CAB 129, CP(55)133, 27 September 1955, pp. 3-4.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(55)5th, 10 November 1955, p. 4.

[5] PRO, CAB 134/1203, CA(O)(56)1st, 30 January 1956, p. 1.

governing.[1] A paper summarising the conclusions of a meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting Committee (GEN 518) was prepared, but because there had not been time to submit it in draft to the official CPC, Brook circulated it, with the agreement of the Permanent Secretaries of the CO and CRO, as a note by himself 'which does not purport to commit the official committee on Colonial Policy as such'.[2] Brook's views on statehood obviously had changed greatly; this paper argued that the concept of statehood was illusory, because it could not be distinguished from the penultimate stage of self-government of a territory that was on the path to full self-government and Commonwealth membership. The best course of action would be to create a single Commonwealth Office with two Secretaries of State; one concerned with relations between full members of the Commonwealth, and the other responsible for Commonwealth States, a term that would simply mean all those territories were not yet full Commonwealth members.[3]

One of the reports of the 'profit and loss account' study suggested that Nigeria, the CAF, a West Indies federation and Singapore (if it joined with Malaya) would all become independent within the next ten years. Fourteen territories were thought most likely to show significant developments in internal self-government over the next ten years, although as far as Uganda was concerned, which was included in this category, the report warned that there would certainly be African pressure for advance, perhaps even for independence, by 1967. As for the rest of the colonies there were no discernible signs in them of pressure for significant advances in self-government within the next decade.[4]

This report, signed by Brook on behalf of the committee, was in one way less realistic than the earlier one, although given future developments in some territories it was also in some ways more realistic. It commented that:

> The United Kingdom stands to gain no credit from launching a number of immature, unstable and impoverished units whose performances as 'independent' countries would be an embarrassment and whose chaotic existence would be a temptation to our enemies....In sum, it should remain our aim to maintain our authority in each territory until a transfer of power can be shown to be generally desired by its people and they have shown that they can live at peace with one another and are capable of sustaining independent status with a reasonable standard of government....Any premature withdrawal of authority by the United Kingdom would seem bound to add to the areas of stress and discontent in the world. The United Kingdom has been too long connected with its Colonial possessions to sever

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1203, CA(O)(56)3rd, 17 February 1956, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1203, CA(O)(56)12, 21 June 1956, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1203, CA(O)(56)12, GEN 518/6/11, 18 June 1956, p. 2 and p. 4.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1556, CPC(57)30(Revise), 6 September 1957, pp. 1-3. The territories that were thought likely to show significant developments in internal self-government were: Singapore, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Aden Colony, Somaliland Protectorate, Mauritius, British Guiana and British Honduras.

> ties abruptly without creating a bewilderment which would be discreditable and dangerous.[1]

These were noble sentiments but perhaps they contained some unrealistic assumptions. In contrast to the earlier report, this one assumed that Britain could control the rate of change, and there was no acknowledgement, with the exception of Uganda, that Britain might have no choice in certain cases but to give independence. Neither did it acknowledge the dangers of artificially holding back independence. There was also no consideration given to the possibility of the knock-on effect of colonial development, in that there might become more demand for independence or full internal self-government in a particular territory when it saw its neighbours achieving more constitutional advance, and that the native political leadership in any colony could not be seen to be asking for less than other colonies had achieved.

When the official CPC had first discussed Macmillan's request, one of its concerns was how the relevant material should be presented to ministers. The CO produced three memoranda for this committee, one intended as a reference document to help in the study of particular territories, a second summarising this material and setting out Britain's political, constitutional and economic responsibilities to its colonies, and a third which examined the colonial balance of payments, colonial sterling assets, the extent of UK financial aid to the colonies and the special position of Hong Kong. Brook suggested that all this material could either be presented to ministers as a reference handbook to be used when questions arose about a particular colony, or an attempt could be made to focus on certain general issues to provide a background for subsequent ministerial discussions of those questions.[2] The latter would clearly be the option that would give officials the best chance of influencing the broad course of colonial policy. In the end the committee decided that the material should be presented to ministers as background documents and be accompanied by a general paper, so officials were taking the opportunity to promote their own views.[3]

In 1959 two reports were produced on which colonies would be suitable for 'Commonwealth Statehood'. One of these reports said that those thought likely to qualify in a straightforward manner were Singapore, Gibraltar, The Gambia and Fiji. There was uncertainty about the suitability of others, such as Bermuda, and some colonies for whom statehood seemed appropriate, such as Sarawak, might join a regional federation instead. It was felt that by 1961 Sierra Leone would be a suitable candidate for statehood, although it was not thought that it

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1556, CPC(57)30(Revise), 6 September 1957, pp. 7-8.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1551, CP(O)(57)2nd, 5 June 1957, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1551, CP(O)(57)3rd, 11 July 1957, p. 1.

could be dissuaded from seeking independence.[1] This report was produced by the Working Party on Smaller Colonial Territories, established in March 1959, which consisted of officials from the FO, CRO and CO, and was chaired by Brook.[2] It was unable to reach agreement on two issues. One was whether Commonwealth States should be represented at meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers. The CO felt that they should be allowed to attend at least some of the meetings, whereas the CRO considered that they should not attend any at all. After inconclusive discussion Brook said that the report should set out the argument on both sides, because the conflict of opinion with the Working Party would have to be resolved at a higher level.[3]

However, what the report actually said, giving no hint of any disagreement, was that as the Commonwealth States would not conduct their own defence or relations with non-Commonwealth countries, they would not attend any meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers at which defence and foreign affairs were to be discussed.[4] This suggests that some compromise had been reached outside of the Working Party's discussions, perhaps because too many points of disagreement in a final report would make this body look inefficient and ineffectual. This suggests that a desire to reach consensus could mean that ministers were not given full information on policy alternatives. It could be, however, that a compromise was reached on this point because the other disputed issue was considered far more important. This other difficulty was the question of the extent to which Britain should retain the power to suspend the constitutions of Commonwealth States. The CO considered that Britain should retain this power in all Commonwealth States. The CRO on the other hand, argued that this power should be retained only in the case of Commonwealth States that were 'key bases', that is where Britain had important strategic interests. Again Brook believed this issue should be resolved at a higher level and that the report should therefore set out both sides of the argument for ministers to consider.[5] In this instance this actually did happen, with the final report stating that the working party had been unable to reach agreement on this issue and setting out at length both sides of the argument.[6] So in practice official committees were not expected just to list the pros and cons of policy proposals; they were expected to make a specific recommendation to ministers.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)7, 23 July 1959, p. 7. The other report gives detailed grounds for these conclusions. See PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)8, 7 July 1959.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/2505, SCT(59)1, 10 March 1959, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/2505, SCT(59)4th, 24 April 1959, pp. 1-3.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)7, 23 July 1959, p. 3.

[5] PRO, CAB 134/2505, SCT(59)3rd, 16 April 1959, pp. 2-4.

[6] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)7, 23 July 1959, pp. 5-6.

In 1960 the Commonwealth Relations Secretary and the Minister of State for Colonial Affairs circulated a joint memorandum on the smaller colonies to the CPC, which suggested that the West Indies Federation, Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika were all candidates for Commonwealth membership, and therefore presumably for full independence. Cyprus, Sierra Leone and British Guiana were marginal candidates, and sixteen territories, including British Honduras, The Gambia and Somaliland, were thought to be suitable for self-government short of independence and Commonwealth membership. The memorandum also listed those territories that were thought to be too small to qualify even for full internal autonomy.[1]

The next general paper on constitutional advance was the report of the Working Party on the Constitutional Development of the Commonwealth, issued in March 1962, which pointed out that the advance towards independence was happening even more rapidly than had been envisaged in 1960, and that pressure from anti-colonialists was mounting. As a result the report suggested that Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, British Guiana, Uganda, Kenya and Zanzibar would become independent by the end of 1963. Between 1963 and 1965, The Gambia, Malta and the CAF would also become independent, although it was felt that The Gambia could not remain independent on its own for very long and could merge with Senegal; Brunei, North Borneo, Sarawak and Singapore would possibly join a federation of Malaysia. After 1965 it was felt that Mauritius, Bahamas, Barbados, British Honduras, Fiji and Tonga would all become independent, as would the Leeward and Windward Islands, but probably in federation; the British Solomon Islands Protectorate would probably only become independent in association with Papua and New Guinea; and finally, an Aden federation would become independent, but because of British defence interests not before 1970. As for the rest of the colonies, it was thought they were unlikely to seek or achieve independence after 1970, if at all.[2] This new timetable demonstrated more understanding of the realities of the situation, not necessarily because the Working Party was more perceptive than its predecessors, but because so many developments were already firmly under way. However, there were some indications that Britain was still unable to acknowledge fully the realities of the situation, especially the belief that the government could still control the pace of change, as shown by the statement that Aden would have to remain dependent until 1970 because of Britain's strategic interests.

In 1964 a paper by the CO on the future of the smaller colonies was circulated to the official DOPC. Attached to it was a report on the future of all Britain's colonies which had been

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1559, CPC(60)9, 19 April 1960, p. 2. The other territories that were thought to be suitable for full self-government short of independence were Singapore, Borneo, Sarawak, Malta, Mauritius, Seychelles, Fiji, Zanzibar, British Solomon Islands, Falkland Islands, Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland.

[2] PRO, CAB 130/180, GEN 758/3(Revise), 9 March 1962, pp. 2-18.

prepared in 1963 for CO ministers. The report began by stating that Britain's colonial relationship with these territories was becoming outdated, and was adversely affecting Britain's position in the UN and its relationships with other countries.[1] It went on to argue that Britain could not decolonize (the report used this word enclosed in quotation marks - possibly one of the earliest times it was used in an official document) all its territories within the next two years, in a manner that would protect the interests of both the colonies and Britain, and would be internationally acceptable.[2] The report went on to list the likely future status of each colony, dividing them into various categories such as those whose independence was assured, those that would become independent in association with other countries or territories, and those that would continue to be dependent on Britain in free association.[3] The list was very long and detailed, and for the most part dealt with very small and insignificant colonies. This is probably why the report does not appear to have been discussed by either the official or the ministerial DOPC. By 1964 the majority of the larger and most significant colonies were either independent or firmly on their way to independence, and with few exceptions, such as Aden, the remaining colonies did not impinge on more general concerns. As a result the wider interest in colonial affairs which had existed for a number of years was fading, leaving this paper of little interest to anyone outside the CO.

III. THE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The issue of colonial constitutional advance was discussed by a vast range of cabinet committees.[4] Among this multitude were several committees that were particularly concerned

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[1] PRO, CAB 148/5, DO(O)(64)16, 23 March 1964, Appendix, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[3] PRO, CAB 148/5, DO(O)(64)16, 23 March 1964, Appendix, Annex I, pp. 1-4.
[4] The following is not a definitive list; some committees only mentioned colonial constitutional matters in passing, and as always the qualification has to be made that not all files are open; nevertheless the list demonstrates just how extensive a range of committees dealt with this topic, and the extent to which the Cabinet committee system was involved in this policy area. The *ad hoc* committees involved were: Future Commercial Policy, Somaliland Protectorate and the Horn of Africa, Democracy in Newly Independent Countries, Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Future Planning Working Group, Central African Affairs, Kenya, Commonwealth Membership, Constitutional Development in Africa, Constitutional Development of the Commonwealth Working Party, Cyprus, Greater Malaysia, Malaya, Malta, Nigerian Resolution on Colonialism, and South Arabian Federation. The standing committees involved were: Commonwealth Membership, CPC (ministerial), CPC (official), Africa (ministerial), Africa (official), Study of Future Policy Working Group, Study of Future Policy Steering Committee, Steering Committee on International Organizations, Land Tenure in Kenya, Latin America and the Caribbean, Official Oversea Coordinating, Oversea Policy, Future Policy in the Pacific, Rhodesia and Nyasaland Constitutional Review, DOPC (ministerial), Defence, Cyprus (ministerial), Cyprus (official), Future Developments in South-East Asia, Greater Malaysia, Greater Malaysia Discussions, Malta (ministerial),

with colonial constitutional development. One was, of course, the ministerial CPC. Its remit was:

> To assist the Cabinet in controlling constitutional development in Colonial territories and in dealing with the problems arising therefrom, and to consider such other problems of Colonial policy as may be referred to them.[1]

The memorandum on membership and terms of reference also stated that the committee had been set up because it was felt that such a body would help Cabinet discussion of colonial problems, that it would be chaired by the Prime Minister and that its members would be the Foreign Secretary, the Commonwealth Secretary, the Colonial Secretary and the Minister of Defence.[2]

By November 1956 the Lord President and the Paymaster-General were also members.[3] A significant change occurred when Macmillan became Prime Minister; rather than assuming the chairmanship himself, he made the Lord President of the Council, Lord Salisbury, the chairman. In addition, the Paymaster-General was removed from the membership.[4] Only a couple of months later, following the resignation of Salisbury over the release of Makarios, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Kilmuir, became chairman.[5] The following year Macmillan reassumed the chairmanship; the timing of this move suggests he had little interest in colonial affairs as such, but was concerned about them when they touched on broader issues.[6]

The CPC was dissolved in June 1962 and its work was taken over by the short-lived Oversea Policy Committee.[7] This new committee was chaired by the Prime Minister, and its members were the Lord Chancellor, Foreign Secretary, Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General, Commonwealth Secretary, Minister of Defence and Colonial Secretary. Its remit was 'To consider questions of oversea policy (other than defence policy and external economic policy) which concern more than one of the oversea Departments'.[8] It was, in turn, abolished in October 1963, as was the Defence Committee, and both were replaced by a single

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Malta (official), Middle East (ministerial), Smaller Colonial Territories Working Party, and South and South-East Asia.

[1] CAB 129, CP(55)144, 3 October 1955, p. 1. This information has been taken from the memorandum circulated to the Cabinet and not from the papers of the committee because the 1955 memoranda of the committee, which should be in CAB 134/1202, have been lost by the PRO.

[2] CAB 129, CP(55)144, 3 October 1955, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1202, CA(56)31, 13 November 1956, p. 1. It is not clear when Salisbury became a member because of the fact that the 1955 memoranda of the CPC have been lost. He was recorded as 'present' rather than 'also present' (the term for a non-member in attendance at a committee meeting) many times before November 1956

[4] PRO, CAB 134//1555, CPC(57)1, 21 January 1957, p. 1.

[5] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)10, 23 April 1957, p. 1.

[6] This concern was perhaps why he allowed himself to be persuaded by Brook to assume the chairmanship. See Chapter Two, p. 51.

[7] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)21, 29 June 1962, p. 1. For the reasons why it was abolished see Chapter Two, p. 51.

[8] PRO, CAB 134/2370, OP(62)1, 29 June 1962, p. 1.

committee, the DOPC. Its remit was 'to keep under review the Government's defence and oversea policy'.[1]

As far as more specialized committees were concerned, there were three dealing with the regions with which this chapter is concerned. The Latin America and the Caribbean Committee was formed in February 1962, and was set up because the FO felt that the significance of Latin America was rapidly increasing and that the problems there were no less serious than those of Asia and Africa.[2] The other two committees, Africa (ministerial) and Africa (official) had a more interesting genesis. The Attlee government had established an Africa Committee in 1949, chaired by the Minister of State for Colonial Affairs and with a membership of officials.[3] By the beginning of 1951 there was a feeling that a ministerial committee for Africa was needed. Brook told Attlee that the Foreign Secretary, Colonial Secretary and Commonwealth Secretary had had talks with him about the need to give a sharper definition to government policy on the economic, social and political development of Africa as a whole, and they had agreed that it would be useful if a small ministerial committee was set up to submit views on long-term policy to the Cabinet, and to ensure that all actions were consistent with these long-term aims.[4] However, because of the death of Bevin, who was to have chaired this committee, the proposal came to nothing.[5] The following year officials discussed whether they should suggest to the Prime Minister that a ministerial committee to concert policy on Africa should be established, because the need for such a body remained the same.[6] However, it was 1959 before such a ministerial body was established, by which time an official Africa Committee had been set up. The latter was established in May 1957. Its remit was:

> To keep under review political and economic problems concerning Africa (excluding problems concerning the Suez Canal or problems in which Egypt or Libya are the only states concerned) which raise important questions of policy calling for interdepartmental consultation.

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[1] PRO, CAB 148/15, DOP(63)1, 1 October 1963, p. 1. The composition of this new committee was the Prime Minister, First Secretary of State, Foreign Secretary, Chancellor or Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Home Secretary, Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary, and Minister of Defence. In addition other ministers would be invited to attend as necessary, and the Chief of the Defence Staff, the CoS and officials would attend as required. In 1964 its composition was revised and became the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Chancellor or Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Home Secretary, Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary, and Defence Secretary. See PRO, CAB 148/2, DO(64)31, 9 April 1964, p. 1. For the reasons why the Defence and the Oversea Policy Committee were abolished see Chapter Three, p. 59.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/2153, LAC(62)1st, 8 March 1962, p. 1.

[3] For its terms of reference see PRO, CAB 134/1, A(49)1, 14 June 1949, p. 1. It is not clear when this committee was disbanded. This is the only file open for this committee; the others may be CAB 134/2-4 but the PRO class list gives no indication which committee these closed files belong to. A memorandum of October 1951 shows that this committee was still in existence at that time. See PRO, CAB 21/3014, R. Marshall to A. Campbell, received 3 October 1951.

[4] PRO, CAB 21/3014, Brook to Attlee, February 1951 (full date not given).

[5] PRO, CAB 21/3014, R. Marshall to A. Campbell, note received 3 October 1951.

[6] PRO, CAB 21/3014, R. Marshall to Mr. Padmore, note received 23 February 1952.

> The Committee will report as necessary to the Ministers severally concerned with the subject matter of their report. When it is desirable that a report by the Committee should be considered by the Cabinet or by a Ministerial Committee, the Committee will decide which of the Ministers concerned can most appropriately be asked to present their report.[1]

The ministerial Africa Committee's remit was 'To deal with matters relating to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and with colonial problems in Africa', and it was chaired by Macmillan.[2]

The sheer number of committees that discussed colonial policy is an indication of the complexity of this area of policy, and the extent of the ramifications it could have for more general policy concerns. Throughout the period under study colonial policy was coming more and more into the mainstream of policy-making; this is reflected in the fact that CO involvement in the Cabinet committee system, in terms of both the number and percentage of committees it sat on, was at its greatest between 1959 and 1963. This had implications for the degree of influence the CO wielded in its own policy area, because far more ministers and officials from other departments could contribute to, and were interested in, the development of colonial policy. It also meant that there was greater scope for bureaucratic muddle and for a lack of coordination. Not least, it also meant that Macmillan had plenty of opportunities to keep colonial matters under close scrutiny.

IV. AMERICA'S BACKYARD

In British Guiana, British Honduras and its Caribbean colonies, Britain had a collection of small and poor territories that now seemed of little importance. One obvious solution to the question of the constitutional future of these territories was to form them into a federation. However, the experience of the West Indies Federation demonstrated some of the problems and pitfalls of this approach.[3]

Following the 1947 Montego Bay Conference, a Standing Closer Association Committee was appointed to work out a federal constitution. It issued a report in 1950 which recommended a federal union. However, its recommendations were not accepted by British Honduras, British Guiana and the British Virgin Islands, and none of these territories joined the Federation.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1351, AF(57)1, 9 May 1957, p. 1.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1362, AF(M)(59)1, 21 October 1959, p. 1. Its members were the Home Secretary, Lord Chancellor, Foreign Secretary, Commonwealth Secretary and Colonial Secretary.

[3] For an account of the history of the Federation see E. Wallace, *The British Caribbean: From the Decline of Colonialism to the End of Federation* (Toronto 1977).

Conferences were held in London in 1953 and 1956 to settle questions such as the powers of the Federal government, and in February 1956 a federal constitution was agreed by Britain and the colonies concerned, and Parliament passed the British Caribbean Federation Act. The British West Indies Federation was eventually established on 3 January 1958, and in March that year the first federal election was held. The Federal government was weak; unable to levy income tax or customs duties, it was solely financed by levies in the member territories, all of whom were reluctant to contribute more than the minimum possible to federal resources. In addition, the two largest and most important units, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, favoured very different types of federation; the former wanted a loose union in which the individual territories retained the maximum possible autonomy, while the latter wanted a strong federal government. However, these two territories did have one thing in common: a determination to avoid subsidising the smaller islands.

The federal constitution provided for a review conference within five years of the establishment of the Federation, and in June 1958 the Federal House of Representatives passed a motion to hold such a conference within a year to review the constitution, with a view to attaining self-government and dominion status within the Commonwealth. This intergovernmental conference commenced in September 1959 in Trinidad, but failed to reach agreement on a number of issues, which were then remitted to a number of intergovernmental committees. The conference was to be reconvened after these committees had considered matters. In December 1959 the Federal House of Representatives authorized the Federal government to ask Britain for cabinet government to be introduced as early as possible in 1960 and to fix a date for independence. Britain felt that to do the latter would be premature, and so the Colonial Secretary responded that it would not be proper to agree a date for independence before the constitutional conference was reconvened. However, Britain was willing to grant full internal self-government and this was done in August 1960. The intergovernmental committees did not finish their work until the end of 1960, and it was not until May 1961 that the conference was reconvened. At the end of that month a constitutional conference opened in London at which it was hoped a date could be agreed for independence. At this conference most of the agreements which had been reached on the future structure of the Federation at the intergovernmental conference were ratified, and proposals for an independence constitution were agreed. It was announced that if the new constitution was ratified the Federation would become independent at the end of May 1962. However, all theses agreements were dependent on approval by the individual territories of the Federation. The leader of the main Jamaican opposition party, Sir Alexander Bustamente, was hostile to the Federation and campaigned against it. In response, the Jamaican Premier, Norman Manley, held a referendum on Jamaican's

membership of the Federation in September 1961, which produced a majority of just over fifty-four per cent in favour of secession. Trinidad was unwilling to remain in a federation that did not include Jamaica and the end results of all this was the dissolution of the Federation in May 1962. Both Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, became independent in August.

Matters did not run smoothly in the two mainland territories either. British Honduras caused problems, for the most part because of Guatemalan claims to the territory. The report of a commission of unofficials, which had been established in 1948 to consider constitutional reforms, was referred in November 1951 by the Legislative Council to a select committee of its unofficial members.[1] During 1952 and 1953 discussions on constitutional advance took place, and decisions were taken on the main features of the constitutional changes to be introduced in 1954. The election was to be based on universal adult suffrage, the Legislative Council was to have a majority of elected members, and the Executive Council was to be reconstituted as the chief instrument of policy, with two-thirds of it to be elected by the Legislative Council from among its own members. In April 1954 a general election on the basis of universal suffrage was held in which the People's United Party won eight out of the nine seats. From October to November 1954 talks were held in London on the constitutional and economic progress of the territory, and in 1955 a ministerial system of government was introduced. A general election was held in March 1957 and was won by the PUP. Further constitutional discussions took place in London in October 1957, but were broken off in November when Britain received evidence that the leader of the unofficial delegation had been having secret negotiations with Guatemala. They were, however, restarted in January 1958. In 1959 Sir Hilary Blood was sent to the colony as constitutional commissioner, and in February 1960 a constitutional conference was held at which it was agreed that a ministerial system would be introduced, and that the leader of the party that obtained a clear majority would be appointed First Minister. In March 1961 a general election was held, with the PUP winning all eighteen elected seats. In January 1964 British Honduras was finally given internal self-government.

In British Guiana universal adult suffrage was introduced in 1952, and in 1953 a new constitution, which gave executive powers to the majority party, was introduced. The election held under it was won by the People's Progressive Party, headed by Cheddi Jagan. However, by October 1953 Britain was convinced that the elected ministers were under the control of a communist clique and were not governing in the best interests of the country, and so the Governor was given emergency powers, the constitution was suspended and British reinforcements were sent to the colony. In addition, PPP ministers were deprived of their

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[1] The term 'unofficials' was used to refer to those members of a colonial legislature or executive who were not British officials.

departmental responsibilities, leading members of the PPP were arrested and an interim government was later appointed. 1954 saw the start of the gradual removal of restrictions and the visit of a constitutional commission, in 1955 the PPP split, with Forbes Burnham and his supporters eventually forming the People's National Congress, and in March 1956 the reinforcements were withdrawn. The following month it was declared that progress could now be made to more democratic government, and a revised constitution was announced. In 1957 a legislature consisting of official, nominated and elected members was set up, as was an Executive Council which included representatives of the majority party. An election was held, following the dissolution of the wholly nominated Legislative Council, which was won be the PPP.

In 1958 a constitutional committee was set up whose report, issued in August 1959, recommended that Britain Guiana should become an independent state within the Commonwealth, although for a transitional period a Defence and External Affairs Council would deal with these matters. At a constitutional conference held in 1960 Britain agreed that the colony should get full internal self-government in 1961.[1] Following the introduction of the new constitution, a general election was held which returned Jagan to power, but now as Premier. In October 1961 the PPP asked for full independence; in response the Colonial Secretary said that a conference would be held in May 1962 to discuss the date and arrangements for independence. However, Jagan's government introduced a budget in January 1962 which contained proposals for increased taxation and a compulsory savings scheme. The strong opposition to these proposals resulted in demonstrations, a strike by civil servants, and then a general strike, accompanied by rioting and looting. At Jagan's request, British military reinforcements were sent. A conference was held in October to discuss the form of a constitution for independence, but it was adjourned because no agreement could be reached. In 1963, after a Labour Relations Bill was introduced, yet another general strike started, which lasted seventy-eight days and resulted in a number of deaths, and led to Jagan and three of his colleagues being suspended from the Legislative Assembly, and to the legislature being prorogued. Later that year the constitutional conference was resumed, but again there was no

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[1] In his Ph.D. thesis, 'British Colonial Policy and the Transfer of Power in British Guiana, 1945-1964', King's College, University of London, 1992, James Rose states (p. 2) that Britain promised the colony independence after the 1961 election. No evidence has been found to support this assertion. To be charitable, it may be that the confusion between independence and full internal self-government was not only limited to some British policy-makers, it also affected those studying colonial issues. However, the fact that this thesis reads more like a sustained political polemic on behalf of the PPP, rather than a scholarly historical analysis, makes one wonder if this is too charitable an explanation. His argument is also somewhat confused; he attacks Britain for not being willing to give British Guiana independence and later for giving in to American pressure to deny independence. If the latter were the case then Britain must have been willing, in the absence of US pressure, to grant independence.

agreement, and as a result the colony's political parties asked the Colonial Secretary to deal with all the outstanding issues; Sandys decided on proportional representation. The colonies sugar workers went on strike in 1964; again there were many disturbances and towards the end of the strike the Governor assumed executive powers, and ordered the detention without trial of some leading politicians. In December 1964 a general election was held and Forbes Burnham became the Premier by forming a coalition government from his own party and the United Force Party.

For the most part these colonies were not discussed by the Cabinet or its committees, presumably reflecting their lack of economic and strategic value; and so as their affairs did not often involve the collective responsibility of the government, the CO was left to its own devices. However, the difficulties of constitutional development meant that the Cabinet and its committees sometimes had to discuss certain of these territories. This happened on four main occasions: in 1953 when the constitution of Britain Guiana was suspended and British troops were sent; in 1954 when a general election took place in British Honduras under a new constitution; in 1962 with the collapse of the West Indies Federation; and in 1963 when there was considerable unrest in British Guiana, including a general strike.

The problems in British Guiana in 1953 were not discussed in any committees, and most of the time when this issue was raised in the Cabinet it was when Lyttelton was reporting to his colleagues on the latest developments, rather than because policy was being discussed, suggesting that in this case the CO enjoyed a lot of autonomy.[1] Considerable time had to be spent on British Guiana because Churchill insisted that the arrest and detention of the leaders of the PPP was such a serious step that the Cabinet needed to be told what the justification for this action was. Lyttelton said the arrests were necessary because the leaders of the PPP were organising illegal meetings, and generally obstructing the efforts being made to normalize the situation. No minister challenged his decision.[2]

Clearly, the situation in British Guiana was so serious that the Cabinet had to be kept informed of it, even if they did not actually discuss matters. One would not, however, have expected the question of constitutional development in British Honduras to be of such importance or interest to other ministers that it would need to be discussed in the Cabinet. The fact that it was discussed may have been because there was no appropriate committee to deal with it, in which case Churchill's dislike of Cabinet committees and his disbanding of many was leading to the Cabinet being burdened with unnecessary work.

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[1] See CAB 128, CC(53)55th, 6 October 1953, p. 13; CAB 128, CC(53)56th, 8 October 1953, p. 22; CAB 128, CC(53)57th, 13 October 1953, p. 28. There was also some discussion about how many battalions of troops should be sent. See CAB 128, CC(53)54th, 2 October 1953, pp. 5-6.

[2] CAB 128, CC(53)62nd, 29 October 1953, p. 68.

The Cabinet discussed British Honduras in November at the request of Lyttelton, who seemed anxious to pre-empt any moves to delay constitutional advance because of events in British Guiana. He pointed out the similarities with that situation such as the anti-British stance of the PUP and the communist link - the PUP was believed to be supported by the Guatemalan government which had communist tendencies. But he then went on to stress that there were also significant differences in British Honduras: there would continue to be an officials majority on the Executive Council, it was not certain the PUP would get a majority at the election, the strong Catholic segment of the population was anti-communist, departmental responsibilities could be withdrawn from elected members without breaching the constitution, and there were enough troops there to preserve order. He therefore recommended that the constitutional changes should go ahead. There was general agreement on this, although one minister said he was unconvinced by the assertion in a memorandum by Lyttelton that Britain would be suspected of having changed its liberal policy on colonial constitutional advance if the changes were delayed.[1]

Concern about communist influence seems to have been one reason why British Honduras had to be discussed by the Cabinet in 1954. Lyttelton had received documents which showed that the leaders of the PUP had sought aid from Guatemala, and he recommended that these documents should be published and that an enquiry into their authenticity should be established. This seemed an odd sequence to suggest and not surprisingly it was proposed that it would be best to establish authenticity before publication, a suggestion which Lyttelton accepted, so providing one of the few occasions when his views did not prevail.[2] Lyttelton later told the Cabinet that the enquiry's findings would not justify cancelling the Legislative Assembly election or proscribing the PUP, and that it would be best to hold the election before deciding whether to proceed with the planned reconstitution of the Executive Council. The Cabinet agreed to this, despite criticism that it would be better to defer the election than have the assembly dominated by the PUP.[3]

In April Lyttelton had to tell the Cabinet, despite his sanguine assurances in November, that the PUP had gained an overwhelming electoral victory. Nevertheless, Lyttelton said he agreed with the Governor that the reconstitution of the Executive Council should still go ahead, although he felt this should depend on the PUP giving the Governor an assurance that they would cooperate in getting the new constitution to work. The Cabinet agreed to this without any

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[1] CAB 128, CC(53)70th, 24 November 1953, p. 117.
[2] CAB 128, CC(54)9th, 17 February 1954, p. 75.
[3] CAB 128, CC(54)26th, 7 April 1954, pp. 8-9. The enquiry found evidence of some links between the PUP and the Guatemalan government, but concluded that it would not be wise to prosecute the former. See CAB 129, C(54)130, 6 April 1954, p. 1.

discussion.[1] Such a lack of debate, which happened on other occasions, and the relatively few times colonial issues were discussed by the Cabinet when Lyttelton was Colonial Secretary, suggest a lack of ministerial interest in colonial affairs - for the most part the Cabinet simply rubber-stamped Lyttelton's proposals - and that Lyttelton was able to keep matters within the CO as much as possible. The reason he raised British Honduras in the Cabinet may have been because any constitutional advance had to be discussed at Cabinet level, but other such instances, for example constitutional changes in Sierra Leone, were not automatically discussed by the Cabinet. More likely, Cold War factors such as a general concern about communist penetration, and the fact that this colony was in a region that was of interest to America, gave significance to what would otherwise have been a fairly mundane matter in an insignificant colony.

Over the next four years British Guiana, British Honduras and the West Indian colonies were mostly ignored by the Cabinet and its committees. From 1959 onwards these colonies were discussed more frequently, particularly by the ministerial CPC. The West Indian colonies were sometimes discussed because although the West Indies Federation had now been established, constitutional development was still required in its constituent territories. For the most part, however, discussions concerned the implications of the Federation becoming independent (the politicians seeming quite certain about the stability of the Federation and that the West Indies colonies would become independent as part of a federation) and then the seemingly unexpected collapse of the Federation.

A federal defence matter was raised in the Cabinet because it had implications for Britain's relations with America. The 1941 Leased Bases Agreement had given the US the use of a number of bases in the Caribbean. Macleod simply reported to the Cabinet that it looked as if the West Indies Federation and the US government were likely to reach agreement on a satisfactory revision of this.[2] Presumably ministers had to be kept informed of developments because they involved the collective responsibility of the government, and it therefore seems that the doctrine of collective ministerial responsibility could lead to ministers' time being wasted. This is underlined by the fact that this topic had been considered the previous month by the Defence Committee when it discussed a memorandum by Macleod on the defence implication of West Indian independence.[3] Those present at this meeting included Macmillan, Macleod, the Defence Secretary, and a number of senior military figures, including the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and the Chief of the Air Staff. The

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[1] CAB 128, CC(54)34th, 20 May 1954, p. 5.
[2] CAB 128, CC(60)57th, 8 November 1960, pp. 3-4.
[3] PRO, CAB 131/24, D(60)52, 27 October 1960.

main concern was the US naval base at Chaguaramas in Trinidad. This town was the proposed site of the federal capital, but was also of great importance to the US as an essential link in America's chain of defence against missile-carrying submarines. The committee agreed that the government should do its utmost to see that an agreement was reached between the Federation and the US. It was also agreed, as suggested in Macleod's memorandum, that any type of regional defence pact along the lines of NATO, as had been suggested by some West Indian politicians, should be avoided, and that it would be best to have separate bilateral agreements between the Federation and Britain, and between the Federation and the US. Given the flexible nature of this committee's membership all those who had an interest were present and it seems somewhat pointless that the issue should then be raised in the Cabinet. The meeting ended with the point being made that it was important that the Minister of Defence should be kept in close touch with the discussions.[1]

Ensuring that ministers were kept in touch with anything that impinged on their own departmental responsibilities was of course one of the functions that the committee system performed. This was why some rather pointless briefings took place in the Cabinet. Presumably no minister would want these briefings to be cut down, even if a matter had supposedly been fully discussed in a committee with all those concerned present, because these briefings made it less likely that anything concerning a minister's departmental responsibilities would slip past him.

One reason for setting up the CPC had been complaints from ministers that they were constantly being faced with developments in the colonies about which they had had no warning. However, as the case of the ending of the West Indian Federation shows, this still happened. That this was so appears to have been due to complacency about the future of the Federation on the part of the CO, a complacency that was not challenged either in the Cabinet or in its committees, perhaps reflecting a lack of wider interest in the Federation.

In 1961 the general impression given by the few mentions of the Federation was ministerial indifference; there was no sense of impending crisis. In January Macleod circulated a memorandum to the CPC, 'Colonial Problems in 1961'. This report concluded that it was probable, although not certain, that the intergovernmental talks would go well and that the Jamaican referendum would show a majority in favour of the Federation, and if so an independence conference could be held that summer, followed by independence about nine months later.[2] Instead, in September 1961 the Cabinet had to discuss the implications of the

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[1] PRO, CAB 131/23, D(60)11th, 2 November 1960, p. 1. Macmillan decided who should attend meetings of the Defence Committee. See Chapter Two, p. 43.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1, 3 January 1961, p. 4.

Jamaican vote in favour of leaving the Federation.[1] Macleod said that because of the precedents set by Cyprus and Sierra Leone (which had become independent in April that year), the size of Jamaica's population, and its economic viability and relative stability, a request for independence within the Commonwealth could not reasonably be resisted. There was no disagreement and only two points were made in the ensuing discussion. It was suggested, unfounded optimism still abounding, that Jamaica's departure might make it easier to persuade British Guiana to join a federation of the remaining territories. More significantly, it was suggested that Britain should be cautious about financial assistance in any discussions; there was no case for giving aid to Jamaica and the poorer islands should not expect full financial support from Britain after independence.[2]

When the CPC discussed a memorandum by Maudling on the bill to allow Jamaica to secede from the Federation there was only a short discussion. On one of the few occasions when the West Indies were linked up to broader considerations - usually the committee system did not make such connections - concern was expressed about the effect there might be on the CAF if Jamaica's secession was used as a precedent by those in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia who opposed the CAF.[3]

The following year there were various mentions of the West Indies, one in the Cabinet and the remainder in the CPC, but the majority of these merely consisted of the Cabinet rubber-stamping proposals by the Colonial Secretary.[4] In April the prospect of a replacement federation was raised in the CPC, following a Conference of Ministers of Barbados and the Leeward and Windward Islands which had suggested these territories should form a 'Federation of the Eight'. Maudling felt there were two main objections to these proposals; they would involve the retention of substantial powers by the constituent territories, whose administrations he felt were corrupt and incompetent, and they were based on optimistic economic assumptions. In response to Maudling's doubts, the committee asked him to arrange with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury for officials to examine the economic problems involved in the constitutional development of the West Indies.[5] The committee therefore gave Maudling a way of highlighting at ministerial level a proposal he was unhappy with, and getting something done about it. In this instance committee membership increased rather than diminished CO influence, although

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[1] For the Colonial Secretary's memorandum on this see CAB 129, C(61)142, 26 September 1961.

[2] CAB 128, CC(61)52nd, 28 September 1961, p. 4.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)13th, 20 December 1961, p. 3.

[4] An example of this is the CPC meeting that dealt with a memorandum by the Colonial Secretary on the future of the Cayman Islands, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Maudling outlined his proposals for these territories, which wished to remain British colonies, and without any recorded discussion the committee agreed to all of them. See PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)6th, 30 March 1962, p. 1.

[5] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)8th, 11 April 1962, p. 1.

admittedly this instance involved opposing a proposal that had not come from some other government department.

In February 1962 the CPC discussed two memoranda by Maudling on future developments in the West Indies. These produced one of the most substantial discussions on these colonies in several years. Maudling informed ministers that because Jamaica wanted to leave the Federation and Trinidad refused to be part of any federation of the Eastern Caribbean, there was no possibility of continuing the Federation in any form. He added that it would not be possible to refuse Trinidad its independence because it was already independent for all practical purposes, and that the real problem concerning the West Indies was the general question of financial liability and the particular problem of the smaller islands, which could not become independent on their own without continuing and indefinite subsidies. There were two answers to this; firstly a federation of these islands, and secondly regrouping some of these islands with Trinidad in a unitary state.[1] This second suggestion was not very practicable, given that one reason for Jamaican and Trinidadian hostility to the Federation was the likelihood that they would end up subsidizing the smaller islands. Ministers seemed to have been deluding themselves about what policy options actually existed.

Three main suggestions were made in the ensuing discussion. It was argued that linking some of the smaller islands with Trinidad was the best move; not only would this produce a financially viable entity, and so reduce the subsidy needed to keep the smaller islands going, it would also be of advantage to Trinidad as it would counteract the rapid growth in Trinidad's Indian population. The fact that in general ministers were not interested in the West Indies, is reflected in the suggestion that it would be justifiable for Britain to grant independence to all the smaller islands and simply leave them to work out their own futures, suggesting that to some ministers these colonies were no more than an irritating distraction. The response was that Britain had a moral responsibility to ensure that these islands did not fall into a state of chaos and bankruptcy. The discussion finished with agreement that the Federation should be dissolved and that Trinidad should become independent, but should be persuaded of the value of associating with as many of the smaller islands as possible, and that the Treasury should examine the economic problems involved in constitutional development in the West Indies[2].

It might have been expected that the fact that Britain's Caribbean colonies were in America's backyard would have meant greater ministerial interest in them. However, it may have been that this was the very reason for the lack of interest of the Cabinet and its committees, and in the lack of contingency plans for these territories. Basically, there seems to have been

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)3rd, 2 February 1962, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

some feeling that if anything went wrong the US would have no choice but to help. Hence, at this CPC meeting it was suggested that the question of persuading Canada and America to accept greater responsibility for an area which was now of more strategic importance to them than to Britain should be studied in detail.[1] The previous year it had been suggested in the Cabinet by the Colonial Secretary that the US had been taking greater interest in the Federation, and at some point might be prepared to provide financial assistance.[2] Later on, in December, it was suggested at a CPC meeting that the government should try and persuade the US that it would be necessary for them to play a more active role in the Caribbean if stability were to be maintained.[3]

In 1964 a CO paper suggested that if Britain was anxious to rid itself of colonial responsibilities then it should persuade the smaller islands to federate, and if necessary give them more development aid to overcome their lack of enthusiasm for federation.[4] Overall, the West Indian colonies were of little interest to those outside the CO, and were usually only mentioned in the Cabinet and its committees because the Colonial Secretary was obliged to keep his colleagues informed of developments. It also appears that the government had few real initiatives to offer following the collapse of the Federation.

The collapse of the Federation had ramifications for the mainland territories. In 1959 the feeling regarding British Honduras was that it was of no value, could not become independent on its own, and in effect membership of the West Indies Federation was the only way of getting rid of it. A meeting of the Study of Future Policy for 1960-1970 Steering Committee was told that its final report should mention that Britain derived no economic benefit from either British Honduras or British Guiana, and that Britain should consider encouraging them to join the West Indies Federation and persuading Canada to take on some responsibility for the Federation.[5]

When British Honduras was next discussed, in 1962, the question of its future had become far more complicated because of the disbandment of the Federation, and the close American interest in Britain's mainland American colonies. The latter in particular meant that Macmillan was now using the committee system to keep a close watch on developments in these territories. Although British Honduras was never discussed by the Cabinet, this was due to the committee system being used effectively. An official committee, the Latin America and the Caribbean Committee, dealt with this territory at its first meeting when discussing the approach to be taken in forthcoming talks with Guatemala, the rather self-evident points being made that

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)3rd, 2 February 1962, pp. 2-3.
[2] CAB 128, CC(61)31st, 13 June 1961, p. 8.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)13th, 20 December 1961, p. 3.
[4] PRO, CAB 148/5, DO(O)(64)16, 23 March 1964, Appendix, pp. 1-2.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1930, FP(A)(59)3rd, 27 October 1959, p. 2.

the colony's inhabitants wanted self-government and not to become part of Guatemala, that a continued British colonial presence in Central America was anomalous, and that it seemed unlikely that British Honduras could ever become economically viable. The CO's attitude was that Britain should not embark on any action which might lead to pressure for the premature independence of an economically non-viable state.[1]

All other discussions took place in the CPC. At a meeting in February 1962 it was suggested that it might be in Britain's long-term interests to accept a merger of the colony with Guatemala, because membership of the West Indies Federation was no longer a possibility and there was no hope of the colony achieving a viable independence on its own.[2] Strangely enough Maudling made no response to this despite the fact that he was responsible for the inhabitants of this territory and they did not want to merge with Guatemala, suggesting that uppermost in the minds of ministers was discharging colonial responsibilities as quickly as possible, and that colonial policy was now about little more than finding the least painless way of doing so. This attitude strongly contrasts with the views of CO officials, and suggests a gulf between officials and ministers in that department.

The CPC had a long discussion on British Honduras two months later. The main concern was the same - to jettison this economic burden - although the means had changed. The way of doing so was now thought to be membership of the Organization of American States and of the Organization of Central American States. As Maudling observed, it would be necessary to ensure that the colony did not become independent if it did not, or had not, obtained membership of these organizations, otherwise the result would be the worst of both worlds for Britain; Britain would have lost control over the colony's political and economic policies, but would still be required to provide economic aid and defend the colony. After a brief discussion, Macmillan gave detailed instructions about how the discussions with Guatemala should be conducted. Clearly intent on keeping this matter under close supervision, he said that the aim should be to give British Honduras self-government as soon as possible and then independence shortly afterwards. In addition, the possibility of the colony getting membership of the two organizations should be explored in advance of independence. Finally, he emphasized that the question of Commonwealth membership should be avoided if possible, but that if it was raised by the representatives of British Honduras, it should be said that in Britain's view the interests of the colony would be better served by working for the closest possible association with its neighbours.[3] Macmillan's concern with such an insignificant colony was presumably due to a

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2153, LAC(62)1st, 8 March 1962, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)3rd, 2 February 1962, p. 2.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)7th, 5 April 1962, pp. 1-2.

desire to jettison a worthless burden and a concern that problems should not arise there that could cause complications for the Special Relationship.

Macmillan's interest in this colony was such that when it was discussed at a later meeting of the CPC when Kilmuir was in the chair in Macmillan's absence, the former said that discussion of the economic issues and of the date of independence should be postponed to a later meeting, because the Prime Minister wanted to arrange for an early discussion about the coordination of British and US policy in that area.[1] Macmillan seemed to want to ensure that the committee system did not lead to him losing control or supervision over certain matters.

The following year the Oversea Policy Committee was told by Nigel Fisher, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, that although it was government policy to give British Honduras independence as soon as possible, so that it could join the Organization of American States and obtain access to US aid, it would now be necessary to move more slowly than had been hoped because Guatemala would probably react unfavourably to any move that went beyond internal self-government. The committee simply agreed to this without any recorded discussion.[2] In the end, although internal self-government was granted in 1964, independence was not achieved until 1981.

Concern about America was even more apparent when it came to British Guiana. In contrast to the West Indian territories, this colony was of considerable interest to other ministers, especially the Prime Minister. In 1957 Macmillan had written to Lennox-Boyd asking how the situation there was likely to develop, urging him to keep a close watch on the situation, and emphasising the importance of keeping in close touch with the US on developments, for if problems developed its help would be valuable.[3] The American interest in this colony was a significant factor that had to be taken into account in policy-making and made life all the more difficult for the policy-makers. Ironically, for a country addicted to anti-colonial posturing, America wanted Britain to delay independence.

Like British Honduras, the government considered that British Guiana was of no economic value and that the best course would be to persuade it to join the West Indies Federation.[4] When this ceased to be an option Britain decided to try and grant independence in 1962. As Maudling told the CPC, the dilemma was that delaying independence (Jagan had asked for it to be granted in May rather than in Britain's preferred month of August) would not benefit Britain, and the only result would be disorder that would strain Britain's military resources. However, the attitude of the US complicated matters. Britain was under a moral

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)9th, 10 May 1962, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)8th, 9 July 1963, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 21/2880, Macmillan to Lennox-Boyd, 18 December 1957.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1930, FP(A)(59)3rd, 27 October 1959, p. 2.

obligation not to grant independence any earlier if this could be avoided, and so the US would need to be consulted before any decision was taken.[1] So not only was the CO's freedom of action circumscribed by the general ministerial interest in this colony, it was further restricted by the need to take American attitudes into account.

As so often happened in Cabinet committees, the points made in the subsequent discussion were obvious and unoriginal, and did little to help the development of policy. It was suggested that experience had shown that it was best to have as short a gap as possible between full internal self-government and independence, because in this interregnum Britain still had ultimate responsibility for events, but had no real control over them and would be unable to hold down British Guiana by force. Furthermore, Britain had no strategic or overriding economic interests there. Another argument, and one indicating growing ministerial frustration, was that in the last resort the US, which had a vital interest in the colony, would have to either accept the burden of supporting the colony or accept the consequences of leaving it to fend for itself; and America was unlikely to recognize this harsh reality while British Guiana remained a Britain colony. The committee agreed that Maudling should review his proposals in the light of the reaction of the US and Britain Guiana, and asked various ministers to telegraph the Foreign Secretary and suggest that he should speak to the US about the situation.[2]

1962 was the year when there was most committee activity on British Guiana. Apart from a briefing to ministers at a Cabinet meeting, and a short Cabinet discussion, all activity took place in Cabinet committees. The Latin America and the Caribbean Committee was simply used to keep officials from various departments informed of development in British Guiana, with the CO representative emphasising at one meeting that the immediate aim of policy was to find a way to withdraw the extra forces that had been sent there as soon as possible, and get rid of responsibility for the territory by an early grant of independence.[3] The Oversea Policy Committee had a memorandum circulated to it on the advantages and disadvantages of British Guiana being granted Commonwealth membership when it became independent. However, this memorandum does not appear to have been discussed by the committee and there are no other mentions of Britain Guiana in this committee's papers.[4] All other work took place in the CPC.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)13th, 20 December 1961, p. 6.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] PRO, CAB 134/2153, LAC(62)1st, 8 March 1962, p. 1. The FO, CO, CRO, Treasury and Department of Technical Cooperation were all represented on this committee, as was The Board of Trade, an indication that the committee was more concerned with broader economic issues in relation to South America, rather than colonial ones. For the membership see PRO, CAB 134/2153, LAC(62)1, 22 February 1962, p. 1.

[4] For the Cabinet minutes see CAB 128, CC(62)15th, 22 February 1962, p. 4 and CAB 128, CC(62)44th, 5 July 1962, p. 4. For the Oversea Policy Committee memorandum see PRO, CAB 134/2370, OP(62)8, 12 July 1962. Another body which dealt with British Guiana was a working party of the

The early grant of independence was an aim that was difficult to reconcile with the continuing political instability of the territory, and with the US desire that independence should not be granted if there was any likelihood that Jagan and the PPP would be in power. As was observed at one CPC meeting, 'it was indeed ironic that the government were delaying independence for British Guiana at the request of the United States government; but action could not be long delayed'.[1] The riots and strikes provoked by Jagan's 1962 budget had led to extra British troops having to be sent to the colony, and the Minister of Defence, Harold Watkinson, used the CPC to press his concerns that Britain was militarily overstretched. Curiously, what he asked for was that if any further need for troops should arise at short notice, the matter should be brought directly to the MoD and not to the individual service departments, because only the former was in a position to evaluate the general situation and coordinate action.[2] Clearly the committee system not only functioned as a way of ministers keeping a vigilant eye on matters that concerned them, they also sought to use it to assert their own position in Whitehall.

At the next CPC discussion of British Guiana, Maudling said that because of the recent disturbances it would be necessary to slow down progress to independence. However, he obviously wanted to do so as little as possible because he proposed that constitutional discussions should be held in May, to be followed by an independence conference later in the year. He also suggested that in the meantime efforts should continue to try and persuade the US to accept more responsibility for the territory, and in particular to provide more economic aid. Another minister suggested that if America wanted independence delayed, and Britain agreed to this, then it would be reasonable to ask for economic aid before independence. Although the Cabinet agreed to Maudling's proposals, it was emphasized at some length that it was important to consult the US about the timetable to independence because of its concern about a communist regime being established.[3]

Many colonies were now seen as belongings that were of little economic or strategic value which did not contribute to Britain's strength and international standing; they were now simply embarrassing relics which caused unnecessary difficulties, such as complicating relations with the US. However, Britain could not simply walk away from its colonial responsibilities, leaving behind conditions of economic and policy chaos, as to do so would

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Oversea Coordinating Committee, which was responsible for the question of independence aid for the colony. See PRO, CAB 134/2280.

[1] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)3rd, 2 February 1962, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)4th, 16 February 1962, p. 5.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)7th, 5 April 1962, p. 3.

attract international criticism, alienate the new leaders of these territories and provide openings for Soviet penetration.

Macmillan seemed well aware of all this. When the CPC next discussed a memorandum on British Guiana, it was one that had been written not by Maudling but by Brook. Although Maudling was present, Macmillan took the lead in the discussion. He began by saying that Britain's plans for British Guiana and British Honduras needed to take into account that after independence the US would have to take on responsibility for their economic development and political stability, that unless America did so these territories might look to the Soviet bloc for aid, and that the US was worried that British Guiana might turn into another Cuba. He added that it was necessary to consider the extent to which the arrangements for British-American consultation on these territories could be strengthened and improved.[1] American interests and Cold War concerns obviously meant that the future of this territory was not simply a colonial issue.

Maudling followed on by saying that he would try and persuade the political parties in the colony to agree that elections should be held under the new constitution before independence, a move he thought would be welcomed by the US, although he felt it was unlikely that this would lead to the defeat of Jagan. His main worry seems to have been that any attempt to delay independence once a constitution had been agreed upon could lead to unrest when Britain was still responsible for internal security.[2]

Britain's concern to rid itself of British Guiana is emphasized by the observation in discussion that if Jagan were re-elected this might perhaps persuade the US that there was no practical alternative to cooperating with him, and the complaint that if independence were delayed, Britain would have to give another grant of economic aid. It was suggested that it would be best not to encourage Venezuelan claims to parts of British Guiana, because the extent of communist influence in the former, and the fact that the people of British Guiana had already been exposed to communist influence, could mean that there was a risk of the whole area becoming part of the Soviet camp. Most of the discussion concerned the question of British-American cooperation in Central America. The Foreign Secretary was very cautious about this, saying that although it would be helpful if arrangements for informal consultation were made, no formal machinery needed to be established. In contrast, Maudling was keen on a formal arrangement, and suggested that the area of consultation should be extended to the Caribbean as a whole. His colleagues seemed to find his approach overenthusiastic, however, and agreed that it would be best if discussions concentrated on British Guiana and British Honduras. The

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)10th, 18 May 1962, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*

committee agreed that the programme for independence for British Guiana should stand, and that in principle new elections should be held before independence, although a final decision on this would not be made until after independence. The committee also agreed that a message should be sent to President Kennedy. It should remind him that at a meeting with Macmillan, he had announced that he would improve the arrangements within the US administration for dealing with Western colonial problems as a whole, and should say that Britain would cooperate with whatever arrangements he decided on. In addition, the message should ask Kennedy to nominate a representative who would liaise with the British government on the problems of British Guiana and British Honduras.[1]

The problem of Britain Guiana was not resolved by the independence conference held in 1962, however, and it continued to be a thorn in the side of British policy-makers, not least because of American concerns. As a result it had to be discussed by both the Cabinet and the Oversea Policy Committee. In May 1963 the Cabinet was informed that an attempt by Jagan's government to introduce a Labour Relations Bill had led to widespread strikes, and that if the situation deteriorated it might be necessary to introduce a state of emergency.[2] A few weeks later Sandys told the Oversea Policy Committee that after five weeks of total strike the economy of the territory was at a standstill, and the country was on the verge of collapse. He therefore felt that it would be best to suspend the constitution and resume direct rule. He added that before doing so, it would be essential to get the US to agree that they would supply the territory with substantial economic aid, even though it would be under direct British rule.[3] The fact that such a serious matter with implications for British-American relations was discussed in a Cabinet committee shows how much use Macmillan made of the committee system, and that it dealt with the most important tasks.

The committee overruled Sandys, an indication of the extent to which the CO and its ministers could lose autonomy when a colonial issue had wider implications. In this case the wider implications were to do with Britain's absolute determination to end its responsibility for this colony. In the ensuing discussion nobody supported Sandys' position. It was emphatically argued that withholding independence to meet the US's wishes could not be justified; the colony was of no economic or strategic value and was a liability, withholding independence would involve considerable cost and the use of troops needed elsewhere, and would expose Britain to international criticism. Although there was a danger of a Congo-type situation developing, the US had the power to prevent this, but would be unlikely to take the necessary

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)10th, 18 May 1962, pp. 1-3.
[2] CAB 128, CC(63)29th, 9 May 1963, p. 4.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)5th, 28 May 1963, p. 1.

measures as long as Britain was still responsible for the territory. The discussion ended with the committee agreeing that Britain was no longer able or willing to accept responsibility for the territory, and that there was no practical alternative to the early grant of independence, and took note that Macmillan would arrange for the US to be informed of this.[1] This willingness to risk incurring US displeasure suggests how keen Britain was to end this colonial responsibility. British Guiana also shows that trying to get rid of a worthless colony could be as difficult as attempting to hold on to a valuable one.

The following month Macmillan and Kennedy met at Birch Grove, Macmillan's country house. Macmillan makes no mention of British Guiana in his account of this meeting.[2] However, according to a recent study, two sessions of Kennedy's very short visit were devoted to this colony. The day before this meeting Home, Sandys and Dean Rusk, the American Secretary of State, met in London. Rusk asked for independence to be delayed until there was no danger of the colony becoming a communist state. Home responded that resuming direct rule would damage Britain's image as a decolonising power, but Sandys, adopting the approach he had taken the previous month in the Oversea Policy Committee, said that direct rule might work if the US gave generous economic aid. At Birch Grove Sandys suggested that proportional representation could be introduced, which would likely deny Jagan an overall majority, Rusk said the US would 'move fast' on economic aid if Jagan was replaced, and Kennedy emphasized his concern that communism would spread in Latin America and asked that British Guiana should not become independent.[3]

When Sandys briefed the Cabinet the following week, he informed ministers that the situation was still deteriorating and that it might become necessary to suspend the constitution and resume direct rule, although because of the possible consequences of such a move he was considering visiting the colony first to assess the situation for himself. Although he made no direct reference to the Birch Grove discussions, he finished by saying that the US had expressed its concern at the possible emergence of a communist state in South America, and that America's interest in the future of British Guiana would have to be borne in mind.[4] No discussion followed this statement, perhaps simply because given the deteriorating situation and American pressure, there were no longer alternative policy options to examine. In some colonies the fear of possible unrest was one of the reasons for British withdrawal, but in British Guiana actual unrest was one of the reasons why it was difficult for Britain to withdraw.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)5th, 28 May 1963, p. 2.
[2] See Macmillan, *At the End of the Day*, pp. 471-475.
[3] R. Lamb, *The Macmillan Years 1957-1963: The Emerging Truth* (1995), pp. 363-368.
[4] CAB 128, CC(63)44th, 4 July 1963, pp. 3-4.

Sandys reported to the Oversea Policy Committee following his visit to British Guiana. He said it was clear that until racial tensions were reduced no progress could be made on constitutional change, and there could be no question of independence. If no agreement was reached when the constitutional conference was reconvened then Britain would have to impose a solution. However, in contrast to the impression he had given the Americans, he said that it would not be enough just to introduce proportional representation, as this would probably still leave Jagan with a working majority, and that in addition a scheme involving the 'pairing' of votes to parties which attracted votes from both Africans and Indians could be introduced in order to develop a multiracial legislature. It would also be necessary to suspend the constitution, not in order to impose direct rule, but so that the new constitution, to which Jagan would be opposed, could be introduced. The discussion that followed was confined to the means of suspending the constitution, and it ended with Macmillan saying that policy should proceed along the lines recommended by Sandys.[1]

The proportional representation scheme enabled the government to avoid antagonising America, meant that it would not be forced to impose direct rule, and seemed to offer a chance that Britain would be able to divest herself of this colonial responsibility at a reasonably early date, although not as soon as it would have liked. Although it has been argued that proportional representation was simply a device to remove Jagan from power, this seems unlikely given that even Sandys thought that Jagan would still win a majority under this system. Furthermore, his predecessor had taken the view that the leader of the opposition, Forbes Burnham, was every bit as extreme as Jagan.[2] Of course Britain was anxious not to offend America, but the scheme was also intended to deal with a political divide along racial lines which Britain considered would prevent the country from ever being stable.

Britain's concern about this problem was made clear in a Cabinet discussion. Sandys said that any solution to the problem of British Guiana would need to involve compelling candidates to win support from all races and therefore proportional representation should be introduced. He also pointed out that the PPP had seats out of proportion to the votes cast for them. In addition, he suggested that the first elections under the new system should take place before independence, and added that the US would endorse his proposed policy. As before there was no discussion, presumably because it was felt that there was no alternative course of action.[3]

Although Britain was deeply reluctant to resume direct rule, Sandys had to tell the Cabinet the following year that this might have to be done because a state of emergency had

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)9th, 17 July 1963, pp. 1-3.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)10th, 18 May 1962, p. 1.
[3] CAB 128, CM(63)3rd, 31 October 1963, pp. 4-5.

been declared following severe disorder.[1] Only one committee discussion took place that year, reflecting the fact that policy options were so circumscribed, and perhaps also indicating that as Prime Minister Home made less use of Cabinet committees than Macmillan. The official DOPC discussed the colony in June because talks on it were due to take place with the US. Sir Hilton Poynton of the CO said if Jagan won the next election the only course of action would be to hold a constitutional conference and fix a date for independence. The same action would also need to be taken if the opposition parties formed a coalition government, although in addition it would then be necessary to ensure that US aid was immediately given. Poynton then pushed the interests of the colony by arguing that whatever happened, Britain should provide economic aid so the unimplemented projects from the previous development programme could be carried forward. In the ensuing discussion it was suggested that in the forthcoming talks it might be best to avoid saying that Britain intended to give early independence if Jagan won, and instead just explain the pressure Britain would be under to do so.[2] Clearly Britain was still worried about US reactions.

By the time the general election was held under Sandys' proportional representation proposals, the Conservatives were out of power. The outcome was, as some had expected, a defeat for Jagan and this eventually enabled the Labour government to grant independence in 1966.

V. AFRICA

In a speech in 1958 Lennox-Boyd reflected on colonial policy.

> Are we going too slow or too fast in constitutional change? Are we losing the initiative or, in our desire to retain it, surrendering the interests of the many to the clamour of the few?...do not the too fast and the too slow schools reflect a view of the problem which is basically a fallacy - the notion that Colonial problems are a thing by themselves which can in practice be considered in a box, in isolation from wider world developments?[3]

Perhaps colonial policy least existed in its own box in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Africa. This was the period when colonial policy in general, as opposed to specific cases such as Cyprus, most concerned the government. Africa was becoming of greater international interest and was seen as important by the politicians of the time, not least by Macmillan who sent a memorandum to the Chancellor in 1959 saying that African problems would become more

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[1] CAB 128, CM(64)29th, 26 May 1964, p. 3.
[2] PRO, CAB 148/4, DO(O)(64)15th, 24 June 1964, Second Confidential Annex, pp. 1-2.
[3] Porter and Stockwell, *British Imperial Policy and Decolonization*, Vol. II, p. 491.

important to Britain over the next ten years.[1] He also informed Brook in November that same year that Africa seemed to be the biggest problem looming at home.[2] During this period Africa was the cause of much debate about the pace of change. However, conflicting opinion within the government about whether the pace was too fast or too slow gradually became replaced, for the most part, by a realization, even if only tacitly acknowledged, that Britain could no longer control the pace of change.

This section will not examine the minute details of policy, especially not the constant revision of constitutional details such as franchise arrangements, but will instead look at broader developments to understand what imperatives and concerns shaped policy, and indeed whether policy was developed or was more of an improvised reaction to events.

As early as 1952 Britain was trying to slow the speed of developments. That year the Cabinet discussed a memorandum by Lyttelton on amendments to the Gold Coast constitution. Local politicians had asked that the Governor should be required to obtain the Legislative Council's approval for his choice of leader of the government, that the latter should have the title of prime minister and rank next to the Governor, and that the Executive Council should be called the Cabinet. The Governor, Sir Charles Arden-Clarke, felt that making these concessions might enable further constitutional changes to be delayed, allowing ministers to gain more experience and an opposition party to perhaps emerge. He also felt that if these concessions were not made the result would be demands for self-government that could not be held back. Lyttelton accepted these arguments and reluctantly recommended that the changes should be made. He also pointed out that his Labour predecessor, James Griffiths, had given a pledge that these changes would be made.[3] In the ensuing discussion three concerns were voiced. The Commonwealth Relations Secretary, General Ismay, pointed out that these changes could alarm South Africa, and the Cabinet agreed to his suggestion that he should be allowed to explain them to the South African government before they were officially announced. More importantly, and showing that the Cabinet did not always simply rubber-stamp Lyttelton's proposals, the Cabinet decided that when the Governor was absent, the senior British administrative officer should take precedence over the Prime Minister and preside over the Cabinet, one of the few instances during Lyttelton's period in office of the Cabinet altering one of his proposals.[4]

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[1] PRO, PREM 11/2587, Macmillan to Heathcoat Amory, 3 July 1959.

[2] A. Horne, *Macmillan*, Vol. II, *1957-1986* (1989), p. 183. Macmillan was generally concerned about colonial constitutional problems. He minuted on a letter from Brook that they were 'vital and urgent'. See PRO, CAB 21/3840, Brook to Macmillan, 25 May 1959.

[3] CAB 129, C(52)28, 9 February 1952, pp. 2-3.

[4] CAB 128, CC(52)16th, 12 February 1952, p. 83.

It was evident the following year that even at this early date Britain could not fully control developments and was again anxiously trying to find ways of slowing down the pace of change. In a memorandum to the Cabinet, not intended for discussion but only to keep ministers informed of developments, Lyttelton said that all the political groups and administrative bodies in the Gold Coast, with the exception of the Northern Territories Council which represented the poorest part of the colony, were demanding immediate full self-government within the Commonwealth. Therefore if the territory was to continue to be governed by consent, further constitutional advance was inescapable, and to avoid having to give immediate self-government any changes would need to be substantial enough to be acceptable to the population. The main changes proposed were the replacement of some *ex-officio* ministerial posts with representative ones, an increase in the membership of the Legislative Assembly, and the election of all of its members by universal adult suffrage. Lyttelton had, however, informed the Governor that Britain would not negotiate on control over external affairs and defence. The Governor hoped that these changes would give Britain a breathing space of three to four years, during which time local politicians could be prepared for greater responsibilities, and the form of the Gold Coast's association with the Commonwealth could be considered. Lyttelton added that he would consult his colleagues later in the year when he received the final proposals of the Gold Coast government.[1]

A few weeks later this briefing document was discussed by the Cabinet. Ministers were resolutely opposed to the Gold Coast government's demand for control of external affairs and defence. The view was 'strongly expressed' that Gold Coast politicians should categorically be told that if they insisted on assuming responsibility for external affairs and defence then it would not be possible for the territory to remain in the Commonwealth. Churchill added that Lyttelton would have the full support of the Cabinet in resisting these demands.[2] It is clear that at this time independence meant little more than internal self-government, with either Britain directly assuming control for external matters and defence or perhaps using the Commonwealth as the means of doing so. There appears to have been a mental block, especially where African territories were concerned, that prevented politicians from considering either that such small and backward colonies would ever be capable of developing into fully autonomous political entities, or that such a development, if it were to happen, would be compatible with Commonwealth membership.[3] Given the conservative influence of the committee system it was unlikely that such assumptions would be challenged.

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[1] CAB 129, C(53)154, 13 May 1953, pp. 1-3.
[2] CAB 128, CC(53)34th, 27 May 1953, p. 67.
[3] A memorandum by the official Commonwealth Membership Committee even suggested that the intended changes would mean that by 1954, when elections under the new constitution were due to be

In July the Cabinet turned down a request by the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly for the CRO to become responsible for the territory in the final transition stage before independence.[1] However, when Lyttelton told ministers he felt the government should agree to the Gold Coast government's request that Britain should declare its readiness to grant full self-government in the Commonwealth, because the latter attached great importance to this, the Cabinet assented without demur.[2] Presumably ministers agreed with the warning in his memorandum that to reject this request would produce a demand for immediate independence.[3]

In 1954 Lyttelton circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet warning that the new constitution would mark the last step before independence, and because independence could probably not be delayed longer than 1956, the complicated matter of Commonwealth membership for an independent Gold Coast would have to be considered.[4] The ambiguities about what was meant by independence were clearing up; there was now a clear distinction between independence and full self-government, with the latter now only a penultimate stage for the Gold Coast. It is clear even at such an early date that the transfer of power was not some evolutionary process under British control, and that the various policy studies that had assumed that Britain could control developments had got it badly wrong.

Independence for the Gold Coast raised the problem of the future of British Togoland, a Trust Territory administered as part of the Gold Coast. It was obviously not of much interest to ministers because the Cabinet agreed without any discussion to Lyttelton's suggestion that a plebiscite should be held, and if its inhabitants were in favour then it should be integrated with the Gold Coast after independence.[5]

The following year there was little discussion in the Cabinet and its committees of the West African colonies. This was not necessarily neglect; perhaps it merely reflected the fact that for the most part these colonies were not 'live' issues that needed to be dealt with at Cabinet level, and also that little use was made of committees, even though the ministerial CPC was established that year. Presumably discussions took place only within the CO or directly between the CO and any other concerned departments. However, there does appear to have been a degree of neglect of the Gold Coast; the CRO was increasingly concerned about developments there,

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held, the Gold Coast would have a degree of responsibility for its internal affairs that would not be compatible with Commonwealth membership. See PRO, CAB 130/87, GEN 435/3, 27 June 1953, p. 2.

[1] CAB 128, CC(53)47th, 30 July 1953, p. 74.
[2] CAB 128, CC(53)52nd, 16 September 1953, p. 122.
[3] CAB 129, C(53)244, 4 September 1953, p. 2.
[4] CAB 129, C(54)62, 18 February 1954, p. 3.
[5] CAB 128, CC(54)36th, 26 May 1954, p. 3.

especially the growing levels of corruption and political intimidation, and as a result there was increased tension between the CRO and the CO.[1]

Although quickly dismissed in 1954, the issue of British Togoland now became a complex one. A UN Trusteeship Council mission had recommended that the plebiscite should offer the inhabitants a choice of integration with the Gold Coast, or continued trusteeship until the territory's ultimate future was decided. Britain was now faced with the unforeseen problem of deciding whether to continue to administer the territory if integration was rejected. Showing that Cold War considerations influenced colonial policy in Africa, Lennox-Boyd suggested that Britain should continue to do so, not just because the territory might become administered by some unsuitable power, but also because if the UN took on responsibility for the territory then the USSR would be given a voice in colonial affairs and a 'vantage point' for interfering in Africa. A lengthier discussion than was normal with colonial affairs at this time ensued. A minister pointed out that a vote against the proposed union would produce another small territory which could not be self-supporting, an unsurprising objection given Britain's difficulty in deciding on the future of the smaller colonies. Another minister responded that such a unit would exist for only a limited time because the future of British Togoland needed to be considered in the context of the future of French Togoland. The discussion finished with a minister reminding the Cabinet that the termination of British Trusteeship in Togoland depended on the Gold Coast becoming independent, and it was not yet clear whether the Ashanti and northern districts of the latter fully supported the independence proposals.[2]

Ministers were starting to take more interest in colonial affairs, and as a result Lennox-Boyd did not have the freedom from ministerial intervention enjoyed by his predecessor. Although the Cabinet approved his suggestion that the UN should be told that Britain would continue to administer the territory in the event of a vote against integration, it also decided that this question raised more general issues which would best be considered separately.[3]

Given the Suez Crisis, it is surprising that the Cabinet rather than the CPC discussed the Gold Coast. In August it considered a memorandum by Lennox-Boyd on the results of the general election which had recently been held there. The election had produced a majority for Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party and as a result Lennox-Boyd said that the conditions Britain had laid down had been fulfilled and the country could now become independent in 1957.[4] The discussion showed that ministers were increasingly reluctant to

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[1] See Goldsworthy, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire*, Part II, p. 206.
[2] CAB 128, CM(55)40th, 10 November 1955, pp. 6-7.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[4] CAB 129, CP(56)204, 29 August 1956, p. 4. Lennox-Boyd had agreed in May that if a general election was held, Britain would agree to independence if a motion for this was passed by a reasonable

simply nod through colonial policy proposals. Duncan Sandys, then the Minister of Housing and later to become Colonial Secretary himself, showed more knowledge of this matter than might have been expected, and observed that the introduction of a unitary constitution would mean that the tribal peoples of the central and northern territories would come under the control of the more advanced inhabitants of the coastal areas. In addition he argued that the proposal to withdraw the protectorate status of the northern territories without the agreement of their inhabitants was an abuse of Britain's responsibilities. He felt that even at such a late stage a federal solution should be considered. Lennox-Boyd responded, supported by Home, that the territory was too small to be divided into the five separate units that a federal solution would require, and that there was no practicable alternative to abrogating the protectorate treaties.[1]

Although the Cabinet then agreed that there was no choice but to proceed with a unitary constitution, it also decided that it would be necessary to examine the implications of the withdrawal of protected status for the native populations of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.[2] This discussion highlights the fact that this matter had not first been discussed by a committee, which could have carried out the preliminary work to deal with the last point, and again suggests that Eden's unwillingness to make full use of the committee system was burdening the Cabinet with unnecessary work.

Indeed, it might have been thought that this whole issue could have been best dealt with by the ministerial CPC. However, major constitutional changes were clearly so important that they had to be brought before the Cabinet. In addition the question of independence for the Gold Coast had financial implications, and was therefore of interest to the Chancellor, and so could not have been dealt with by a committee of which he was not a member. In fact at the end of the discussion the Chancellor said he would like independence deferred because the withdrawal of the Gold Coast's sterling balances would damage the pound. The Cabinet rejected this out of hand; clearly the Chancellor and the Treasury were not as powerful as they are often thought to be.[3]

In 1957, with the Gold Coast achieving independence, Nigeria and Sierra Leone were the West African colonies whose constitutional futures were now discussed, although the latter was discussed by the CPC and not by the Cabinet. The CPC now seemed more active and to be dealing with a broader range of topics than before; previously it had tended to get bogged down

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majority in the newly elected legislature. On 3 August the Legislative Assembly voted by seventy-two to nil in favour of independence (the thirty-two members of the opposition parties abstained). See *The Colonial Territories, 1956-57*, p. 5.

[1] CAB 128, CM(56)64th, 11 September 1956, pp. 3-4.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[3] *Ibid.*

with a narrow range of topics, especially Cyprus.[1] Although an official Africa Committee was established that year with the remit to 'keep under review political and economic problems concerning Africa' it did not once discuss colonial constitutional development.[2] This suggests a shortcoming in the system because a committee that could have kept constitutional advance under review, and so provided some long-term policy planning, did not perform this function.

In December Lennox-Boyd told the CPC that although full independence for Sierra Leone might not be possible because of its strategic value, the effect on nationalist opinion of the developments in the Gold Coast, Nigeria and the neighbouring French colonies could not be ignored. He therefore considered that an all-African Executive Council should be established as a further move towards internal self-government. The Governor, he added, felt that doing so would offer the best chance of retaining the constitutional initiative and the goodwill of the population. Apart from a few minor points the CPC agreed to the proposals.[3]

However, that same month the CPC had to discuss Sierra Leone again, because a delegation from the colony had asked for the Deputy-Governor to be excluded from the proposed new Executive Council. Indicating the watchful eye he kept on African matters, Macmillan had told Lennox-Boyd to consult the CPC if he felt it was necessary to agree to this demand. Lennox-Boyd told the CPC he felt it should be accepted so that a satisfactory and lasting settlement could be achieved. In response, two objections were made. It was pointed out that the Deputy-Governor should be present because the Executive Council would discuss internal security and this was his responsibility. In addition it was argued that making this concession might lead to further concessions being demanded. Nevertheless, Lennox-Boyd got his way. The committee agreed that if a completely satisfactory settlement was achieved then it would not be necessary to insist that the Deputy-Governor stayed on the Executive Council.[4]

It might appear that as the CPC had reached an agreement on this issue there was no need to refer it to the Cabinet. However, Macmillan felt otherwise. He sent Lennox-Boyd a memorandum in which he said that although he did not think it right to dissent from the proposals for constitutional advance which the CPC had examined:

> I regret that our colleagues in the Cabinet did not have the opportunity of considering these proposals, which could I feel have been prepared more than a week before the Delegation of Africans arrived. I am sure you will agree that although the Colonial Policy Committee performs an essential function in giving close scrutiny to proposals for colonial development, a

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[1] Cyprus was discussed at six of its seven meetings in 1955, thirty-one of the thirty-nine meetings in 1956, but only eight of the eighteen meetings in 1957.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1351, AF(57)1, 9 May 1957, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)14th, 4 December 1957, p. 1.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)16th, 11 December 1957, pp. 1-2.

> final decision on any substantial measure for constitutional change in the colonies, should I think be taken in principle by the Cabinet.[1]

This suggests that although Macmillan made full use of Cabinet committees, he wanted to ensure that the result was not a reduction in his authority or in his ability to keep matters under his supervision. This concern to have the Cabinet to discuss important matters of constitutional change might also suggest a certain nervousness on Macmillan's part about such changes, because he was clearly anxious to ensure that there was full Cabinet approval for them.

Nigeria was discussed by both the CPC and the Cabinet, and was the subject of a dispute between Lennox-Boyd and the Commonwealth Secretary, Lord Home. Lennox-Boyd told the CPC that a conference was shortly to be held to give effect to the commitments made by Britain in 1953 and 1954 that regional self-government would be granted, and that the Federal House of Representatives had recently passed a unanimous resolution demanding independence for the Federation as a whole by 1959. He suggested that the probable effect of the latter would be that the Northern Region, which had previously not been keen on self-government because it feared domination by the more advanced East and West regions, would now ask for regional and federal self-government. Although there was a danger that meeting these demands would lead to an administrative breakdown in the Eastern Region, the alternative was a risk of serious disturbances and a legacy of resentment after independence, an argument that was being increasingly used in favour of constitutional advance.[2]

Home, in a response indicative of the growing gulf between the CO and CRO over constitutional change, insisted that if Lennox-Boyd said at the conference that he would meet these demands, this would worry other members of the Commonwealth who were concerned that an Afro-Asian bloc might emerge within it, and observed that Nigeria would, on this plan, achieve independence before the CAF. He suggested that regional self-government should be established on an experimental basis for a five-year period, at the end of which a constitutional commission would consider further changes. After some discussion the committee agreed that it would be best to avoid giving any commitment to granting federal independence in 1959 and therefore the draft declaration should be rephrased in less precise language.[3]

At its next meeting the CPC considered revised versions of the declaration by Lennox-Boyd and Home. Lennox-Boyd's revision was designed to attract the support of those in the North and West Regions who might have doubts about early federal independence. He argued that an experimental period of regional self-government would not be feasible, and that because the suggestion of a constitutional commission would be seen as a delaying tactic it would be

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[1] PRO, CAB 21/4356, Macmillan to Lennox-Boyd, 11 December 1957.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)7th, 13 May 1957, p. 3.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

better to propose a conference. Home, on the other hand, said his draft reflected his concern to avoid fixing a date for federal independence, and added that even if a five-year delay between regional and federal independence was not possible, he still felt it would be useful to appoint a constitutional commission. Kilmuir proposed a compromise draft, which the committee generally approved, and said he would circulate a memorandum on it to the Cabinet, and inform the Cabinet that Lennox-Boyd wanted to have further time to reflect on the draft.[1]

Lennox-Boyd's original version, which he circulated to the Cabinet following the CPC's first discussion of it, argued that the government needed to maintain a peaceful and quiet Nigeria, if only in Britain's ultimate interests as a trading nation. His proposed statement said that if in 1959 the people of Nigeria still wanted independence within the Commonwealth, and if the Federal governments had shown themselves competent, then Britain would 'consult with all the Nigerian Governments about arrangements for the final transfer of power'.[2]

His revised declaration stated that if by 1959 the Federal governments had shown they could govern in a stable and effective manner, Britain would 'consult with all the Nigerian Governments to work out a programme for the attainment by the Federation of Nigeria of such a status as would enable it to become eligible for full membership of the Commonwealth'.[3] Home's version said that if after a five-year period the Federal governments had proved their competence then

> a Constitutional Commission should then be appointed to make recommendations as to the framing of a Constitution for a fully independent Nigeria...(and) to consider the constitutional and other changes which would be necessary to enable the Federation of Nigeria to become eligible for full membership of the Commonwealth.[4]

The compromise version proposed by Kilmuir said that if by 1959, when the life of the present House of Representatives was due to end, the Nigerian people still wanted independence within the Commonwealth, and the Federal governments had shown they could provide stable government, Britain would 'confer with all the Nigerian Governments to determine the processes whereby the Federation of Nigeria would advance towards independence within the Commonwealth'. A constitutional commission would be appointed 'to consider the constitutional and other changes which would be necessary to enable the Federation to become eligible for full membership of the Commonwealth'.[5]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)8th, 16 May 1957, p. 1.
[2] CAB 129, C(57)120, 14 May 1957, p. 3.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)13, 15 May 1957, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)14, 15 May 1957, pp. 1-2.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)8th, 16 May 1957, Annex, circulated to the Cabinet as CAB 129, C(57)122, 16 May 1957, p. 1.

When the Cabinet discussed this dispute, Lennox-Boyd's memorandum containing his original proposed statement and Kilmuir's revised version were before it, and a further revision was circulated by Lennox-Boyd during the meeting. Lennox-Boyd broadly repeated the background briefing he had already given to the CPC. However, when he came to describing the choice Britain faced, his description of it was far gloomier. He had earlier said that regional self-government, particularly if linked with early federal independence, posed a risk of administrative breakdown in the Eastern Region, but he now warned that the result could be 'the disintegration of Nigeria and a critical breakdown of administration'. Lennox-Boyd, in contrast to Home, seemed to feel that Britain was no longer in control of developments. He also pointed out that there would be increasing animosity and disturbances, and an inability to influence Nigerian politics after independence. He now, however, suggested as a compromise that if he had to make a fresh declaration of policy at the conference, he would say that if it became clear in 1959 that Nigeria wanted independence then Britain would confer with all Nigerian politicians to see how this could be attained, a process which might include the appointment of a constitutional commission.[1]

The ensuing Cabinet discussion seemed a half-hearted response to Lennox-Boyd's warnings. It was argued that Britain should avoid giving any date for independence, especially because the CAF government had recently been told that the decision on full Commonwealth membership for the Federation would be deferred until 1966, and because a longer period of regional self-government was needed to ensure competent full self-government. The discussion finished with the Cabinet 'inviting' Lennox-Boyd to be guided in the conference by the general sense of their discussion.[2] In many ways this discussion was a dialogue of the deaf; ministers made known their own specific view but made no attempt to take into account the concerns of their colleagues. Nobody, for example, countered Lennox-Boyd's arguments about the dangers of deferring independence. The Cabinet's conclusion seems a very weak one, especially given that five memoranda had been circulated and three meetings had been held; a lot of time had produced few concrete results.

As was often the case with colonies on the verge of independence, the problems concerning Nigeria centred on post-independence economic aid and a defence treaty. In a discussion in 1959 on the official Africa Committee, the CO representative emphasized that Nigeria was of key importance in West Africa because of its size, position and pro-Western sympathies. However, it was suggested in discussion that when it became independent there

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[1] CAB 128, CC(57)42nd, 22 May 1957, p. 4. For Lennox-Boyd's earlier statement see PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)7th, 13 May 1957, p. 3.

[2] CAB 128, CC(57)42nd, 22 May 1957, p. 5.

would be an increase in external contacts which could stimulate left-wing thought. The possibility of retaining a British controlled enclave had been rejected because such a scheme was thought to be impracticable, and because a defence agreement would better keep Nigerian goodwill. Tying these two considerations together, one official suggested that the key factor in good relations would be the amount of economic aid given after independence.[1] There were several similar discussions, especially on economic aid.[2] Clearly there was going to be no quick release from colonial obligations for Britain, especially in those territories that were of strategic significance.

A memorandum produced for the official Africa Committee in January 1959 on the prospects for the African colonies, suggested that the influence of Ghana and the changes in the neighbouring French territories would stimulate the demand for independence in Sierra Leone, and so pressure for further constitutional reform would probably develop strongly over the next two to three years, despite a lack of solid popular support for this. Although the colony needed a period of consolidation and stability, it was felt sensible to assume that in the long term it would cease to be a colony.[3]

The following month when the official Africa Committee discussed this memorandum, a CO official said that the position in Sierra Leone had changed. In contrast to what had been said in 1957, he told the committee that the colony was only of some, but not great, strategic interest to Britain; a convenient conclusion now that the pressure of changes in other territories was forcing Britain's hand. Events elsewhere in West Africa had made it almost impossible for Sierra Leone's ministers not to press for independence, and so they intended asking for this to be granted not later than 1963, a request to which Britain would probably have to agree.[4]

The major study produced by this committee. 'The Next Ten Years in Africa', repeated the conclusion that independence not later than 1963 would be requested.[5] However, a CO report prepared the following month for the official CPC shows that the pace of change made the Sierra Leone aspect of the major African study soon out of date. This report, which Brook circulated to the ministerial CPC, reported that the Premier of Sierra Leone, regarded by Britain as a moderate and conservative figure, had asked for independence to be given in January 1961.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)2nd, 21 January 1959, pp. 4-5. There were no significant discussions of the West African colonies in 1958.

[2] See for example PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)5th, 20 February 1959, pp. 1-2. The CO considered that Britain should provide up to £1 million a year for the first five years of independence. See PRO, CAB 134/1354, AF(59)13, 10 February 1959, p. 2 and p. 4.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)5, January 1959 (full date not given), pp. 22-23. In September 1958 de Gaulle had offered France's colonies the choice of membership of a French *Communauté* of autonomous members with the right to leave, or independence. Only *Guinée* chose independence.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)5th, 20 February 1959, p. 6.

[5] PRO, CAB 134/1355, AF(59)28(Final), 3 June 1959, p. 13.

Lennox-Boyd had agreed that there should be negotiations on further constitutional advance and felt that it would be difficult to refuse to fix a fairly early date for independence at these discussions.[1] In a report circulated to the ministerial CPC later that month, he pointed out that even though this territory was small, barely viable and mostly undeveloped, it would be difficult to decide any future for it other than independence within the Commonwealth. However, he said that there was not yet any need to take a decision on this.[2] This hardly suggests a planned and coordinated approach to decolonisation, and seems more like a tactic of procrastination followed by a surrender to the inevitable. It is clear that even in the smallest and most insignificant colony, Britain was unable to control the pace of change, but there was no general recognition of this in the committee system.

The following year Macleod told this committee he wanted to announce at the forthcoming constitutional conference that, subject to a satisfactory defence agreement, Sierra Leone would become independent in 1961, and argued that such early independence would have political advantages. Most of the discussion, however, was not about the granting of independence - this now seems to have been regarded as an inevitable development - but over the level of post-independence economic aid, because of the Treasury's unhappiness with the sum Macleod had suggested. The CPC agreed to the independence announcement, although Macmillan said that the independence proposals should be reported to the Cabinet, an action he often requested.[3]

The Gambia, little more than both banks of the River Gambia, was one of those small territories whose future was seen as problematic. 'The Next Ten Years in Africa' concluded that The Gambia's real interest lay in keeping the British connection for as long as possible because it was so backward and poor, but as it was surrounded by the now self-governing Senegal some form of association between the two territories seemed increasingly likely.[4]

The Gambia was now the only African colony whose future was in doubt, and so Macleod warned ministers that the government needed to formulate its own solution before pressure in the UN and elsewhere began to build up against Britain. He outlined three alternatives: full internal autonomy, with Britain retaining responsibility for defence and foreign affairs, federation with Sierra Leone, and a link with Senegal. Macleod dismissed the first option because The Gambia was too small and weak to support such a status, and the second

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)8, 7 July 1959, p. 2.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)11, 21 July 1959, pp. 3-4.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1559, CPC(60)2nd, 18 March 1960, p. 3. When the Cabinet discussed the question of independence, its only action was to ask Macleod to consult with the Chancellor and the Minister of Defence on whether anchorage at Freetown and overflying rights should be paid for. See CAB 128, CC(60)35th, 11 April 1960, p. 4.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1355, AF(59)28(Final), 3 June 1959, p. 13.

because Sierra Leone was distant from The Gambia and was too weak financially to take on the burden. He favoured the third option because the two territories had a common language. The Gambia would gain financial from the link, and Gambian ministers were in favour of developing such a connection. There was general agreement that this somewhat desperate alternative was the only sensible one, although it was pointed out that the association of a British territory with a foreign country could provoke criticism in Britain. Macmillan therefore said that the matter should be brought before the Cabinet because it could arouse a lot of political interest.[1] Despite these fears the future of The Gambia did not become a controversial issue. A memorandum circulated by Macleod to the ministerial CPC at the beginning of 1961, on the most difficult colonial problems likely to be encountered that year, made no mention of this colony.[2]

When, as requested by Macmillan, the Cabinet discussed The Gambia, Macleod repeated what he had earlier told the CPC, and the Cabinet agreed, without any objections being made, that developing a link with Senegal was the best move. However, the Minister of Defence added that as Britain needed to keep its staging rights in The Gambia, a defence agreement should form part of the constitutional settlement. Macleod was asked by the Cabinet to consult with the Minister of Defence on this.[3] Bringing this issue to the Cabinet involved a repetition of work but it did mean that the Cabinet was collectively involved in the decision, enabling Macmillan to guard against being held solely responsible for a possibly controversial move. This suggests that although the committee system was not meant to breach the principle of collective responsibility, Macmillan recognized there was a danger that this could happen in practice.

In July, a week before the constitutional conference on The Gambia was due to begin, Macleod circulated a memorandum to the CPC saying that he proposed to avoid giving a date for independence, because independence would only be practical if it occurred a very short time before a merger with Senegal.[4] When the committee discussed his proposals they were approved with little discussion and the issue of The Gambia limped off the agenda of the Cabinet and its committees.[5] The colony eventually became independent, on its own, in 1965.

The East African colonies were frequently discussed in both the Cabinet and its committees from 1959 to 1963. Before 1959 there were, with the exception of Uganda, only a few discussions of these colonies. Tanganyika, for example was briefly discussed in 1952 when

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1559, CPC(60)8th, 22 December 1960, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1, 3 January 1961.
[3] CAB 128, CC(61)2nd, 24 January 1961, pp. 6-7.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)26, 17 July 1961, p. 2.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)10th, 19 July 1961, p. 4.

the Cabinet endorsed Lyttelton's recommendation that the proposals of the Tanganyika Constitutional Development Committee should be accepted.[1]

The discussions about Kenya in the CPC in 1957 were of more significance. Following elections, the African members of the Legislative Council had asked for fifteen more seats and refused to take office until they were given them. Lennox-Boyd, who was in Kenya, sent a telegraph to the CPC asking for permission to declare the constitution unworkable so that he could impose his own settlement. Although the Cabinet agreed to his proposal, it was pointed out that for propriety's sake Lennox-Boyd should first return to London and obtain full Cabinet authority for it. Despite this, obviously an attempt to ensure that Cabinet committees were never used to take decisions that were the responsibility of the Cabinet, and following a telephone conversation between Macmillan and Lennox-Boyd, ministers approved the draft of a telegram to Lennox-Boyd authorising his proposals.[2]

The other discussions, which were quite detailed, concerned the particulars of various proposed constitutional changes, including the method of nominating candidates for election to inter-communal seats and the function, composition and powers of the new Council of State for Kenya. These were, in many ways, the sort of technical details that the CO might have been expected to deal with by itself, and the fact that they were considered by the CPC shows the extent to which the government as a whole was becoming involved in colonial matters, and the way in which the CO's autonomy was being eroded.[3]

Uganda was frequently discussed by the Cabinet from 1951 to 1958 because of the difficulties caused by the *Kabaka* of Buganda. Buganda was one of the four provinces that made up the Uganda protectorate and the *Kabaka* was its ruler. Towards the end of 1953 he had asked Lyttelton for Buganda to be given its independence, for its affairs to be transferred to the FO, and for assurances that there would never be a federation of Britain's East African territories.[4] In the end his refusal to drop his demand for independence led to him being deported to Britain. For the most part the Colonial Secretary simply briefed the Cabinet on developments and had his proposals approved without any discussion of them. The Cabinet did not contribute to the development of policy at all. There was only discussion about how the matter should be handled

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[1] CAB 128, CC(52)62nd, 24 June 1952, p. 179. The committee recommended that unofficial representation on the Legislative Council should be divided equally between Africans, Asians and Europeans, but that the official majority should be retained.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)12th, 7 November 1957, pp. 1-2.

[3] For these discussions see PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)15th, 6 December 1957, pp. 1-2 and PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)17th, 20 December 1957, p. 1.

[4] CAB 129, C(53)324, 18 November 1953, p. 1.

in the House of Commons because it had become controversial, such as whether the government should ask for a motion of confidence in its handling of colonial affairs.[1]

This affair later became entangled with broader questions of constitutional development in Uganda. By 1954 it was felt that the continued exclusion of the *Kabaka* would lessen the chances of acceptance of the agreements reached at the most recent constitutional conference, and that he should be allowed to return on condition he surrendered direct rule. The main concern of the Cabinet was that this change of policy should be represented as the consequence of a recently made legal judgement which made it difficult to justify his continued exile, and not as a reversal of policy, in order to make the change more acceptable to government supporters.[2] The Cabinet thus gave ministers the ability to ensure that policy proposals by a single department did not cause the government as a whole any political difficulties. By 1955 Lennox-Boyd was able to inform the Cabinet that only two outstanding problems had to be resolved before a constitutional agreement was reached: the date of the return of the *Kabaka* and the method of electing Buganda's representatives on the Protectorate's Legislative Council.[3] Two long memoranda were circulated to the CPC by Lennox-Boyd on the details of the electoral system, one in 1956 and one in 1957, but neither was discussed. In many ways ministers were happy to let the CO get on with matters that had no wider significance, and the details were circulated to ministers simply to meet a requirement that they should be kept abreast of developments.[4]

By 1959 the establishment of 'The Next Ten Years in Africa' study meant that an attempt was now being made to look at the broader picture, to try to coordinate policies in the different territories, and to take into account the implications of developments in any one colony for Britain's other colonies. At a meeting of the official Africa Committee it was suggested that Britain's interests in Africa were the maintenance of stability and a pro-Western outlook, although Britain might have to accept no more than neutrality. The question, therefore, was what would best serve these interests: retaining control of the colonies or withdrawing from them. The latter would lead to administrative chaos and a dangerous political vacuum, and would have undesirable repercussions in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. However, Britain could not remain in control indefinitely, and should therefore try to remain long enough to build

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[1] CAB 128, CC(53)76th, 3 December 1953, p. 151. The Cabinet decided it would be best to let matters rest.

[2] CAB 128, CC(54)74th, 10 November 1954, p. 5.

[3] CAB 128, CM(55)23rd, 14 July 1955, p. 9.

[4] For the relevant memoranda see PRO, CAB 134/1202, CA(56)14, 10 April 1956 and PRO, CAB 134/1556, CPC(57)18, 3 June 1957.

up an educated middle class to administer effectively after independence, and also promote reform of land tenure.[1]

How long Britain could hope to remain in control of its African colonies, and whether it would be best to give independence speedily or delay it for as long as was practicable, were major dilemmas. In a strongly worded memorandum, the CO tried to turn the interconnection between colonial policy and strategic concerns to its own advantage by using strategic reasons to support its policies for constitutional development. It argued that instead of following the line of least resistance - allowing African nationalist opinion to dictate the pace of change - the best course would be to state that Britain intended to remain in ultimate control of all its East African territories for a considerable period, probably fifteen to twenty years. Although African leaders would oppose this and there would be a risk of disorder, over the longer-term such a course would produce more stable conditions. It would also be the only long-term way of protecting British strategic interests in the region.[2] The CO also circulated a memorandum written in 1957 on the future constitutional development of the colonies. This paper argued in sententious tones that withdrawing British influence from West Africa would be a shabby end to an experiment in race relations, would have damaging repercussions on the CAF, and would reduce Britain's prestige. In addition, the CO argued that a withdrawal would extend the Middle East air barrier southward, making it virtually impossible to overcome, and so would open the flank of Africa to Soviet subversion.[3]

The FO felt there was evidence of increasing popular demand for self-government, and that a more realistic estimate should be made of the disorders that would result from an announcement of Britain's intention to stay for a lengthy period. It also considered that there was little value in keeping the strategic reserve in Kenya, because its mobility would be undermined by its involvement in containing unrest there. Furthermore, the CO's policy would make Britain look like a reactionary power making a last ditch attempt to continue colonial rule, because by 1960 virtually all African territories north of the Congo would either have, or be on the verge of, independence. Finally, the Soviet bloc would exploit and support dissident activity in East Africa. The FO therefore recommended that the best course would be to adopt a more flexible approach.[4]

A CO official later told the official Africa committee that the governors of the East African territories were in general agreement with the CO's proposals. Lennox-Boyd later

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)1st, 14 January 1959, p. 2.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)5, January 1959 (full date not given), p. 7.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)2, 6 January 1959, CO reference: GEN 174/012, May 1957 (full date not given), p. 32.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1354, AF(59)22, 26 February 1959, pp. 1-3.

submitted a note written in the light of his discussions with the governors to this committee, so that these views could be taken into account before he submitted his note to the CPC. This paper was more realistic in its assessment of the situation than the one produced by CO officials. It pointed out that the time was coming in Uganda, Tanganyika and possibly Zanzibar, when constitutional progress would tip the balance in favour of unofficials, and when this happened it would be difficult to check a rapid advance to full internal self-government. Because the latter stage could probably not be maintained for more than a few years, Uganda and Tanganyika would become fully self-governing in the foreseeable future, and Zanzibar would probably achieve full internal self-government as part of a larger unit. As for Kenya, although Lennox-Boyd had maintained that there was no prospect in the foreseeable future of giving up control there, he acknowledged that the changes in surrounding colonies could affect the situation there. Although African nationalism might produce widespread violence, if Britain rapidly withdrew from Africa the result would be a loss of vital defence interests, unstable new governments and a political vacuum which Britain's enemies would exploit. If, on the other hand, the government made clear that Britain would not relinquish control in the foreseeable future then Britain would need to be prepared and able to hold the area by force, and risk both political isolation and a legacy of hostility in East Africa. Lennox-Boyd suggested that there was a third way: continuing step by step constitutional progress while obtaining sufficient time for the territories to become adequately prepared for self-government, and drawing out the period during which Britain could keep control of defence and external policy.[1]

When the official Africa Committee discussed this note, a Treasury official opposed the suggestion that Britain should take over responsibility for local defence costs, and another official suggested that Africans would see the proposal as a means of delaying the eventual grant of independence.[2] This latter comment is a precursor of the later attitude that such third way alternatives were not viable because Britain could not be seen to be dragging its feet.

During the CPC's discussion of his note, Lennox-Boyd suggested that an unofficial majority should be permitted on the Tanganyikan Council of Ministers from 1965 to 1969, by which time the territory should have a substantial measure of internal self-government. He emphasized that the action taken there would determine the pattern of what would be expected in the other East African territories. Another minister suggested that what was needed was a fundamental examination of Britain's ultimate strategic objectives, and whether it would be possible to safeguard them other than by retaining bases, staging posts and overflying rights in Africa. Unfortunately such an examination was something the committee system was incapable

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1354, AF(59)23, 4 March 1959, pp. 2-10.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)7th, 6 March 1959, p. 4.

of carrying out. The valid, if not exactly practicable, observation was made that some African territories might develop more successfully if their borders, which had been drawn up arbitrarily in the nineteenth century without regard to expenditure or ethnic considerations, were redrawn. Macmillan ended the meeting with the observation that the committee was in general agreement that Britain should not surrender its interests and responsibilities in East Africa, but that the existing position could not remain unchanged, and therefore policy should be one of step by step constitutional advance. The safest way of doing so needed to be considered, as did the question of which of its interests Britain wanted to preserve in the area. In the meantime Lennox-Boyd was to proceed with his proposals for Tanganyika.[1]

When the official Africa Committee discussed the draft report on 'The Next Ten Years in Africa' it agreed that the section on East Africa should not be discussed until ministers had considered the situation there.[2] It was then agreed at the next meeting that this section should be revised in the light of the CPC's discussions, and should now make the point that the precise form of constitutions would require further consideration.[3] Officials seemed to pay more attention to the work of ministers than ministers did to the work of officials.

The final version of the report observed that policy in East Africa was complicated by the presence of Europeans, and stated that ministers had decided there would neither be a policy of rapid withdrawal nor a refusal to relinquish control. Britain would continue to promote constitutional development and at the same time try to prolong the period during which it would still control vital matters, in order to ensure that the territories would be reasonably equipped to govern themselves after independence. Uganda would probably reach full internal self-government by 1970, although if the conflicting political factions there reached agreement this would probably have to be granted earlier. Britain would need to keep control of Kenya until a viable non-racial state had been established, which was unlikely to have been achieved by 1970. Although Tanganyika was lacking in educated people who could govern successfully, it would probably achieve internal self-government by 1970, but would still need external economic and administrative help.[4] In effect Britain was adopting a policy that was essentially reactive and which made it hostage to the actions of other colonial powers. This hardly suggests that 1959 saw a major turning point in colonial policy. Macmillan's response to the study was, not surprisingly, a muted one; he felt that although it was helpful and could be used as a basis for discussion with Britain's allies, there were many questions it did not deal with.[5]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)1st, 17 April 1959, pp. 1-2.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)9th, 9 April 1959, p. 3.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)10th, 23 April 1959, p. 3.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1355, AF(59)28(Final), 3 June 1959, p. 5 and pp. 15-16.
[5] PRO, PREM 11/2587, Macmillan to Heathcoat Amory, 3 July 1959.

This was not the only study carried out about this time. Later that year, in a discussion of the final report of the Future Policy Steering Group, it was agreed that the section on Africa should say that insisting on enough time to allow multiracial societies to develop in East and Central Africa could lead to difficulties with impatient African nationalists; and the conflict which might follow with other Britain interests should be explained.[1] This suggests that there was a feeling that the latest policy for East Africa was unrealistic.

Towards the end of the year the CPC discussed Tanganyika. Macleod wanted a statement to be made in Tanganyika that Britain accepted the principle that the Council of Ministers and the Legislative Council should have unofficial majorities after the 1960 elections. Macleod said the desire for internal self-government and the general support for the Tanganyika African National Union, led by Julius Nyerere, made it important to persuade Nyerere to take office after the election, even if this meant appointing him Chief Minister in the Council of Ministers. He also informed ministers that proposals had been advanced for a widening of the franchise, and added somewhat complacently that these would not cause any serious difficulties in Kenya, where it would obviously not be possible to make such rapid change. However, to be on the safe side, no announcement about constitutional change in Tanganyika would be made until after the Kenya constitutional conference was held in January 1960.[2]

A lengthy discussion ensued. Home felt that the changes would threaten the future of the CAF by stimulating demand in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia for a wider franchise, which could not be met because of the strained relations in these territories between Europeans and Africans, and because such a change would not be acceptable to Southern Rhodesia. Another minister responded that conditions in Tanganyika were different from those in the CAF, and that there was general support for the changes, as well as confidence that Nyerere would be able to peacefully develop the country on multiracial lines. Furthermore, Tanganyika was a trust territory and Britain was continuously being asked in the UN to come up with a timetable of constitutional advance. Refusing the present opportunity to make advances would also be difficult to justify to world opinion, and there was a danger that in the absence of change TANU would cease to cooperate or even resort to violence, and any resultant disorder would be hard to contain. This was a very emphatic warning, and one ministers responded to; the only point made after this was that the Governor should be given sufficient powers to be able to deal with any deterioration in the situation. It was pointed out that the proposals in fact allowed for defence and law to remain under the control of officials.[3]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1930, FP(A)(59)3rd, 27 October 1959, p. 2.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)6th, 20 November 1959, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)6th, 20 November 1959, pp. 1-2.

In a memorandum circulated earlier that year, the CO had argued that if the demand for an unofficial majority was conceded, the last chance to stop the momentum towards early independence would be lost. Furthermore, if the pace of change Nyerere wanted was followed then the various political factions in Uganda would probably settle their differences and press for an equally rapid pace of change there, and if this demand was also met then Britain would probably not be able to maintain its position in Kenya.[1] In many ways Macleod's position was closer to the FO's than to his own officials'. This CO memorandum had been prepared when Lennox-Boyd was still Colonial Secretary, and it may be that officials were working within the limitations of the conservative approach of Lennox-Boyd, suggesting a bureaucratic attitude that was unlikely to come up with innovative suggestions because officials were to an extent providing a minister with what he wanted to hear. Macmillan ended the CPC's discussion by saying that before taking a decision, it would be useful to have another discussion at which the Governor should be present. In addition, the committee should be provided with information on the present franchises in Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Kenya, and the views of the governors of these territories on the possible repercussions of widening the franchise in Tanganyika.[2]

Sir Richard Turnbull, the Governor of Tanganyika, attended the CPC's next meeting. Macleod said he had taken into account the views of the governors of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and had amended the proposals in order to reduce the maximum number of people who would be enfranchised. Although the amended scheme could have awkward repercussions in other territories, he felt there would not be a reasonable prospect of peaceful development in Tanganyika if there were any further changes to the scheme. Ignoring this point entirely, another minister argued that the repercussion in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland would be serious because an extension of the franchise on such a scale had never been envisaged for these territories. He insisted that the changes in Tanganyika could not be justified on the grounds that it was a trust territory, and that Britain's inability to make similar concessions in other territories would be seen as evidence that colonial rule was failing. Another minister responded that Tanganyika was different from other territories because the proposed advance was supported by all sections of opinion there. Macmillan summed up that on balance the committee agreed that the policy would have to be adopted and the repercussions elsewhere accepted. However, he added that in view of the importance of this advance, the Colonial Secretary should report briefly to the Cabinet on it.[3]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1353, AF(59)5, January 1959 (full date not given), pp. 6-7.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1588, CPC(59)6th, 20 November 1959, p. 2.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)7th, 23 November 1959, pp. 2-3.

The issue then passed up to the Cabinet. Macleod informed it that the CPC had agreed to his proposal for an announcement on constitutional advance to be made. The changes would consist of an unofficial majority in the Council of Ministers and a limited widening of the franchise. The Cabinet endorsed his policy without discussion.[1] The Cabinet was simply rubber-stamping a decision made by a Cabinet committee, but this did mean that Macmillan had obtained full Cabinet backing for it.

Over the next two years there were a number of general discussions on East Africa, partly because of the plans for a federation of the territories there, but also because of the broader implications of developments in that area. Most discussions took place in the Cabinet, with the issues usually going straight to it without any preparatory committee work. In a memorandum to the Cabinet, Macleod said that recent events in East Africa had made it clear that it was becoming increasingly necessary for Britain to insure against the risks posed by constitutional advance. Britain's position would be threatened if the government had no means of controlling constitutional development in Kenya, or if the decision 'to go more or less with the tide' in Tanganyika went wrong. The police and the East African Land Forces were the means by which Britain could resist pressures to leave quickly and therefore:

> The probability that political advance towards self-government will have to be faster than we think ideally right makes it all the more important that we should, as a brake on that advance, do all we can now, before it is too late, to insulate all the internal security forces of the territories from local political control.[2]

This all suggests that there was no deliberate speeding-up of advance in terms of Britain taking the initiative; rather there was a realization that Britain could not determine fully the pace of change, and could do no more than attempt to slow down a process that was not entirely under its control.

Macleod told the Cabinet that if Britain reassumed responsibility for the East African Land Forces, he would want the authority not to have to insist on the East African territories making a contribution to the cost of them, so that he could if necessary use this concession to help ensure a successful outcome at the forthcoming constitutional conference on Kenya. The Chancellor opposed this on the grounds that the resumption of responsibilities (in 1957 the administrative and financial responsibility for these forces had been transferred from the War Office to the East African governments) was contrary to the usual policy applied to colonies approaching independence, and because the move might establish a precedent of British support for the local forces of other such territories. Unable to reach any conclusion, the Cabinet agreed

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[1] CAB 128, CC(59)60th, 26 November 1959, pp. 7-8.
[2] CAB 129, C(60)1, 1 January 1960, p. 1.

to resume the discussion later. Macmillan finished by observing that the discussion had revealed that the political aspects of the proposal were even more important than the financial and administrative ones, which suggested that the Treasury's view would not necessarily prevail.[1] At the Cabinet's next meeting Butler, in the chair because Macmillan was on a tour of the Commonwealth, said the general feeling was that Macleod's proposals were desirable in principle, but because of the financial considerations involved, the ministers concerned would need to consider whether it would be possible to postpone implementing the proposals or offset them by cutbacks elsewhere.[2] This was a partial victory for Macleod which showed how much significance colonial constitutional development now had, and demonstrated that although this increasing importance could constrain the freedom of the CO, it could sometimes help the Colonial Secretary when trying to get the Cabinet to agree to his proposals.

At the end of the year the official Africa Committee dealt with financial and economic matters at some length. The committee was told that the present lack of confidence in the East African territories, together with the speed at which they were advancing to independence, and the likely exodus of British officials when self-government was achieved, meant there was a danger of an administrative breakdown. A further loss of confidence would result in more flights of capital on a large-scale. This would lead to a gradual run down of Tanganyika's economy, and a breakdown in Kenya which would lead to civil war between Africans after independence. Many of the economic problems being experienced had arisen from the fact that these territories' governments now had to try and carry out a ten-year programme in the three years left before all the territories were expected to gain independence. If the sum required to solve these difficulties was very high then Britain would have to either use even more of its resources for economic aid, or disengage and face the danger of communist penetration.[3]

The chairman responded to this bleak analysis by suggesting that a paper should be prepared as the basis of a submission to ministers. It should start from the premise that in all cases independence was coming before these colonies would be capable of standing alone. The position in these territories would be particularly difficult between internal self-government and independence, and during this period it would therefore be of great importance to retain enough British officials to ensure efficient government and continued economic development. Although at present it did not seem likely that this could be done, the committee should proceed on the assumption that it could and examine what the situation would be in each colony.[4]

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[1] CAB 128, CC(60)1st, 4 January 1960, pp. 3-4.
[2] CAB 128, CC(60)2nd, 18 January 1960, p. 5.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1356, AF(60)3rd, 21 December 1960, pp. 1-2.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1356, AF(60)3rd, 21 December 1960, p. 2.

This all suggests that there was a growing gulf between official and ministerial appreciation of the situation in East Africa. There seems a certain futility in officials evaluating what was, on their own admission, an unlikely situation. There were many other occasions when the preparation of contingency plans would have been worthwhile, but this does not seem one of them because this discussion came far too late in the day. There was a lack of coordination between ministerial committees and the Cabinet on one hand, and official committees on the other; officials were carrying out preliminary type studies after ministers had taken major decisions, rather than the other way round.

In January 1961 Macleod told the CPC that apart from the CAF, the biggest colonial problem that year would be East Africa. However, in discussions with the governors of these colonies he found them reasonably optimistic about the future because opinion there seemed to be growing in favour of an East African federation. The committee agreed that the best hope of stability in the region was the creation of such a federation.[1] This seems more like wishful thinking than a rigorous consideration of the situation. The official Africa Committee produced a report on the economic consequences of political development in East and Central Africa, the result of a study which its chairman had asked it to start the previous year. Indicating how lumberingly slow the bureaucratic procedures of Cabinet committees could be, the report had taken six months to prepare, and by this time Tanganyika was only about five months away from independence. This report highlights how quickly and how drastically estimates of when independence would be achieved had changed, saying that Uganda would probably become independent in 1962 or 1963, and that it was unlikely that independence for Kenya could be postponed beyond 1963.[2]

Tanganyika, the territory that the policy-makers had admitted was the least well-equipped of the East African ones to stand alone, became the first East African territory to achieve independence, in December 1961. There was little discussion of this territory in the Cabinet and its committees. Presumably Macleod's 'go with the tide' approach meant there was little to actually discuss because Britain was not determining policy. Macleod circulated a note to the CPC in October 1960 informing his colleagues of TANU's complete victory in the recently held elections, and of the likelihood that when the Legislative Council met there would probably be a resolution demanding independence in 1961. He added that he had decided to hold a constitutional conference in 1961 to consider the dates for internal self-government and

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1st, 5 January 1961, pp. 5-6.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1358, AF(61)3(Final), 12 July 1961, p. 7. The covering note of the report said that it was being circulated for the background information of departments and - if departments wished - their ministers.

independence, and hoped that the Governor's announcement of this would forestall demands for independence.[1]

In a memorandum circulated to the CPC on colonial problems in 1961, Macleod said this territory continued to be comparatively plain sailing.[2] In discussion a minister said that the success of British policy in Tanganyika was due to the government's willingness to consider a quick and progressive transfer of power to Africans, as well as the emergence of an able and moderate African leader.[3] Clearly the criteria used to measure the success of colonial policy had changed; no longer was it to be judged on leaving a legacy of political stability, a suitably well-educated indigenous population to ensure this, an improved level of social services and a higher level of economic development. It was simply to be judged in terms of a trouble free extrication from colonial responsibilities, and in the case of Tanganyika the politicians could therefore feel suitably complacent and self-satisfied. This moving of political goalposts ensured that politicians could ignore all the previous complicated debates on colonial problems and the difficulties Britain faced.

Nyerere's change of mind about how to achieve an East African federation led to independence being granted even earlier than anticipated. He had originally wanted a federation to be established before its constituent territories became independent in their own right, but because of his concern at the lack of effective African political leadership in Kenya and Uganda, he now wanted Tanganyika to achieve independence before there was any attempt to establish a federation. When Macleod informed the CPC of this, he said that he proposed to accept Nyerere's suggestion that Tanganyika should get full internal self-government in April, and although the government had recommended independence in March 1962, would agree to independence on 31 December 1961 if Nyerere regarded it as important to have a date in that year. The CPC agreed and Macmillan, anxious as always to have such decisions taken by the Cabinet, asked Macleod to circulate a memorandum to it on the proposals.[4] Macleod repeated his arguments to the Cabinet, but in a more robust manner, and included the warning, which he had not given to the CPC - indicating that he probably thought the Cabinet would be less likely to agree to his proposals than the CPC - that unless Britain proceeded in full cooperation with Nyerere, it would be difficult to persuade the UN not to prematurely terminate the trusteeship agreement.[5] Tanganyika became independent on 9 December 1961.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1559, CPC(60)24, 4 October 1960, pp. 1-2.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1, 3 January 1961, p. 2.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1st, 5 January 1961, p. 6.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)3rd, 2 March 1961, pp. 2-3.
[5] CAB 128, CC(61)11th, 7 March 1961, p. 7. His memorandum on the proposals pointed out that they had been endorsed by the CPC. See CAB 129, C(61)32, 6 March 1961, p. 2.

In February 1960 the CPC discussed the report of the constitutional commission which had been set up to study Uganda. For Macleod, the determining factor of Ugandan policy was Kenya. He told the CPC that he was unwilling to go as far in constitutional changes as the commission had recommended because of the repercussions in Kenya, and because of the lack of able African politicians in Uganda. As far as widening the franchise was concerned, the key to this was the result of the Kenya constitutional conference. If it resulted in universal adult suffrage for common roll seats being introduced then he would propose that universal adult suffrage should be adopted in Uganda. Home pointed out that there would be repercussions in Nyasaland, but Macleod responded that if changes were made in Kenya then it would be difficult to defend the retention of a qualified franchise for Africans in Uganda. Although the committee agreed to the proposed limited changes, Kilmuir, chairing the meeting in the absence of Macmillan, said that because of Macmillan's particular interest in African affairs, and the possible repercussions in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, the proposals should be brought to the Cabinet as soon as possible after Macmillan returned to Britain.[1] Macleod duly did so and his proposals were approved.[2]

In his paper on colonial problems in 1961, Macleod stated that the main problem in Uganda was that the rest of the territory did not trust the *Kabaka* of Buganda and his tribe, the Baganda.[3] That autumn Macleod reported to the Cabinet that a reasonable degree of success had been achieved at a constitutional conference. Although the Democratic Party would oppose the arrangements proposed for the representation of the Baganda in the central legislature, the Baganda delegation had been persuaded to play an effective part in the conference.[4]

In 1962 there was a dispute between the CO and the Treasury over one of the financial aspects of the independence settlement, namely financial help for a compensation scheme for expatriate officials. The CO, a memorandum said, wanted £14.5 million, whereas the Treasury was offering £11.9 million. Maudling argued that to offer less than the CO's recommendation would mean that a settlement would not be achieved. This could have serious political consequences, and could end in Britain ultimately paying more than the sum suggested by the CO. Appealing to British self-interest, and trying to show that the CO was financial responsible, he pointed out that his proposals represented a saving of nearly £4 million over the next two

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1559, CPC(60)1st, 8 February 1960, pp. 1-3.
[2] CAB 128, CC(60)10th, 18 February 1960, p. 6.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1, 3 January 1961, p. 2.
[4] CAB 128, CC(61)53rd, 5 October 1961, p. 8. In fact, at the end of the conference Macleod had announced that, provided the necessary discussions could be completed and arrangements made in time, Uganda would become independent in October the following year. See *The Colonial Territories, 1961-62*, p. 18.

years on what Britain would have had to provide for Uganda if it was still a colony.[1] Maudling told the Cabinet that it would be difficult to defend a smaller settlement because of the more generous arrangements recently made for Tanganyika. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Henry Brooke, did not address Maudling's arguments, and merely responded that in his view the Tanganyika settlement was unduly generous and could set an embarrassing precedent. Macmillan 'summed up' by saying that although the cost of giving up colonial rule was proving to be high, it was probably better to accept a definite, if large, financial commitment on independence, than to risk the indefinite and larger cost of prolonging colonial rule when there was a risk of law and order breaking down. The Cabinet agreed with him that Maudling's proposed settlement should be approved.[2] Macmillan was clearly determined to ensure that Treasury objections did not interfere with the shedding of colonial responsibilities. In May Maudling obtained the authority of the CPC to draft an independence bill in advance of an upcoming constitutional conference, at which he did not anticipate any major problems, so that Uganda could become independent in October as agreed at the previous year's constitutional conference.[3] On 9 October 1962 Uganda duly became independent.

In the case of Uganda, the committee system did not reduce the CO's autonomy because most mentions of this colony were no more than briefings or requests for the formal authorization of policy. There were few proper discussions of policy, and the Colonial Secretary, whether Macleod or Maudling, usually had his proposals accepted without many objections being raised. In general, the committees and the Cabinet made little contribution to the development of policy for this colony. However, because of this little thought seems to have been given to the effects of developments in Uganda on Kenya.

Events in Tanganyika had implications for Zanzibar. In 1960 Macleod told the CPC that the constitutional advances in Tanganyika the previous year had produced a strong demand in Zanzibar for similar changes. He therefore proposed that the government should in principle be prepared to grant a considerable measure of self-government, including the introduction of a ministerial system, and unofficial majorities in the Executive and Legislative Councils. He felt, however, that such changes should not be imposed by Britain, and that instead an outside commission should be appointed to make recommendations. The committee endorsed his proposals.[4]

This colony does not appear to have been of much general concern to the government, and was not discussed by the Cabinet in 1960 or 1961, despite Macmillan's instruction that the

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[1] CAB 129, C(62)40, 24 February 1962, pp. 1-3.
[2] CAB 128, CC(62)17th, 27 February 1962, pp. 5-6.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)9th, 10 May 1962, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1559, CPC(60)2nd, 18 March 1960, p. 4.

Cabinet should deal with constitutional development. Presumably the fact that Macmillan chaired the CPC was one reason for this, but in addition, and more importantly, Zanzibar was not a colony where it was thought that change would create problems, and it did not concern the Conservative Party or the country at large.[1] It was mostly only potentially controversial colonial matters that Macmillan ensured were dealt with by the Cabinet, so as to ensure full collective responsibility for such decisions; Zanzibar did not appear to be such a case.

However, as with many other colonies, the fundamental problem in Zanzibar was that although time was needed to construct a stable settlement, there was a demand for quick independence, a demand Britain felt could not be resisted because of the internal security problems that a refusal would create. Britain, as a CO official told the official Africa Committee, had a stark choice: give Zanzibar independence or hold it down by force. The committee agreed that there was no alternative to independence; it would be difficult to maintain order because of the run down of the Kenya base, and in any case because Britain had no interests in Zanzibar there was no reason to refuse independence. The committee therefore agreed that Zanzibar should become independent at about the same time as Kenya.[2] The types of arguments used earlier about the dangers of granting independence prematurely were not brought up.

In discussion in the CPC it was also argued that refusing independence would lead to severe disorder, and that it would be impossible to hold Zanzibar by force, a consideration that was a crucial factor in decisions on constitutional advance. In addition, Perth warned that it would be politically difficult to keep Zanzibar as the only British territory in a region where all the others had become independent. However, because of the racial divide and the unstable economy, it was felt, in contrast to what had been said on the official Africa Committee, that it would be best if the period between internal self-government and independence was as long as possible, during which time Britain would remain responsible for internal security. In order to reduce the possibility of unrest, the committee agreed that Maudling should encourage a coalition of the two main parties as a necessary condition of independence, as well as ensuring the longest possible period of internal self-government.[3]

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[1] In a memorandum circulated to the CPC in 1961, Macleod said he did not anticipate any problems arising in Zanzibar which could not be contained. See PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1, 3 January 1961, p. 3.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1359, AF(62)2nd, 25 January 1962, p. 1.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)4th, 16 February 1962, pp. 3-4. The two political parties were the Arab supported Zanzibar National Party and the African supported Afro-Shirazi Party. The former were willing to enter into a coalition when internal self-government was granted, and continue until independence without elections. The latter were willing to enter a coalition but wanted elections before independence. The CO felt that a coalition arrangement would enable a decision about a date for independence to be put off, and would therefore be in accord with the CPC view that self-government

Maudling later had to inform the CPC that he had failed to get the two parties to agree to a coalition. He advised that it would now be best to refuse to set dates for self-government and independence, and instead set up a commission to consider how many elected members the Legislative Council should have, and delimit the new constituencies on that basis. Elections would not be held until its work was complete, and so might be delayed until June 1964. It was suggested in discussion that this move might force the parties to come to some agreement, and that because a difficult security situation could occur at short notice, the British garrison should stay and reliable local forces should be built up.[1] In contrast to Maudling's view, the official Africa Committee had earlier agreed that although a coalition was desirable, it should not be made a precondition of granting independence at the same time as Kenya, and that if a coalition could not be agreed on there should be a pre-independence election.[2] These views do not seem to have had any influence on Maudling. In fact, there is nothing in the papers of the official committee to suggest that its view was communicated either to the Cabinet, a ministerial committee, or indeed to any individual minister. This happened quite frequently in the committee system; committees often seemed to exist in isolation, and it is often not clear how their discussions contributed to the overall development of policy.

In August 1963 Sandys informed the Cabinet that he proposed to hold an independence conference in September, so that Zanzibar could become independent before the end of the year and be able to join an East African federation.[3] No coalition was achieved, and in the end the colony became independent in December under the control of the Arab minority, which had gained control because of a freak result in the last election in 1961. Shortly after independence the Africans seized power in a coup.

Because of its large white settler population, its strategic significance, and concerns about internal security, Kenya posed more problems than any other East African territory. As a result, it was discussed far more often by the Cabinet and its committees than its neighbours. However, on many occasions in the Cabinet there was no discussion, only a briefing by the Colonial Secretary, such as in 1960, when Macleod kept ministers briefed on the progress of the constitutional conference held in London during January and February.[4]

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should last as long as possible, even though the British Resident in Zanzibar felt that postponing fixing a date for independence would cause security problems. See PRO, CAB 134/1359, AF(62)16, 14 March 1962, p. 1. The CO view contradicts the Africa Committee's earlier agreement that Britain had nothing to gain by delaying independence. See PRO, CAB 134/1359, AF(62)2nd, 25 January 1962, p. 1.

[1] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)6th, 30 March 1962, pp. 1-2.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1359, AF(62)2nd, 25 January, 1962, p. 3.

[3] CAB 128, CC(63)51st, 1 August 1963, p. 5.

[4] See for example CAB 128, CC(60)2nd, 18 January 1960, p. 4 and CAB 128, CC(60)9th, 16 February 1960, p. 7.

One Kenyan issue that was discussed was the issue of land tenure, an issue that was as significant as it was difficult. White farmers were concerned that after independence their lands would be vulnerable to wholesale expropriation, and this uncertainty was leading to a large-scale exodus of capital from Kenya. Macleod felt that none of the proposed solutions to the problem of the security of land tenure were satisfactory, and therefore suggested that a committee of ministers should be appointed to examine the problem. The Cabinet agreed.[1] The land Tenure in Kenya Committee was chaired by Kilmuir, who was frequently used by Macmillan as a pliant and reliable pair of hands where colonial matters were concerned. Its members included those with a direct interest in the matter, such as Macleod, Perth, and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Sir Edward Boyle, as well as a minister with legal knowledge, the Solicitor-General, Sir Jocelyn Simon, and a disinterested party in the form of Henry Brooke, the Minister of Housing.[2]

The committee dismissed a number of suggested schemes as being unsuitable, with Macleod observing, presumably to pre-empt Treasury objections, that there could be no question of Britain accepting financial responsibility for the consequences of appropriation, and therefore any schemes of compensation, insurance or guarantee were unacceptable. He commented that it was hard to see what sanctions consistent with independence could be devised, because Africans in Kenya would not accept anything less than genuine independence. His only suggestion, which the committee accepted, was that the government should state publicly that before any change in the constitution could be considered, it needed to be confident that satisfactory guarantees on land tenure would be given.[3] Britain's policy was in this respect reduced to little more than window dressing, given that there was no way, on the government's own admission, that any guarantee could be enforced. The main concern seems to have been that no difficulties should be allowed to stand in the way of a British withdrawal.

The next meeting confirms this. Macleod, in the chair, said it was clear that whatever safeguards were devised, there could be no sanctions against an independent Kenyan government that would be effective. But because certain African leaders seemed to be taking a more cooperative approach, Macleod agreed with the Governor's suggestion that as little as possible should be said about land tenure at this time, in case African leaders were provoked into making irresponsible statements, especially while elections were being held. African leaders should be encouraged to make reassuring statements, and the Tanganyika constitutional conference in 1961 should be used as a way of seeing how fundamental rights, including

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[1] CAB 128, CC(60)42nd, 14 July 1960, pp. 5-6.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/2147, KL(60)1(Revise), 29 August 1960, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/2147, KL(60)1st, 18 July 1960, pp. 1-3.

property rights, could be entrenched in an independence constitution. Macleod summed up that although safeguards on land tenure could not be made absolute, they should be incorporated into the independence constitution.[1] This difficulty was not going to be allowed to prevent constitutional change, demonstrating a change in attitude. Previously such difficulties were used as arguments against independence, but now they were simply inconvenient realities that had to be lived with.

The third and last meeting of this committee, chaired by Kilmuir, advanced matters no further because nothing could be done to enforce any guarantees, not least because any arrangement could be unconstitutionally abandoned after independence. The weak conclusion was that it might be of considerable importance to negotiate an Agreement of Guarantee, under which Kenya would agree to observe the constitutional, or at least its basic provisions regarding British subjects.[2] There was little contribution from other ministers to this committee's work. Macleod's contributions dominated, especially at the second meeting when he was in the chair, although no doubt Boyle would have had much to say if Macleod had suggested a scheme involving British expenditure. Overall, the attendance of other ministers seems a waste of their time and this happened because there was a refusal to acknowledge that were no real options to be considered. Clearly, although Cabinet committees could reduce the amount of work on the Cabinet as a whole, they could unnecessarily increase the workload of individual ministers.

When the committee's report was discussed by the Cabinet, Kilmuir came up with the feeble observation that the best way to proceed would be to encourage a sense of responsibility in the colony's African leaders. The Cabinet agreed that it would be too expensive to offer any form of guarantee to European property owners, and that a statement should be made saying that constitutional advance must be dependent on a reasonable attitude to the continued protection of fundamental rights.[3] This was a suitably vague formula that gave the government freedom to manoeuvre.

The following year Macleod warned the CPC that apart from the CAF, the most difficult colonial problem would be Kenya.[4] This proved to be the case, and in consequence a lot of time had to be devoted to this colony. The pattern of work on Kenya illustrates how the Cabinet committee system could function in practice. The official Africa Committee discussed the details of the economic implications of independence, while the CPC and the Cabinet dealt with the basic issues. In addition, after most CPC discussions matters were referred to the Cabinet. However, the CPC discussions were often not ground clearing exercises in which the points of

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2147, KL(60)2nd, 15 September 1960, pp. 1-2.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/2147, KL(60)3rd, 24 October 1960, p. 1.
[3] CAB 128, CC(60)64th, 15 December 1960, pp. 6-7.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1st, 5 January 1961, p. 5.

disagreement were clarified, instead the arguments and points made in the CPC tended to be repeated in the Cabinet.

Officials' appreciation of the realities of the situation seemed to lag behind that of ministers. This seems to have been an inevitable outcome of the bureaucratic process. Officials often took a narrower view of a particular situation, simply because they were dealing with policy details rather than the 'big picture', and also because the sort of long-term planning they were often involved in could lead to a certain tunnel vision. One suggestion made in the official Africa Committee, during discussion of a report it was preparing on the economic consequences of constitutional development in Central and East Africa, was that the report should emphasize that although an East African federation was a desirable aim, constitutional development in Kenya should not on that account be speeded up to an extent that it could not support.[1] There was no suggestion that Britain might have no choice but to speed it up. However, the views of officials quickly changed, because when the report finally appeared it stated that with Tanganyika becoming independent in 1961, it was difficult to see how Kenyan independence could be postponed beyond 1963.[2]

At the end of 1961 the chairman of the official Africa Committee told its members that it was necessary to prepare a report on the financial implications of constitutional development in Kenya, and to do so in time to give ministers a chance to consider it before the start of the constitutional conference in February 1961. Basically, the discussion was little more than a list of Kenya's financial problems and the reasons for them. The committee concluded that because the economy ultimately depended on the European farmers, it would worsen as they left.[3]

Ministerial discussions during 1961 suggest that economic considerations did not have high priority, and were unlikely to influence considerations of constitutional advance. When the CPC first discussed Kenya that year Macleod was not optimistic, observing that Britain was likely to come under increasing pressure in the UN to give its colonies independence, but so far there had not been a single case of a colony with a large white settler population being successfully brought to independence. A minister suggested that it would not be politically possible to withdraw from Kenya as quickly as the CO appeared to envisage, and that the government should therefore decide to retain control for the next eight to ten years, allowing time to train African administrators. This seems like a modified version of the view held by the CO in 1959. It was argued that a quick withdrawal would lead to a Congo type situation, which would contribute to the instability of the continent, and would cost more to sort out than would

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1357, AF(61)2nd, 20 February 1961, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1358, AF(61)3(Final), 12 July 1961, p. 7.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1357, AF(61)10th, 8 December 1961, pp. 1-3.

staying on in Kenya. The dangers of premature withdrawal were not disputed; the response was simply that although Britain should remain there for as long as possible, the colony could not be administered by military force. The CPC consoled itself with the thought that a federation would give hope of stability; optimistic thinking given the troubles of the West Indian Federation and the incessant problems caused by the CAF. Macmillan ended the discussion with the observation that for the purposes of defence planning, the best estimate of how long Britain could keep its facilities there was six to seven years.[1] In general, discussions give the impression of going round in circles and that harsh realities were not being faced up to.

In November Maudling circulated a memorandums to the CPC which said that it would not be possible to delay independence for more than eighteen months because of expectations in Kenya and progress in East Africa generally.[2] He emphasized in discussion that there were only two ways of avoiding great disorder; continuing to rule Kenya for a number of years and providing the military force to do so, or finding a solution at a conference that would satisfy both majority and minority interests. The latter course was preferable because the first course would lead to an outbreak of Mau Mau terrorism. Macmillan commented that the problem of Kenya was extremely intractable because it consisted of various issues that were in themselves very difficult, such as white settlers, tribalism, and an economy dependent on the sale of crops produced by Europeans. He agreed it was best to hold a conference, but added that a constitution needed to be agreed upon that did not include unfettered parliamentary sovereignty on the Westminster model. It should also include guarantees deeply entrenched enough to reassure minorities. Macmillan said he would raise Kenya at the next Cabinet meeting.[3] At that meeting Maudling repeated the arguments he had made in the CPC. Although the Cabinet agreed with him, some ministers doubted that the conference would be able to agree on such safeguards, and felt such guarantees might be overthrown after independence.[4]

The overall impression given is that by the end of 1961 the government was determined to relinquish responsibility for Kenya and was not open to arguments opposing this. The overriding view was the Britain could not sustain the military commitment that would be needed if a quick move to independence was refused. Significantly there was, for the most part, an unwillingness to examine critically the question of entrenching minority protection in the constitution. The previous year the Land Tenure in Kenya Committee had concluded that there was no guaranteed way of protecting the land tenure rights of white settlers, because no matter what constitutional safeguards were devised, there were no effective sanctions that could be

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1st, 5 January 1961, pp. 5-7.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)30, 14 November 1961, p. 3.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)12th, 15 November 1961, pp. 1-3.
[4] CAB 128, CC(61)63rd, 16 November 1961, pp. 6-7.

taken against an independent Kenya to ensure that they were complied with.[1] Furthermore, it had concluded that any system of entrenching safeguards in the constitution might not be agreed to by African politicians, and even if a system was accepted it might be swept away unconstitutionally.[2] All these arguments were mostly ignored in discussions in 1961, even though they were still relevant.

The most frequently discussed issue was what Macleod described as 'the formidable problem of Jomo Kenyatta'.[3] He told the CPC that the question of Kenyatta's release was a disagreeable decision, but it could now be taken from a position of strength and according to a government plan. The Governor and his senior advisers thought he should be released without delay, because almost everyone in Kenya expected this to happen, and some liberal politicians thought he could be a force for good, although the Kenyan government did not want him fully back in political life. The Cabinet agreed that on balance it was best to release him, but that there should be a long period before the law that disqualified him from membership of the legislature was amended.[4]

When the Cabinet dealt with this issue, Macleod told ministers that the CPC had approved his proposal that Kenyatta should be released. The Cabinet agreed to this, despite misgivings, because it felt there was no alternative. There was some pressure for Kenyatta's disqualification from election to be lifted, but Macleod warned that if this happened he would be elected, and it would then be difficult to resist pressure for him to be appointed as chief minister, something which would be unacceptable to many in Kenya. Macleod suggested, and the Cabinet agreed, that the Governor was correct in recommending that amending the constitution should not yet be considered.[5] However, in November Maudling told the CPC that the constitution should be amended. Macmillan felt this needed to be done because there was no prospect of anyone other than Kenyatta becoming chief minister. Maudling added that the government had to face the fact that Kenyatta was now the leader of the majority party, and with Kenya likely to become independent within eighteen months, it was illogical to prevent Kenyatta from playing a full political role. The emphatic response of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, was that Kenyatta was a thoroughly evil man who was partly responsible for Mau Mau's atrocities, and might take reprisals against loyal Kikuyu. After discussion the CPC reached the tentative conclusion that there was much force in Maudling's position and

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2147, KL(60)2nd, 15 September 1960, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/2147, KL(60)3rd, 24 October 1960, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1, 3 January 1961, p. 2.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)10th, 19 July 1961, p. 3. The Kenyan constitution disqualified anyone from standing for election to the Legislative Council who had served a prison sentence of more than two years. See CAB 128, CC(61)44th, 27 July 1961, p. 5.
[5] CAB 128, CC(61)44th, 27 July 1961, pp. 5-6.

Macmillan referred the matter to the Cabinet.[1] In a long Cabinet debate, Maudling emphasized that there would be little chance of the constitutional conference being successful unless Kenyatta, the elected leader of the majority party, was able to sit in the Legislative Assembly. Other ministers argued in response that Britain should not increase the probability of Kenyatta becoming prime minister of an independent country, and that reversing the disqualifications would not help ensure a successful conference.[2]

The CPC had to discuss this issue again because the Cabinet had been unable to reach agreement. Once more Maudling argued that obtaining a settlement at the conference would require the removal of Kenyatta's disqualification, and in contrast to the Cabinet, the CPC agreed that this would be the best course of action.[3] When the Cabinet met in mid-November ministers finally agreed that the disqualification should be removed.[4] Maudling had thus been able to use the fact that the CPC discussed the issue before it was raised again in the Cabinet to strengthen his position in the Cabinet discussions. Given that this was not an issue with any financial implications, and so would not be opposed by the Chancellor, and that a committee of those ministers most concerned with colonial matters had supported his proposal, the Cabinet was unlikely to oppose it.

For the most part, there was a fairly clear division of work between the Cabinet and ministerial committees on one hand, and official committees on the other, when dealing with the financial aspects of independence. The latter handled the details and the former dealt with the fundamental issues. However, sometimes officials did not merely deal with the details, they tried to influence ministers on more fundamental points. This happened when members of the official Africa Committee, during the discussion of a report to be submitted to ministers, voiced their concern that ministers might decide to make savings by substantially reducing the amount of post-independence development aid for Kenya.[5] The resultant report strongly emphasized that it was unlikely that in the first few years after independence there would be any lessening in Kenya's need for financial help from Britain.[6] This report was circulated to a meeting of the CPC, at which Maudling emphasized the seriousness of Kenya's economic difficulties, and stressed that the present level of financial help would need to continue for some years after independence.[7]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)11th, 7 November 1961, pp. 1-2.
[2] CAB 128, CC((61)61st, 9 November 1961, pp. 5-6.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)12th, 15 November 1961, pp. 1-2.
[4] CAB 128, CC(61)63rd, 16 November 1961, p. 7.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1359, AF(62)1st, 16 January 1962, p. 2.
[6] PRO, CAB 134/1359, AF(62)5(Final), 30 January 1962, p. 10.
[7] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)3rd, 2 February 1962, p. 5. The Colonial Secretary's particular concern was, as he went on to say, to use the information on the gravity of Kenya's financial problems to make nationalists less anxious for easy independence.

The Treasury's main concerns were that the uncertainty about Kenya's future should not lead to it becoming completely bankrupt, and that Britain should not accept responsibility for any aid that would be needed due to mismanagement after independence.[1] As usual, the Treasury view was a very narrow one. The sort of clean break the Treasury wanted was not possible, because Britain wanted to be seen in the eyes of international opinion as decolonizing in a responsible manner, and because Britain wanted to retain the goodwill of the new political leaders.

The CO was concerned with more specific issues, such as funding for land settlement schemes and the compensation scheme for expatriate officers. Following talks on the former between the Treasury and the CO, Maudling took the matter to the Cabinet. His proposal involved settling 70,000 African families on one million acres of land previously reserved for Europeans. The cost of this would be £16.55 million, but because funds from existing schemes would be absorbed into this larger scheme, the real cost would be £12.65 million.[2] Maudling pointed out that if there were no scheme of this kind then Europeans would simply abandon the land, leaving different tribes to fight for possession of it. The Cabinet accepted the force of this argument and approved the proposal.[3]

However, the matter was not fully resolved. The following year Sandys told a meeting of the Oversea Policy Committee that there were certain residual problems, such as the difficulties experienced by elderly or infirm European farmers in remote areas in selling their farms, and additional funding was required. The Treasury was opposed to this proposal because it would set a precedent of compensating people for the effects of constitutional change. This, it was feared, could lead to claims from Northern Rhodesia, and could ultimately result in the whole European population of Kenya claiming compensation. This apocalyptic scenario seems to have flummoxed Sandys because he did not come up with a counter-argument. Macmillan finished the discussion by asking Sandys to consult further with the Chancellor.[4]

As late as the month before independence, the CO and the Treasury were still at loggerheads over the land settlement. Landless Kikuyu were moving into the central Kikuyu region where they were meeting resistance from European farmers. In order to avoid having to use UK troops to protect these farmers after independence, Sandys proposed that the government should announce that it would help the Kenyan government to purchase 350,000 acres of land in the central region at a cost of about £3.1 million, and announce that the intended review of the existing land settlement schemes would be advanced to early 1964. Using the

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[1] CAB 128, CC(62)12th, 8 February 1962, p. 4.
[2] CAB 129, C(62)101, 3 July 1962, p. 1.
[3] CAB 128, CC(62)44th, 5 July 1962, p. 6.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)4th, 24 April 1963, pp. 5-6.

CO's stated purpose against it, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury argued that the policy of land purchase had been to settle Africans on land previously occupied by Europeans, whereas the new scheme would be seen to be designed primarily to compensate European farmers for the effects of constitutional change, and this would have undesirable repercussions, such as removing the inducement for local government to maintain law an order.[1]

Those in favour of Sandys' proposals argued that the risk of repercussions was being exaggerated, and that local opinion thought the scheme would reduce the danger of violence. The critics of the scheme argued that it might encourage members of the Kikuyu tribe to take over farms immediately by force, and that such a breakdown of law and order would be likely to lead to disorder elsewhere. Home summed up that there was general agreement that action had to be taken, and that it should be based on a widening of the present land settlement scheme, although further consideration should be given to its precise terms.[2] Although the CO did not always prevail over the Treasury, it was reasonably successful, and in some ways, thanks to Britain's desire to be seen to be reducing its colonial empire in a responsible manner, the CO was most influential at the very time it was shedding its responsibilities. In this particular case the CO was of course helped by the fact that there was considerable support for the white settlers among Conservatives.

Although the defence implications of independence were a major concern, discussion on this tended to be sporadic and uncoordinated, with the various strands drifting in and out of the committee system. One difficulty in this policy area was that there was uncertainty about the independence timetable even at a relatively late stage. For example, at the first meeting in 1962 of the official Africa Committee, it was noted that one of the causes of uncertainty about the redeployment of Britain's forces in Kenya was the possibility that the CO might want to urge a slower pace of change there.[3] Another indication of the general uncertainty and worry about Kenya was the suggestion made in the Cabinet that because of the precarious nature of the security situation there, it would not be possible to withdraw troops before independence, and reinforcements might even be required. The possibility of withdrawing troops from Germany therefore needed to be considered, and if doing so was not practicable then the plans for reducing the strength of the army might need to be reconsidered.[4] Such comments show how much concern there was about Britain's ability to cope with unrest, and provide evidence that the perception of the policy-makers was that African nationalists posed a major security threat.

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[1] CAB 128, CM(63)7th, 21 November 1963, pp. 4-5.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1359, AF(62)1st, 16 January 1962, p. 1.
[4] CAB 128, CC(62)22nd, 20 March 1962, p. 7.

One particular concern was how to protect European lives if an emergency developed after independence. Loss of European lives would have considerable political implications, especially for a government which had in its own ranks people with close connections to, and sympathy for, white settlers. Sandys told the Oversea Policy Committee that in an emergency Britain might be able to land troops from Aden so long as Britain had control of an airfield in Kenya, but this would be dependent on being able to keep some RAF personnel there after independence, ostensibly to train the Kenyan air force.[1] This need to retain an RAF unit so that Britain would be able to maintain a bridgehead was emphasized again at the next meeting of the Oversea Policy Committee.[2]

When the Cabinet discussed the draft of the announcement of Kenyan independence, it was pointed out that the speeding-up of the move towards independence would make it all the more important to decide Britain's future military dispositions in Africa and the Middle East. This seems rather late in the day to raise this matter, suggesting problems with coordination and contingency planning in the committee system. Building up Kenya's own forces, and negotiating an agreement with Kenya on the retention of long-term military facilities there, also needed consideration. The strength of Britain's negotiating position over these would, it was argued, depend on the amount of help given to Kenya to equip and train its forces.[3] A similar point was made by the CO in a memorandum to the Oversea Coordinating Committee, which concluded that Britain should undertake to expand Kenya's forces to get the maximum amount of goodwill. This would mean that Britain would be able to obtain the required defence agreement, and would ensure that Kenya would be able to handle its own internal security, and would not be forced to turn to another, possibly communist, power for military help.[4] However, the memorandum does not appear to have been discussed by this committee. Again there is little sense of policy coordination and a strong sense of unproductive work.

There was so much concern about a breakdown in internal security that Macmillan asked Home to consider the possibility of UN involvement. When the official Africa Committee discussed this proposal the point was made that given its involvement in the Congo, the UN would be unlikely to accept a major new commitment in Kenya. The committee were, however, unable to reach any conclusion and agreed to continue the discussion later.[5] At its next meeting an official suggested that neither the Commonwealth nor the UN could be expected to take on the burden of internal security if Britain retained sole political control, and that even if Britain

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)1st, 13 February 1963, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)2nd, 13 March 1963, p. 2.
[3] CAB 128, CC(63)41st, 24 June 1963, pp. 3-4.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/2278, OC(O)(63)27, 26 July 1963, p. 2 and p. 8.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1359, AF(62)4th, 16 March 1962, p. 1 and pp. 5-6.

was prepared to give up this responsibility, there was no reason to believe that the UN would be willing to take it on. It was emphasized that it would be unacceptable and impracticable for Britain to transfer to the UN its responsibilities as a metropolitan power. The meeting finished with the chairman summing up that the committee was unable to conceive of circumstances in which it would be in the interests of Britain, or a colony, for responsibility for that colony to be transferred to, or shared with, the Commonwealth or the UN.[1] This appears to have marked the end of this initiative, as there is no record of this suggestion being proposed again in either the Cabinet or its committees.

From 1962 to 1963 there were relatively few discussions of the constitutions for self-government and independence, and the rate of constitutional change. Such matters were usually only raised in the Cabinet when the Colonial Secretary briefed his colleagues on developments, rather than because policy was being debated. The question of the rate of change and the negotiations over the constitution were not in fact that closely related, because there could be no question of denying Kenya independence in the near future. As a memorandum circulated to the CPC by Maudling in January stated: 'It is not possible for us, even if we wished, to secure the continuance of European political power in Kenya....Arithmetic and African nationalism are against this'.[2]

In this memorandum he also warned the CPC that if Britain was seen to be dragging its feet, this might provide the Kikuyu with an excuse to restart terrorism.[3] He told a CPC meeting that the question of independence was bound to arise at the forthcoming conference on the self-governing constitution for Kenya, and that the Kenya African National Union might refuse to take part in it unless a date for independence was given. It was suggested that realization of the extent of Kenya's economic problems might make African nationalists less anxious for 'easy' independence. The point was made that both self-government and independence would endanger European lives, because Britain would not be in full control any longer, although it was acknowledged that progress to self-government could scarcely be resisted. However, there was no debate about the rate of progress or when independence should be given.[4] Maudling was therefore able to go into the conference without his hands being tied.

Maudling seems to have equivocated about the inevitability of early independence. In a memorandum to the Cabinet he said that during his last visit to Kenya the people who had most

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1359, AF(62)5th, 29 March 1962, pp. 1-5. This suggestion of Macmillan's was probably connected with a desire to find a way of delaying independence, because a memorandum by the CO on Macmillan's minute observed that UN involvement could not be used as a way of delaying independence. See PRO, CAB 134/1359, AF(62)19, 21 March 1962, p. 5.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)3, 30 January 1962, p. 1.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)3rd, 2 February 1962, pp. 4-6.

impressed him were the provincial commissioners, who had advised him that there was no way to slow down the move towards independence, even though the rate was too fast. However, he then went on to suggest that if there was not a reasonable chance of having an adequate administration then independence would have to be postponed, and the country would probably have to be governed by decree and without any African cooperation.[1]

At the Cabinet meeting that dealt with this paper, Maudling pointed out that Britain had a choice of two undesirable options: refusing to set a date for independence, which would probably give rise to violence that would further reduce confidence in Kenya's future, and so worsen its economic problems, or an early grant of independence, which could leave the country with an unstable and incompetent government, which would be equally economically disastrous. In response it was suggested that it would be best to see if the period of self-government could be extended without provoking violence, or devise some form of international trusteeship. The Cabinet asked Maudling to consider the possibility of some form of trusteeship for Kenya during the period of self-government.[2] Such suggestions were not taken up, as if there was an unspoken belief that Britain had no viable options. All this suggests that the few Cabinet and committee discussions which took place were of little value, and this is reflected in the fact that all the other mentions of the timetable for independence were simply briefings by the Colonial Secretary because policy was essentially reactive.

In 1963 Sandys told a meeting of the Oversea Policy Committee that although a longer period of self-government would improve the prospects of stability, independence would probably have to be given between January and September 1964. A minister argued that the period of self-government should be as long as possible, but did not counter Sandys' point that independence could not be deferred for long; in effect this intervention seems a ritualistic complaint rather than a serious critique of policy, and yet again a committee discussion contributed nothing to the development of policy.[3]

In June 1963 the Cabinet discussed a proposed statement by Sandys announcing that Kenya would become independent on 12 December 1963. Sandys told the Cabinet it now looked likely that a federation of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika could be established by the end of 1963. If any British objections delayed Kenyan independence, and in turn the establishment of a federation, Britain would appear to be blocking the creation of the federation, and would lose the goodwill of the three countries concerned. The earlier date of December for independence would therefore need to be considered. Sandys added, to bolster his proposal, that

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[1] CAB 129, C(62)22, 6 February 1962, pp. 1-2.
[2] CAB 128, CC(62)12th, 8 February 1962, pp. 4-5.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)1st, 13 February 1963, p. 1.

a federation would have economic advantages, would reduce the risk of tribal dissension in Kenya, and reinforce the position of other minority groups. No objections were made to this revised timetable, although some practical difficulties were pointed out, such as the need to delay a public announcement until Southern Rhodesia had been privately informed, otherwise the negotiations on the future of the CAF would become more difficult.[1]

Thus the ostensible reason for rapid independence was to expedite the setting up of a federation that was never actually established. The planned setting up of an East African federation provided a face saving device, and a means by which politicians could delude themselves that they had avoided the dangers of overhasty progress to independence. In effect the federal scheme provided the pretext to jettison a colonial responsibility, hence none of the objections to early independence were raised again.

The government as a whole did not, in terms of the Cabinet and its committees, make much of a contribution to Kenyan policy. According to a biography of Macleod, the detailed negotiations were regarded as a matter for the Colonial Secretary and not the rest of the Cabinet, and both Maudling and Sandys appear to have enjoyed the same latitude.[2] Such latitude may of course have been due to a desire on the part of Macmillan to avoid being personally identified with policies that would be unpopular with sections of the Conservative Party. This consideration might be one of the reasons why such matters were not kept completely away from the Cabinet. To have done so would not only have breached the doctrine of collective Cabinet responsibility, it would also have enabled ministers to disassociate themselves from any unpopular or controversial aspects of colonial policy, and so could lead to Macmillan again being more closely personally identified with such policies than he might have cared for. There was actually more discussion of the secondary aspects of Kenyan policy, such as the economic and defence implications of constitutional change, than there was of constitutional change itself, presumably because it was only in these subsidiary areas that Britain had room to manoeuvre and therefore had policy alternatives to discuss.

As was the case with the timetable, the negotiations for both the self-government constitution and the independence constitution were barely discussed by the Cabinet or its committees in 1962 or 1963. Ministers were mostly just briefed on the attempts to get a split in KANU so that its moderates aligned themselves with the Kenya African Democratic Union, the problems in reconciling KANU's demands for a highly centralized government with KADU's

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[1] CAB 128, CC(63)41st, 24 June 1963, pp. 3-4.
[2] R. Shepherd, *Iain Macleod* (1994), p. 179.

desire for a high level of regional autonomy, and the difficulties of obtaining a constitutional agreement with strong minority safeguards.[1]

Because disagreement on the independence constitution between KANU and KADU continued, the Cabinet had to discuss this matter in October 1963. The main issues were, as before, how centralized the system of government should be, and the provisions to be made for the amendment of the constitution after independence. Sandys ruled out postponing the date of independence on the grounds that KANU would probably respond with a unilateral declaration of independence, and Britain could not then contemplate holding the country by force. By this time Sandys saw the movement to independence as inexorable, hence the fact that the independence timetable seemed to operate without reference to how the constitutional talks were going. After some discussion all the Cabinet could conclude was that the government should try and secure a settlement, but should also make preparations to deal with tribal conflict and protect the European community.[2]

In order to discuss the problem of the constitution, an *ad hoc* committee was established which met two days after the Cabinet meeting. A large range of ministers sat on it, so that all departments with any interest in developments were represented, and Lord Mountbatten, the Chief of the Defence Staff was also a member. Its only meeting was chaired by Butler, the First Secretary of State. Sandys outlined the government's dilemma: a refusal to meet KANU's demands would lead it to make a unilateral declaration of independence, whereas if the government satisfied KANU's aspirations, KADU might try and partition the colony, and tribal warfare might break out, which could result in whites being attacked. Sandys' recommendation was that the government should continue to search for a settlement with KANU, but should keep in mind the danger of a violent reaction from KADU.[3]

This committee did not really move matters any further on. Britain's freedom of manoeuvre was so limited that any further discussion seems to have been rather pointless, providing further evidence that the committee system generated a lot of unproductive activity. It seems as if ministers were unable or unwilling to recognize Britain's lack of policy options and inability to control events. In the end Kenya became independent sooner than expected, after a shorter period of self-government than had been anticipated, and with no constitutional safeguards for minorities.[4]

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[1] See for example CAB 128, CC(62)26th, 5 April 1962, pp. 4-5 and CAB 128, CC(63)59th, 8 October 1963, p. 3.

[2] CAB 128, CC(63)60th, 15 October 1963, p. 4.

[3] PRO, CAB 130/192, GEN 810/1st, 17 October 1963, p. 1.

[4] It had been hoped as late as March 1963 that there would be twelve or eighteen months between self-government and independence. See PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)2nd, 13 March 1963, p. 1.

VI. CONCLUSION

From 1959 to 1963 colonial affairs constituted a major part of the work of the Cabinet and its committees, with colonial constitutional advance the most frequently discussed colonial topic. All the various timetables which had been painstakingly prepared by various committees, and all the long-term studies, proved of little value, not least because in this area policy consisted of little more than a reaction to events. The relatively large number of studies and the relatively little influence they appear to have had - ministers would blithely ignore some of their most important statements - suggests that the committee system could be the location of bureaucratic activity that contributed little to the development of policy, and did not help the government anticipate change and formulate contingency plans.

The Caribbean territories were of little general interest to the government, but because of the various problems there, especially in British Guiana, the Cabinet and its committees had to spend more time on them than they might have wished. Cabinet and Committee discussions show how determined Britain was to give up its responsibilities for these territories, and both British Guiana and British Honduras demonstrate the difficulties Britain had in ridding itself of unwanted colonial responsibilities. The seemingly unexpected demise, at least as far as the Cabinet and the CPC were concerned, of the West Indies Federation, suggests that the committee system was not providing a conduit between ministers and the bureaucracy, and that ministers were still being faced with developments about which they had received no warning. The system was more effective in the case of British Guiana; even though it was an issue with major implications, the Cabinet did not have to discuss it that often because its committees were capable of dealing with this issue.

Africa was in one way less well served by the committee system. Despite the recognition that a ministerial body was needed to coordinate African policy, such a committee was not established until October 1959, and did not actually meet until October 1960. Practically all its work concerned the CAF, and it repeated the acknowledged shortcomings of the CPC by becoming so bogged down with particular issues that it was unable to look at matters in a more long-term way and coordinate policy for Africa.

The committee system did not drastically reduce the autonomy and power of the CO, simply because as colonial independence became an issue of greater importance the CO gained a higher profile in government and was able to use ministerial concern about events in the colonies to push its own concerns, and also because Macleod, Maudling, and to a lesser extent Sandys, were given considerable latitude by Macmillan. The department was not lacking in

influence at ministerial committee level and was in general fairly successful in using a variety of means to promote its interests.

The impact of the system on policy development was not as great as might have been expected. Many of the committees seemed to work in isolation and contributed little to policy; ministers did not take much notice of the work of official committees, and so the system did not increase the influence of officials, and furthermore, the narrow views of officials meant that there contributions could be of little value. In general, the system was not good at coming up with policy initiatives and failed to help the government develop an overall strategy: there was a tendency for the same arguments to be repeated again and again until, events made them redundant.

Sir Hilton Poynton, Permanent Under-Secretary at the CO from 1959 until the department merged with the CRO, viewed the independence of Britain's African colonies as 'simply a stage in an evolutionary process already well established elsewhere'.[1] This statement epitomises the view propagated by Macmillan that decolonization was not a result of Britain's weakness but the successful culmination of British policy. The idea of an evolutionary process suggests a process of gradual, planned and controlled change. In fact, change was sudden, with Britain unable to control the pace of developments, and policy was not planned, it was essentially reactive.

There was no general plan for decolonization in Africa, and neither was there an intentional increase in the pace of change. According to Macleod there was a deliberate speeding-up of the movement towards independence after he became Colonial Secretary because otherwise there would have been terrible bloodshed.[2] This is putting a gloss on matters to give the impression that Britain was still in the driving seat. There was not a decision to speed-up; rather there was a gradual recognition, on a colony-by-colony basis, that Britain had no choice but to give independence quickly. Various factors were involved: the developments in the colonies of other European countries, a perceived growth in nationalist pressure and the fear of unrest, earlier commitments and promises about constitutional development, and the international environment, including pressures at the UN.

One significant factor was the decision to give early independence to Tanganyika. Although there was some awareness of the knock-on effect of changes in one colony on others, Britain does not seem to have considered that this decision would constitute the final erosion of its ability to control events, in the same way that the decision to give the Gold Coast

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[1] Kirk-Greene, *The Transfer of Power*, p. 16.

[2] Iain Macleod, 'Trouble in Africa', *The Spectator*, 31 January 1964, quoted in Nigel Fisher, *Iain Macleod* (1973), p. 142.

independence set the course of developments in West Africa. The decision to grant Tanganyika independence was one of comparable significance.

The most important factor was African nationalism. Some accounts of decolonization have argued that this was not a significant factor because there was no real nationalist threat. Whether or not there was a real nationalist threat is irrelevant when analysing the factors underlying colonial policy. What is relevant is the perception among the policy-makers of the time of the nationalist threat. It is clear from the papers of the Cabinet and its committees that there was considerable concern about nationalism and that this was the determining factor behind the pace of change, with the government convinced that unless the pace was increased there would be significant unrest.

One feature of the discussions in which the nationalist threat was mentioned, was the uncritical acceptance that this threat existed, and on such a scale that Britain could be faced with an uncontainable amount of unrest. The collective impression given by the papers on this topic is that the government wanted to believe that there was such a threat. This is not to go so far as to say that the nationalist threat was a pretext for rapidly pulling out of most of the African colonies, but clearly from the point of view of Macmillan, concerned with the special relationship, Europe and the Cold War, the colonies were seen as excess baggage and he was receptive to any reasons for discarding this excess.

The minutes and memoranda of the Cabinet and, in particular, its committees say much about colonial policy, and what they make clear above all is that decolonisation was not a planned process: it was a *post facto* rationalization of the inevitable.

CHAPTER FIVE

MALTA

I. INTRODUCTION

Among the British colonies Malta was both typical and unique. Like all colonies it was economically backward compared to its colonial master; like many others it was of strategic importance to Britain, a fact which sat uncomfortably with its other common feature: an increasing dissatisfaction with its colonial status. However, unlike most colonies it was a European territory which, according to Lyttelton, meant that its people 'boasting a civilisation older than our own would not tolerate for long their inclusion in the same constitutional category as the peoples of the African Colonies'.[1] It was also unusual in that almost all its income derived from British defence spending. But in its attempt to become part of the UK Malta was absolutely unique.

This colony provides a valuable case study. It demonstrates the close connection between colonial policy and broader policy concerns, in particular the link between colonial constitutional development and Britain's strategic requirements, the problems of economic development, and the implications colonial topics could have for domestic policy. As well as bringing together these different issues, Malta also shows how inextricably intertwined many of these matters were, and the problem this fact posed for policy-makers. An examination of Malta will enable an assessment to be made of how proactive British policy was, what policy alternatives were developed, and whether there was an overall strategy. The extent of the contribution of the Cabinet committee system to all this will be assessed, as well as the role of the system in scrutinizing policy proposals, preparing the ground for Cabinet discussion, and building on previous work and discussions. The island was discussed frequently by the Cabinet and its committees, indeed several committees were established specifically to deal with Malta, and therefore the Cabinet committee system could have had considerable implications for the CO's power and influence in government, and this too will be considered.[2]

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[1] CAB 128, CC(53)47th, 30 July 1953, p. 73.

[2] Malta was discussed by the following committees: Commonwealth Affairs, Malta Dockyard, Commonwealth Membership, Malta Economic Equivalence, Middle East Policy, Evacuation of Maltese from Egypt in an Emergency, Future Planning Working Group, Constitutional Development of the Commonwealth Working Party, Treaty of Rome, Defence, European Economic Association, Economic Steering Committee Sub-Committee on Closer Economic Association with Europe, Economic Steering Committee Sub-Committee on Closer Economic Association with Europe Working Party on the Colonies, CPC (ministerial), CPC (official), Malta (ministerial), Malta (official), Study of Future Policy,

II. OLIVIER AND DOMINION STATUS

Formally annexed by Britain in 1814, Malta's first important constitutional change after the Second World War occurred in 1947 when it was given a dyarchic constitution.[1] Although this gave the Maltese autonomy in internal affairs, Britain kept control of defence, foreign relations and all related matters. There were two main political parties on the island, the Nationalist Party, an established conservative group which supported the Catholic Church, and the Maltese Labour Party, a newer group which threatened the Nationalists' influence. The Nationalists, led by Borg Olivier, were able to form a minority government following the 1950 general election, thanks to the split that had occurred in the Labour Party the previous year when Dom Mintoff ousted its old leadership. Further successes in the 1951 and 1953 elections enabled Olivier to form coalition governments with the Malta Workers' Party.

When he visited London for the Coronation, Olivier caused the British government considerable difficulties by insisting that he should be granted the same treatment as Dominion Prime Ministers.[2] This demand was not just status consciousness on Olivier's part, it reflected the unhappiness of the Maltese with their colonial status. Another indication of this dissatisfaction was Olivier's request, made towards the end of his visit in a note he handed to the Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, Henry Hopkinson, that responsibility for Malta should be transferred from the CO to the CRO.[3] This note marked the start of eleven years of wrangling over Malta's constitutional status.

Lyttelton's response to Olivier's request was that Malta could never hope to attain dominion status because of its size, economic reliance on Britain and strategic significance.[4] The request was discussed at a meeting of the official committee on Commonwealth Membership, when Sir Thomas Lloyd of the CO pressed for a ministerial decision on Malta. However, in response to his suggestion that ministers should be asked to consider before the Parliamentary recess what reply to give Olivier, it was pointed out that the Secretary of State for Commonwealth relations, Lord Swinton, had agreed that it was not necessary for the committee to discuss this matter before it was considered by the Cabinet. One way for officials to

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Defence (Transition), Defence (Transition) Committee Sub-Committee on the Reception of British Subjects from Egypt, Defence (Transition) Committee Sub-Committee on the Evacuation of British Subjects from Egypt, Oversea Policy, DOPC (ministerial), Oversea Coordinating (official), Government Publicity, Common Market Negotiations (official), and Common Market Negotiations Steering Committee (official).

[1] For further background see D. Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (1971).

[2] In the end a compromise was reached that he should be treated as having the same status as the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia. See A. Eden, *Full Circle* (1960), pp. 383-384.

[3] PRO, CAB 130/87, GEN 435/3, Addendum, 17 August 1953, p. 1.

[4] CAB 129, C(53)218, 28 July 1953, pp. 1-2.

strengthen the hand of their minister was to have a matter discussed in a committee before it was raised in the Cabinet. If the discussion was favourable then the minister would be in the strong position of raising a matter in the Cabinet when he already had a Cabinet committee behind him. This was presumably what Lloyd was trying to arrange. Conversely, as happened here, officials could also try and prevent a matter being considered by a committee if they felt that the result would be to weaken their own minister's hand in the Cabinet. In this instance the CO failed to get any substantive consideration of Malta, and the chairman made no mention of Malta when he summarized what conclusions he would mention in a memorandum he proposed to circulate.[1]

In the event, as a note circulated to this committee by the CO recounts, ministers decided that Olivier's request should be refused, and that Britain should instead offer to transfer jurisdiction for Malta from the CO to the Home Office. The relevant departments were asked to examine the administrative and constitutional implications of such a move, and to report their findings to the minister concerned before any offer was made to Olivier.[2]

The Cabinet itself only discussed this issue twice, presumably because the matter seemed so clear-cut: there was no early prospect of Malta becoming economically self-sufficient, and it was not large enough to have the status of a fully independent member of the Commonwealth. At the end of July Lyttelton told the Cabinet that transferring Malta to the CRO on the basis of its independence in domestic affairs would set an undesirable precedent, and might cause problems in the future when other colonies reached a similar stage of constitutional development. However, he felt that some change was needed because of Maltese unhappiness with colonial status, and proposed that Malta should be given a similar status to the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands; that is placed under the charge of the Privy Council, with the Home Secretary as the council member responsible for relations with Malta. After the Home Secretary, David Maxwell-Fyfe, said that he was prepared to accept this arrangement, the Cabinet approved Lyttelton's proposals, despite the suggestion that ministers should first consider whether such a move was consistent with long-term plans for the development of Commonwealth relations.[3] Yet again policy was not being coordinated.

By the time the Cabinet next discussed this matter, Olivier had declared that he was going to press for full independence at an early date. This change of mind came after he had received

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/87, GEN 435/2nd, 17 July 1953, p. 1 and p. 5.

[2] PRO, CAB 130/87, GEN 435/3, Addendum, 17 August 1953, p. 1. The subsequent report concluded that Malta was one of the smaller colonies that were never likely to achieve full independence or full Commonwealth membership. See CAB 129, C(54)307, 11 October 1954, Appendix, para. 3.

[3] CAB 128, CC(53)47th, 30 July 1953, pp. 73-74. In a memorandum Lyttelton emphasized that Maltese dissatisfaction was poisoning the relationship with Britain. See CAB 129, C(53)218, 28 July 1953, p. 2.

advance information from Britain about a proposed increase in the number of US naval air squadrons in Malta.[1] Lyttelton, however, still felt that Britain should offer to transfer Malta to the Home Office, although he now thought that to allay any Maltese suspicions, emphasis should be placed on Home Office jurisdiction rather than on the Privy Council. The Cabinet agreed both to this and to his proposal that if the offer was rejected the government should announce that they would appoint a Royal Commission.[2] On 19 September the government announced that it was prepared in principle to transfer responsibility for Malta to the Home Office. Olivier, however, made no formal reply, although he did indicate that his preliminary view was that the offer held little appeal for him and his party.[3]

After this matters were left to drift and Malta's constitutional position was not discussed in any Cabinet committee until 1955.[4] The politicians seem to have been unwilling to take the initiative and officials do not seem to have tried to get them to do so. In April 1954 Lyttelton and the Home Secretary circulated a joint memorandum to the Cabinet in which they argued that the crux of the problem was Britain's attempt to give complete self-government in internal affairs to a territory which did not, and probably never would, have a viable economy.[5]

When the Cabinet discussed this memorandum, Lyttelton suggested that Olivier would probably reject the offer of Home Office jurisdiction, and outlined the alternatives. Firstly, the government could agree to Olivier's request for a Dominion status similar to that of Southern Rhodesia before the creation of the CAF, but this had already been rejected. Secondly, Britain could develop closer relations with Malta along the lines proposed by Mintoff. This would, however, involve Maltese representation at Westminster and this could not be seriously considered. The last alternative was that old political substitute for a constructive proposal: the appointment of a review body. Lyttelton suggested that the only alternative might be to establish a Royal Commission to examine Malta's constitution and financial problems, and to consider the question of some change in its constitutional status. The Commonwealth Secretary was not keen on this proposal and felt that further discussions were needed. Although Lyttelton and the

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[1] CAB 129, C(53)255, 12 September 1953, p. 1.

[2] CAB 128, CC(53)52nd, 16 September 1953, p. 121.

[3] CAB 129, C(54)141, 14 April 1954, p. 1.

[4] The only committee discussions concerning Malta took place in the Evacuation of Maltese from Egypt in an Emergency Committee. This was an *ad hoc* official committee chaired by Brook who, ironically in view of later events, said that such an eventuality was becoming more and more hypothetical. See PRO, CAB 130/99, GEN 452/1st, 8 January 1954, p. 1. During December 1953 the government made a Commons statement on the proposal to transfer Malta to the Home Office and a general election took place in Malta which returned Olivier's coalition to power. See *The Colonial Territories, 1953-54*, p. 32.

[5] CAB 129, C(54)141, 14 April 1954, p. 8. The paper added that Olivier's solution to the economic dilemma was that Malta should be entitled to a sort of annual rent from Britain for Malta's strategic value.

Home Secretary were authorized to start discussions with Olivier, the Cabinet asked that the matter be referred back to it before ending the talks.[1] Cabinet ministers were obviously anxious to keep this whole matter under close control, perhaps one reason why no committees dealt with this issue.

When Lyttelton reported to the Cabinet on these discussions, he said that it seemed likely that Olivier's reply to the offer of Home Office jurisdiction would be 'indefinitely delayed'. He also added that he had changed his mind about the wisdom of setting up a Royal Commission - to the approval of the Commonwealth Secretary who sad he had been concerned that such a body might recommend that Malta should be transferred to the CRO - and now suggested that a conference of all the main Maltese political parties should be held under the supervision of a CO minister. The Cabinet agreed that this proposal should be investigated.[2] In August Lennox-Boyd therefore suggested to all the Maltese political parties that they should discuss with Britain the broad implications of Home Office jurisdiction. Olivier was initially hesitant, saying that before there could be any discussions there would need to be agreement in principle on revision of the constitution and the financial relationship with Britain, but by November both he and the other political leaders had accepted Lennox-Boyd's offer. However Olivier's government was defeated in the Maltese Legislative Assembly later that month when a minister resigned and voted with the opposition. As a result of this the Assembly was dissolved on 18 December, and in February 1955 a general election was held.

III. MINTOFF AND INTEGRATION: FIRST MOVES

The general election produced a dramatic change in the nature of the problem of Malta, forcing the Cabinet and its committees to devote far more time to this colony. Shortly after the Maltese Labour Party won the election, the new Prime Minister, Dom Mintoff, formally requested that Malta should become part of the UK. He proposed that Malta should be represented in the next Parliament by three members in the Commons, and that over a period of about fifteen to twenty years Malta should be raised to economic parity with Britain, with ultimate equality in wages and social services.[3] Throughout the transition stage Britain would provide substantial economic aid, but over time this would fall to a lower level at which it would then remain.[4] During this period the Governor would retain full powers in the fields of

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[1] CAB 128, CC(54)29th, 15 April 1954, pp. 7-8.
[2] CAB 128, CC(54)56th, 29 July 1954, p. 3.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)3, 28 July 1955, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)2nd, 29 July 1955, p. 1.

defence, foreign affairs and certain other matters, but would be obliged to consult a mixed committee of officials, service representatives and Maltese on these reserved matters, and if agreement could still not be reached then the matter would have to be referred back to a ministerial committee in London.[1]

Mintoff had been suggesting integration for some time, and as a result by the time he made his formal proposal, the British government had already considered and rejected the possibility of integration. During a visit to London in the spring of 1954 he had held meetings with MPs, ministers and Labour Party leaders at which he had advocated some form of closer association with Britain, involving Malta having less political autonomy and paying UK rates of taxation, but in return getting UK levels of social services and pay, and representation at Westminster. In a joint memorandum the Colonial Secretary and Home Secretary argued against this move. They felt that such an arrangement would place an increasing burden on the UK exchequer and the Services budgets, and would lead to administrative inefficiency. More importantly, Maltese representation at Westminster would be unacceptable because it would create an undesirable precedent, and could lead to other colonies asking for similar treatment, although they admitted that in practice few colonies would do so. Furthermore, Maltese MPs would lose touch with their constituents back in Malta and would have little to contribute in Parliament. Finally, if a government had only a small majority then Malta's members would have an undue and disproportionate control over Britain's domestic affairs.[2] This all seemed to amount to a categorical rejection of the entire concept, with no minister disputing these objections.

The Cabinet did not discuss Mintoff's formal proposal until June 1955, and it was July before any committee discussed it. This lack of activity seems curious given that talks between Lennox-Boyd, Mintoff and Olivier took place in London in June and July. Even though these were private and informal consultations, some preparatory discussions in the Cabinet or its committees might have been expected, especially now that the integration scheme was the formal proposal of the Prime Minister, rather than the unofficial suggestion of the leader of the opposition. It may be that as these talks were so exploratory no preparation was necessary, or that any preliminary work only took place in and between the departments concerned. It could be, however, that the lack of activity in the Cabinet and its committees reflected Eden's reluctance to make full use of the committee system.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)3rd, 8 August 1955, pp. 1-2.
[2] CAB 129, C(54)141, 14 April 1954, p. 1 and pp. 12-13.

When the Cabinet finally discussed the proposals, ministers did no more than agree that more time was needed to consider Lennox-Boyd's memorandum on integration.[1] At the next Cabinet meeting Lennox-Boyd suggested that some change in Malta's constitutional status was inevitable, although the island could not expect independence and full Commonwealth membership. He now felt that what Malta needed was closer association with some other power, and warned that if this partner was not Britain then Malta might move closer to Italy, a move which would be embarrassing given that Cyprus was looking for closer association with Greece. Ministers agreed that a new initiative was needed because the government could not risk a serious constitutional crisis in Malta when there were already constitutional difficulties in other colonies.[2] British policy was thus essentially reactive: decisions were only taken when options had run out. The proposals were not discussed in a committee first, and so no preliminary work had been done before the matter was taken to the Cabinet. This might have been because the issue was so significant it had to go straight to the Cabinet, but if this was the case it seems puzzling that the Cabinet took so long to get around to discussing the proposals.

What basically seems to have determined the government's response was that it had no initiative of its own to offer, and therefore had little option but to accept Mintoff's proposals, even if only as little more than a holding operation. As Lennox-Boyd pointed out, the Maltese would only cooperate in an independent examination of these proposals if Britain at least welcomed them as a valuable contribution. The Cabinet accepted this and asked him to consider the procedure for further examination.[3]

The following week Lennox-Boyd suggested to the Cabinet that the constitutional aspects of Mintoff's proposals should be examined by a conference of representatives of all British political parties and all parties represented in the Maltese Legislative Assembly. The discussion was brief, not least because Lennox-Boyd had, as he informed the Cabinet, already discussed the matter with Eden. Only two points were made; that the conference should be allowed to discuss alternatives to Maltese representation at Westminster, and that it should be able to take into account that other small colonies might ask for representation at Westminster. Despite reservations about the long-term consequences of Maltese representation, the Cabinet agreed that a conference should be held because rejecting the proposals out of hand would cause problems. [4]

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[1] CAB 128, CM(55)18th, 28 June 1955, p. 3.
[2] CAB 128, CM(55)19th, 30 June 1955, p. 7.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[4] CAB 128, CM(55)20th, 5 July 1955, pp. 5-6. Lennox-Boyd's worry was that if Britain turned down the matter in principle Mintoff would come up with an unacceptable alternative, such as independence with a defence treaty and a large amount of British aid. See CAB 129, CP(55)53, 27 June 1955, p. 2.

A newly established official committee spent the summer examining the proposals. This body consisted of officials from the Treasury, Home Office, CRO and CO, and its terms of reference were:

> To study the economic, financial, social and constitutional implications of possible schemes for closer association of the United Kingdom and Malta, and to assist Ministers in the preparations for the Round-Table Conference on Malta.[1]

It was also asked to consider if there were any alternative proposals not involving Westminster representation which could be put forward.[2] Given Malta's strategic significance it seems strange that the strategic implications of integration were not to be studied. It may be that another committee examined them, but the papers which are open provide no evidence for this. If these aspects were not studied this could be because the conference was indeed intended as little more than a delaying tactic. In consequence the government was risking handing the initiative to Mintoff.

The CO was enthusiastic about the proposals and argued strongly in favour of them to the point of sounding unrealistic and uncritical. In a memorandum the department enthused that the proposals had 'the merit of recognising that a tiny overpopulated island, without economic resources and starved of capital, has no economic future except as part of a larger economic unit'. In addition, integration would mean that political, social and economic problems would in future be dealt with in 'a new spirit of hopefulness and realism', and the transfer of all legislative powers on defence and foreign affairs to Westminster would reduce the possibility of clashes between the Maltese and their governor. Furthermore, the proposals accepted that the Maltese must make a strong effort themselves and eventually pay UK rates of tax. The memorandum finished with the warning that if the proposals were rejected the Maltese would possibly look for independence or union with Italy.[3]

The committee's chairman did not share the CO's enthusiasm for the proposals, observing at the end of one meeting that the discussions showed that the integration scheme presented formidable political and economic difficulties, in particular the problem of how Malta could be represented at Westminster during the transition period when the UK did not yet have control over Maltese taxation. He suggested that if it became obvious that integration was not a viable goal, even in the long-term, it would be best to support a scheme that did not involve Westminster representation. However, only one such alternative had been proposed, a CO

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)1, 30 July 1955, p. 1.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)1st, 28 July 1955, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)8, 8 August 1955, pp. 1-2.

scheme involving a joint select committee of the House of Commons and the Maltese Legislature, and he feared that it might be unworkable.[1]

This shortage of alternative schemes suggests a failure on the part of policy-makers. Indeed, it almost seems as if the CO was so keen on the integration proposals that it was not interested in seriously considering alternatives. Furthermore, because the other members of this committee did not come up with any alternatives either, the committee was failing to carry out properly its task of examining the implications of possible schemes for closer integration. As a result the committee system was also not compensating for any shortcomings in the contribution of a particular department to the making of policy. The consequence of all this was that the official Malta Committee was failing to provide ministers with a proper evaluation of a full range of policy alternatives.

In the end two options were outlined in the committee's report. The first was the CO's scheme. A second alternative was later considered; not, however, because it seemed particularly worthwhile, but because, as the chairman informed his colleagues, the committee had been asked to look at other arrangements and the draft report contained only one alternative. His suggestion was that Malta should be given a modified version of the Gold Coast's constitution. The committee agreed that this alternative should also be submitted to ministers, even though the service departments did not think it gave sufficient powers to protect their interests.[2] The inclusion of this scheme suggests a degree of desperation, and constitutes little more than a display of going through the motions.

The aspect of Mintoff's proposals that most concerned the committee was his demand for economic equivalence, that is the raising of Malta to economic parity with Britain. Such a development would have considerable implications for both Malta and Britain. For example, if wages were raised to British levels the Admiralty would be less likely to want to have work carried out in Malta.[3] The end result of wage rises for dockyard workers would therefore be that the Royal Navy would divert some of its expenditure in Malta to British ports, where there were other advantages to getting the work carried out.[4]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)3rd, 8 August 1955, p. 4. This proposal was, broadly, that the present dyarchical system should be replaced by a constitution under which the Governor would normally be required to consult Maltese ministers on defence and external affairs, although he would still have legislative and executive authority in those fields. In addition as many reserved matters as possible would be transferred to the Maltese Legislature and government. See PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)6th, 23 August 1955, pp. 1-2.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)6th, 23 August 1955, pp. 1-2.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)2nd, 29 July 1955, p. 1.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)4th, 10 August 1955, p. 4. It was also pointed out that a further difficulty with the dockyards was that it was possible naval expenditure would be reduced in two or three years which would mean a reduction in the workforce. As will be seen later this became a complicating factor in relations with Malta.

Some members of the committee took what seems an unreasonably optimistic view of the problems economic equivalence might pose, arguing that the emphasis on this in the draft report was too gloomy, given that Mintoff had considerably changed his claims in the course of discussions and might accept a lower, though comparable, scale of social service benefits, and had in any case suggested a long interim period.[1] The impression all this gives is that certain committee members were not scrutinising the proposals thoroughly, because they were not interested in finding flaws in them as they had no counter-proposals to offer.

Others were less sanguine, arguing that Mintoff's supporters saw economic parity as a central part of the proposals, that giving Westminster representation implied acceptance in principle of parity, and that the repercussions elsewhere could cause problems.[2] This danger was raised several times, showing how split the committee was. At one meeting it was complacently suggested that the proposals would not cause any serious difficulties in other parts of the UK.[3] However, at a later meeting it was argued that giving Malta three rather than two members at Westminster could have damaging repercussions in Northern Ireland, and by implying that a Welsh Parliament would not necessarily mean less Welsh representation at Westminster would encourage Welsh nationalists. As far as other colonies were concerned, the CO said that after consultations it appeared that four would probably be envious of Maltese integration, but would be unlikely to make a serious request for similar treatment, and that although Gibraltar might like Westminster representation, it would rather not have this if the result was having to pay UK tax.[4]

Defence concerns were mentioned, but only briefly, when it was suggested that although Malta's strategic importance was taken for granted, this might be questioned by ministers, who should therefore be given the CoS's report on this topic.[5] Obviously a committee cannot be blamed for not dealing with matters outside its remit, but the failure to consider the strategic implications of any change in Malta's constitutional position seems a remarkable oversight; not least because such an omission was likely to produce a lack of policy coordination. A further shortcoming was that no thought was given to what effect any change in Malta's strategic significance would have on policy options. Perhaps the reason for this omission was simply that too many awkward questions would have been raised, and officials and ministers were not interested in finding reasons why the proposals should be rejected.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)7th, 24 August 1955, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)3rd, 8 August 1955, p. 2.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)6th, 23 August 1955, p. 6 and p. 3.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

The committee's report came out firmly in favour of the integration proposals, arguing that:

> The case for giving full representation in Parliament to Malta is that to do so provides the best hope of solving a long-standing political problem, and of securing genuine Maltese cooperation in foreign affairs and defence matters.

The report also warned that rebuffing the proposals could produce a demand for independence. The officials do not, however, seem to have had complete faith in their own conclusions. In several parts of the report they felt it necessary to warn about the possible dangers of the scheme, particularly its economic aspects. They emphasized that the financial assistance required to achieve economic parity would be 'on a scale greater than that given to any other colony' and could have detrimental effects elsewhere, such as demands for extra financial assistance, not only from other colonies but also from Scotland and Northern Ireland. They also cautioned that acceptance of the principle of representation at Westminster would be regarded as a commitment to economic parity, and that the extra cost of giving this would all fall on the UK.[1]

These various warnings seem at odds with the report's strong conclusion in favour of integration. Furthermore, although the report said that one of Britain's main aims was to avoid excessive claims for UK assistance, this is exactly what the recommended course of action would involve.[2] All this suggests that policy-makers were cornered; they had no real alternative to offer, but felt that things had to change in Malta, and so there was no choice other than to accept integration. As a result British policy had become essentially reactive.

This interpretation is supported by the work of the ministerial committee that was established to supervise the preparations for the Round-Table conference on Malta.[3] It was chaired by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Kilmuir (formerly David Maxwell-Fyfe), who had been Home Secretary when it had been proposed that responsibility for Malta should be transferred to the Home Office. Although one of the tasks of this body was to examine the report of its official counterpart, the ministerial committee actually spent only a small part of its time doing this. After a short discussion at the committee's first meeting, ministers simply agreed that it would be necessary to take into account the report's views on Britain's present financial commitment in Malta, the continuing strategic importance of Malta, and the fact that Britain was already committed to revising the present constitution.[4] The deliberations of the official committee do

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)24(Final), 2 September 1955, pp. 15-17.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[3] For details of its membership and terms of reference see PRO, CAB 134/1295, MC(55)1, 28 July 1955, p. 1. Kilmuir told the Cabinet that this committee would consider the report of the official Malta Committee. See CAB 128, CM(55)30th, 5 September 1955, p. 9.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1295, MC(55)1st, 8 September 1955, p. 1.

not seem to have been particularly valuable, and the casual and quick way ministers dealt with its findings suggest its work was of little help.

One main concern of the committee was public opinion in Malta, which was thought to be divided, not least because of the Catholic Church's hostility to the proposals. It was argued that this division could not be ignored, even if the conference decided in favour of integration, and that even a referendum might not provide a solution if there was only a small majority in favour of integration.[1]

Another topic of concern, whether the government should decide its views on the proposals before the conference, adds weight to the impression that for Britain holding the conference was little more than a way of treading water. The Home Secretary, Gwilym Lloyd George, suggested that the government should decide in advance of the conference whether it was prepared to accept the embarrassing future repercussions of Maltese representation, although he added that any such decision could be modified in the light of the conference's findings. Lennox-Boyd's exasperated response was that if Westminster representation was not considered even a possibility by the government then the conference should never have been summoned. In a more conciliatory mood, he went on to say that he was prepared to be guided by the committee's findings, and suggested that in any case Olivier might come up with proposals which would be more acceptable to the conference than Mintoff's, but he also observed that if any decision was subject to modification then there was no point in taking a decision at all at this stage. It was further pointed out that when the Cabinet had discussed holding a conference, it had felt it was best not to turn down Mintoff's proposals out of hand, but had not taken a view on the proposals' feasibility. The committee therefore concluded that a final decision on the proposals should not be made until after the findings of the conference were known.[2] In effect, the government intended holding a conference on proposals that could turn out to be completely impracticable.

The committee also discussed a CO paper on the effect of integration on the other small colonies. This memorandum contained statements on the financial aspects of statehood that the Treasury was not keen on, and because of this the committee asked Lennox-Boyd to revise the paper for the Cabinet, in consultation with the Financial Secretary to the Treasury.[3] Committees

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[1] In the event Kilmuir discovered at the conference that the Catholic Church was suspicious about the effect of closer integration on its position and feared secularization. At this time the Church enjoyed an official status that gave it considerable influence. See PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(55)3rd, 1 November 1955, p. 1. Hostility to the Church was indeed one of Mintoff's motives for seeking integration. He hoped that if Malta became part of a Protestant state the social power of the Church would be broken. See Holland, *European Decolonization*, p. 261.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1295, MC(55)2nd, 12 September 1955, p. 2.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

were thus a way of ensuring that the views of all concerned departments were taken into consideration, and that the Cabinet was not just given the partial view of one department. However, the fact that the committee had to ask ministers to consult suggests that the system was not functioning as intended. Ministers were supposed to discuss matters between themselves before taking them to a committee; clearly this had not been done, and as a result the committee had to spend more time on this matter than should have been the case. Furthermore, there was little evidence that the ministerial committee was building on the work of its official counterpart. Much of the ministerial discussions were on peripheral issues and, as with the official committee, the general impression is that few members were interested in thoroughly scrutinising the proposals.

When the Cabinet discussed the ministerial committee's conclusions, its main concern was the question of parliamentary representation for Malta. The ministerial committee had stressed that there were substantial arguments against this.[1] Two suggestions were made; that Malta could be given some form of limited membership of the House of Commons, something for which there was no precedent; and that it should be given Parliamentary representation without incurring any commitment to economic parity, a commitment which the Financial Secretary to the Treasury said should be resisted. Lennox-Boyd again argued that no conclusion should be reached on the proposals before the conference started, because any conclusion would be reflected at the conference and would prejudice its findings. However, if the Cabinet had to reach a conclusion at this stage, he suggested, not surprisingly, that it should be one generally in favour of the proposals; a suggestion that seems as illogical as the one he was opposing. In the end the Cabinet agreed that they should not reach any conclusion before the conference was held.[2] Perhaps they were swayed by Kilmuir's argument that to rebuff the proposals would increase friction and led to pressure from all Maltese political parties for independence.[3] This seems to be the bottom line that determined government policy on Malta.

After nine meetings of the official committee, two of the ministerial committee and one of the Cabinet, the position was that there was concern about the implications of Parliamentary representation, worry about the demand for economic equivalence, an absence of viable alternative proposals and a decision not to take a decision: a lot of meetings had produced few tangible results. In the Cabinet it was observed that the conference should concentrate on the

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[1] These were: the difficulty of dividing authority between Parliament and the Maltese Legislature; that it would be presumed in the UK and Malta that Malta should have UK standards of social services; that other colonies might press for their social services to be improved; and the division of opinion in Malta. See CAB 129, CP(55)121, 13 September 1955, p. 2.

[2] CAB 128, CM(55)31st, 15 September 1955, pp. 3-4.

[3] CAB 129, CP(55)121, 13 September 1955, p. 3.

practicability of the various alternatives, so as to provide the government with an objective appraisal of them.[1] This is precisely what the committee system should have done. In this case the system did little to facilitate policy development, because it did little more than act as a talking shop which helped to cover up a lack of ideas and policy inertia.

Shortly after the start of the conference, the official Malta Committee held its last meeting, in order to examine a memorandum that Mintoff had circulated at the conference, and see if there was anything in it on which ministers would need a supplementary briefing. Quickly deciding that there was little new in the memorandum, officials went on to discuss a suggestion made by Mintoff at the conference, that the Governor of Malta should become a constitutional head of state, and that the representatives of Whitehall departments should implement their decisions through the Maltese Civil Service. Any disputes, he had suggested, should be referred back to the Home Secretary's committee in London. The committee agreed to draft a brief saying that such an arrangement would be unworkable.[2] It appears that officials wanted to use this committee to offer unsolicited advice to ministers, when its function had been intended to be of a purely preparatory nature.

The ministerial committee also held its last meeting soon after the conference began. Lennox-Boyd was anxious for the Cabinet to discuss future policy on the smaller colonies before he gave evidence to the conference, and after some discussion pointed out that he obviously could not refuse to make a statement. The committee agreed to his suggestion that he should say he was giving careful consideration to the problem, and hoped at a later stage to be able to give the conference his views on the matter.[3] Again the Colonial Secretary was using a committee to push for a decision on a particular concern of his.

In November the recently established CPC discussed a note by Kilmuir, the conference chairman, on how the views of the conference were developing. He informed ministers that the majority of the conference felt it would be expedient to offer Malta representation at Westminster, and that a substantial majority in Malta would vote for closer integration on these lines. The only comment made was that if Malta was treated on the same basis as Northern Ireland then it should have two, not three MPs.[4] However, this lack of discussion was probably not significant, because often such committee work was simply a matter of keeping ministers informed of relevant development, rather than debating policy.

The conference ended in December. Its report grandiloquently stated that 'the people of Malta are entitled to a special road of political equality and that that road should be, if they

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[1] CAB 128, CM(55)31st, 15 September 1955, p. 4.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1296, MC(O)(55)10th, 22 September 1955, pp. 1-2.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1295, MC(55)3rd, 28 September 1955, p. 4.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(55)3rd, 1 November 1955, p. 1.

should choose, representation at Westminster'.[1] As far as more concrete proposals were concerned, the report recommended that responsibility for Malta should be transferred to the Home Secretary, who would be represented in Malta by the head of the UK agency that would be established there. This body would have the necessary powers to carry out the decisions of the British government in defence and foreign affairs, and to consult and collaborate with the Maltese government in matters of joint concern.[2]

Between the end of the conference and the holding of the referendum, Malta was still discussed, suggesting that there was a degree of doubt about the conference findings, especially as regards Westminster representation. Kilmuir explained to the Cabinet why this decision had been taken; constitutional progress was needed, and as Malta could never hope to become an independent member of the Commonwealth this seemed the only solution; and given the uneasy situation in the Mediterranean and Middle East, rejecting the proposals would be a serious step. Sounding unreasonably optimistic, he also told his colleagues that the economic consequences of integration would not be as serious as had been feared; in any case it was a broad equivalence rather than close parity that was being asked for. He further insisted that the Maltese were not asking for a greater level of financial assistance than Britain had already been prepared to offer, and that their economic objectives were not out of line with the level of economic development that Britain desired and supported in other colonies. Lennox-Boyd added that he was convinced that Westminster representation was the right solution.[3]

Many of his colleagues disagreed. Lloyd George felt that integration would increase pressure for independence, or greater representation at Westminster, by Wales and possibly Scotland. Others felt that integration was too easy a solution to holding the Commonwealth together, and that if Malta was to be represented at Westminster, its representatives should not have full rights to speak and vote on UK and Commonwealth matters. The Chancellor, Harold Macmillan, argued that it should be made clear that financial assistance would continue only at the present level. The discussion finished with the Cabinet agreeing that the conference report should be considered by the CPC, but with the addition of the Chancellor, Lord Chancellor and Home Secretary.[4]

The CPC considered the report on 6 February, with Kilmuir, Lloyd George and Macmillan 'also present'.[5] Lennox-Boyd warned that there was growing unrest among

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[1] *The Colonial Territories, 1955-56*, p. 41.
[2] CAB 129, CP(55)194, 9 December 1955, p. 23.
[3] CAB 128, CM(56)2nd, 4 January 1956, p. 5.
[4] *Ibid,*, pp. 5-7.
[5] The Cabinet had briefly considered the terms of the referendum and the worry of Maltese Catholics that any constitutional changes would affect their liberties. See CAB 128, CM(56)3rd, 11 January 1956, p. 7 and CAB 128, CM(56)8th, 31 January 1956, p. 12.

Conservative MPs at the way the referendum was being conducted, and in response the committee agreed to a proposal that individual MPs selected by Mintoff should visit Malta as unofficial observers. Lloyd George repeated his concern that Westminster representation for Malta could have undesirable repercussions in other parts of the UK, and argued against the proposal that responsibility for Malta should be transferred to the Home Office.[1]

One potential problem with the committee system was duplication of work, either between committees or between the Cabinet and its committees. This could happen because a minister was pushing a particular concern, as was the case here with Lloyd George. This type of tactic increased the workload of committees, which in turn meant they could take less weight of work from the Cabinet than would otherwise have been the case. In this instance the Home Secretary was unsuccessful; the committee agreed that the question of repercussions should be reserved for Cabinet consideration.[2] Clearly, the CPC was aware of the limitations of its authority; even when many senior ministers sat on a committee, major issues still had to be discussed by the Cabinet.

The referendum was held in February 1956, and its results showed that fears about a division of Maltese opinion were justified. Although there was a majority in favour of integration, the large number of abstentions meant that only forty-four percent of those eligible to vote had supported the proposals.[3] It was thought that many of those who abstained did so because of the hostility of the Catholic Church to integration.

Following the referendum, it was the CPC, not the Cabinet, that discussed the results. The referendum might have been regarded as so significant that the Cabinet itself should have dealt with it, but because this CPC meeting was attended by all the ministers concerned with external affairs, two representatives of the Treasury, the Home Secretary and the First Lord of the Admiralty, and was chaired by Eden, there was no need to take the matter to the Cabinet. By chairing the meeting Eden was ensuring, as he always did, that all important foreign policy matters were kept under his close supervision. Ministers discussed a memorandum by Lennox-Boyd which suggested that the government should decide its attitude to the referendum result, and should try to persuade Mintoff to hold a general election, the results of which could be regarded as a conclusive judgement on the integration proposals.[4] Lennox-Boyd, again sounding over-optimistic and uncritical, said that although in all similar referendums more of the electorate had voted, none had such a high percentage in favour as the Maltese one. Although

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(56)6th, 6 February 1956, pp. 2-6.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[3] Only 59.12% of electors voted, of whom 67,607 voted in favour and 20,177 voted against. See *The Colonial Territories, 1955-56*, p. 41.

[4] PRO, CAB 134/1202, CA(56)7, 17 February 1956, p. 3.

the committee was informed that there was growing opposition to the proposals within the Conservative Party, ministers agreed that consideration should be given to the amount of aid Britain would be prepared to offer; as a first step the Governor should be recalled to Britain for consultations; and Lennox-Boyd should develop proposals on financial aid in consultation with Macmillan.[1]

The Cabinet discussed a CPC analysis of the conference report the following month. The CPC's views were that acceptance of the constitutional proposals should not involve any commitment to provide increased financial assistance, that the constitutional changes and consultative machinery recommended by the conference should be implemented, and that no decision needed to be taken yet on the question of future ministerial responsibility for Malta.[2]

There seems to have been little point in the CPC preparing this report for the Cabinet, however, because ministers did not build on it; all of the Cabinet's discussion was about Parliamentary tactics. There was growing concern among ministers about Conservative MPs' attitudes to the proposals. Despite a warning that any further delay would lead to the position in Malta getting out of hand, the Cabinet decided that because of the mood of Conservative backbenchers, it would be unwise to hold a Commons debate on a government motion accepting the report's main recommendations. Ministers felt that either a debate should be held without any motion being tabled, giving Lennox-Boyd the opportunity to state his provisional view without finally committing the government, or that a government motion should be tabled on proceeding with measures to implement the report's recommendations, provided that the Commons was satisfied that this was what the Maltese wanted.[3]

The handling of the issue in the Commons now became the government's main concern. At the Cabinet's next meeting, a minister suggested that the matter should not be put before Parliament until after a general election had been held in Malta. Lennox-Boyd felt otherwise, arguing successfully that it would be unreasonable not to allow Parliament even to debate the matter before a general election was held. As a result the Cabinet chose the second alternative proposed at its last meeting.[4]

Malta had to be discussed again at the next Cabinet meeting because of the increasing Conservative backbench opposition to the proposals. Lennox-Boyd still felt that some sort of discussion in Parliament was needed, otherwise the situation in Malta could worsen, especially

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(56)9th, 17 February 1956, pp. 1-2.
[2] CAB 129, CP(56)76, 12 March 1956, p. 1.
[3] CAB 128, CM(56)22nd, 13 March 1956, pp. 9-10. Lennox-Boyd also used this meeting to repeat his argument that the Maltese should be given a further opportunity, at a general election, to make a clear declaration in favour of the proposals.
[4] CAB 128, CM(56)23rd, 15 March 1956, p. 8.

if Mintoff made some intemperate statement because he was angry about returning home empty handed. Lennox-Boyd feared that any such statement would make it impossible to get agreement between Mintoff and the Catholic Church. Although R. A. Butler, Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House, argued that backbench opposition would increase if it looked as if the government was trying to rush Parliament, Lennox-Boyd got his way. Eden said that a preliminary debate should take place on a government motion inviting the House to take note of the conference report.[1]

Two days later Lennox-Boyd told a meeting of the CPC that the speech he proposed to make in the debate was designed to give the general impression that the government favoured the report, but without giving the impression that the government was finally committed to implementing it, and would end by promising that Eden would make a further Commons statement once the government had considered the points made in the debate. Butler, in the chair, continued the opposition he had shown in the Cabinet and suggested that promising an early statement would further antagonize Conservative backbenchers. Although some ministers shared this view, others considered that the government needed to give a clear lead. One minister added that it would look like the government was evading its responsibilities if, after three months considering the report, it appeared unwilling to say what it thought of the recommendations. The decision went Lennox-Boyd's way; he was to say in the debate that the conference recommendations offered a better chance than any other proposals to produce a satisfactory settlement of Malta's problems.[2] Even when the chairman was against a proposal he could not ignore the views of the committee's members.

Although the referendum result had hardly constituted a conclusive endorsement of the proposals, negotiations between Britain and Malta on implementing integration took place in London in June, August, September, October and December 1956, and in consequence Malta was frequently discussed in both the Cabinet and its committees.

Apart from two brief mentions of Malta, and a long discussion on Malta's strategic importance, the remaining Cabinet discussion on Malta that year all dealt with the financial aspects of integration.[3] Lennox-Boyd informed ministers that although it had been assumed

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[1] CAB 128, CM(56)24th, 21 March 1956, p. 3.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(56)14th, 23 March 1956, pp. 1-2. After the debate the Cabinet agreed that although the promised statement should make clear that the government intended to introduce legislation to give effect to the conference recommendations, Westminster representation would not commence until the Maltese had given further indication that this was what they wanted. See CAB 128, CM(56)25th, 27 March 1956, p. 7.

[3] On 29 March the Colonial Secretary informed the Cabinet that he had made an announcement on Malta to the House of Commons. See CAB 128, CM(56)26th, 29 March 1956, p. 6. In May the Cabinet took note of a memorandum by Lennox-Boyd on legislative and other steps needed to implement the conference recommendations. See CAB 128, CM(56)34th, 8 May 1956, p. 5.

throughout the conference that the amount of financial aid needed would not be any more than £4-5 million a year, Mintoff was now in London asking for £8 million financial aid for the coming year.[1]

Lennox-Boyd circulated a note to the Cabinet the following week, recommending that the government should stand by its decision to limit financial aid that year to a maximum of £5 million.[2] This, he told the Cabinet, was the best course of action, even though the Governor of Malta had recommended a compromise, because to agree to a higher figure would commit the government to accepting economic parity. Furthermore, if more money was given, this could result in other colonies seeking Westminster representation, and he had told the Commons that this would not happen. If, however, extra aid was refused, this would mean a general election having to be held in Malta, and Mintoff might then propose a settlement based on self-determination with a defence treaty and a UK subsidy. Despite this danger the Cabinet agreed that Mintoff should only be offered aid of £7.5 million to cover an eighteen-month period from April 1955.[3] It was becoming obvious that ministers had been over-optimistic about the financial aspects of the proposals and that because of this no contingency plans had been developed.

In July Lennox-Boyd told the Cabinet that as a result of the compromise offer, Mintoff was now willing to resume negotiations, and obtained its agreement that demands for economic equivalence and changes in Malta's electoral system should be resisted, and that to help them weigh up any new proposals for constitutional change ministers should have the latest views of the CoS on Malta's strategic significance.[4] Significantly the memorandum he circulated for this meeting was far less optimistic in tone than his earlier statements on integration; presumably the harsh reality of the financial negotiations was one of the main reasons for this. He suggested that Mintoff's repeated demands for economic equivalence, and for the electoral system to be changed from proportional representation to first past the post, would be the main probable sources of future conflict. The fundamental difficulty was that the advent of nuclear weapons had not substantially changed the importance of Malta in Britain's defence plans; as a result no alternative proposal could both satisfy Britain's defence requirements and Malta's desire for a different constitutional status. Even so, he warned that integration could give rise to serious

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[1] CAB 128, CM(56)45th, 21 June 1956, p. 5. However, a memorandum by Lennox-Boyd said that Mintoff was seeking £6.5-7 million for the current financial year. See CAB 129, CP(56)169, in Goldsworthy, *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire*, Part II, p. 325. In one of the volumes of his autobiography Eden says Mintoff wanted £7 million for the coming financial year. See Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 389.

[2] CAB 129, CP(56)159, 28 June 1956, p. 3.

[3] CAB 128, CM(56)46th, 28 June 1956, pp. 6-7. The Cabinet also agreed that the UK should appoint a commission to examine Malta's financial needs and resources.

[4] CAB 128, CM(56)51st, 20 July 1956, p. 7.

friction, partly because of Mintoff's volatile character, but also because he might feel it necessary to make nationalistic gestures to maintain public support for a policy of wage restraint and relating living standards to Malta's economic capacity. Although Lennox-Boyd concluded by saying that Britain must have an alternative plan in case the integration plan broke down, he was unable to offer one that would meet Britain's defence needs and be acceptable to Malta.[1] Nevertheless, at least defence issues were now being addressed, and awareness was being shown of the need for a contingency plan, as well as an attempt to coordinate defence policy and Maltese policy.

Financial aid was not the only disputed issue. In August Lennox-Boyd informed the Cabinet that there were disagreements over consultation on defence measures, control of the rediffusion service, and the composition and terms of reference of the proposed Economic Commission.[2] As often happened economic concerns produced a dispute between the CO and the Treasury. Although Lennox-Boyd suggested that if concessions were not made on the terms of reference, Mintoff would refuse to cooperate with the Commission, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury said that Mintoff's draft terms of reference were unacceptable. The Cabinet agreed that it was important to avoid a breach with Malta at present, and invited Lennox-Boyd to consult the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, and then tell Malta what the government's views were on the terms of reference.[3] Unfortunately, the records do not make clear what these views were or whether a compromise was reached.[4]

The last Cabinet discussion of Malta in 1956 took place in September when ministers discussed the CoS report on Malta's strategic significance. This document concluded that the loss of defence facilities in Egypt and the Levant had increased Malta's strategic value, which was likely to increase further rather than decrease in the near future. Although other bases were available in Gibraltar, Cyprus and Libya, no single base could meet the requirements of all three services. No ministers dissented from the report's conclusion that it was still important to have Malta as a naval base, because of the extent to which British strategic interests still centred on

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[1] CAB 129, CP(56)169, 13 July 1956, pp. 103.

[2] Malta Rediffusion provided the island's broadcasting service. Britain wanted to use it to warn fishermen to keep out of the path of the flying boats which were being used to evacuate British civilians from Egypt to Malta. Mintoff responded by temporarily shutting down the service. See Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 390.

[3] CAB 128, CM(56)59th, 14 August 1956, pp. 7-8.

[4] The Economic Commission was eventually appointed in September 1956 to examine the Maltese government's budget proposals. On the basis of the Commission's reports the UK agreed to provide financial assistance of £5.66 million for 1956-57 and £6.077 million for 1957-58. See *The Colonial Territories, 1956-57*, p. 44.

the Mediterranean.[1] This conclusion would mean that Britain would have even less room to manoeuvre and so policy was likely to become even more reactive.

Although Suez pushed Malta off the Cabinet's agenda for the rest of the year, it also led to Malta being discussed by a number of other committees. One of the tasks of the Defence (Transition) Committee, an official committee, chaired by the ubiquitous Brook, was the imposition of censorship, and it asked the CO to establish what practical or political difficulties would be involved in establishing a system of military censorship in Malta.[2] The difficulty proved to be that legislation would be required before any measures beyond postal and telegraph restrictions could be imposed, and any action taken by Britain that did not receive the support of Mintoff could provoke a constitutional crisis. The committee agreed that this danger needed to be weighed against the value of censorship which might not in any case be very effective, and that the MoD and CO should discuss with the Commander-in-Chief Middle East Land Forces the pros and cons of censorship in Malta. If censorship had to be imposed, the committee agreed that the idea should be tactfully put to Mintoff while he was still in London.[3]

Clearly anxious about this matter, the CO used the committee system to highlight its concerns. The main committee that dealt with the Suez crisis was the Egypt Committee, which has been described as acting as a kind of inner Cabinet.[4] A CO official informed the Defence (Transition) Committee that a copy of the CO's report on establishing censorship in Malta and Cyprus had been sent to the Egypt Committee.[5] There is no record of his own committee asking him to do this, so presumably he did so on his own initiative to ensure that the CO's concerns were brought to the attention of ministers.

After consultation, the military still felt that censorship in Malta was necessary. The committee decided that the constitutional hazards should again be explained, and that the MoD, in consultation with the Air Ministry, War Office and CO, should review the practical needs and difficulties of censorship in Malta.[6] It often seems that whenever the wishes of a department

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[1] CAB 128, CM(56)67th, 26 September 1956, p. 8.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/815, DTC(56)11th, 28 August 1956, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/815, DTC(56)12th, 7 September 1956, p. 1.
[4] See R. R. James, *Anthony Eden* (1986), p. 462. James claims that as a result of the nationalization of the Suez Canal a new Whitehall structure was created, citing as evidence the establishment of what became the Egypt Committee, of a new sub-committee of the Economic Policy Committee and of the Defence (Transition) Committee. However, a list of Cabinet committees contained in the PRO's CAB 1-21 class list shows that this last committee, and a number of its sub-committees, had been in existence from at least 1950. In any case the creation of a couple of committees does not constitute a new structure; that structure, the Cabinet committee system, was already in existence, and of course one of its features was that it could be changed as circumstances required. Furthermore, the new Egypt Committee did not exist in isolation; it became part of this existing structure, referring work to, and receiving reports from, already existing committees such as the Defence (Transition) Committee.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/815, DTC(56)12th, 7 September 1956, p. 1.
[6] PRO, CAB 134/815, DTC(56)14th, 14 September 1956, p. 1.

came up against any awkward military reality or necessity, the military view prevailed. This was exactly what happened in this case. When the MoD representative said that censorship was indeed required in Malta, and that the Governor of Malta should therefore now discuss the necessary arrangements with Maltese ministers, there was no further debate; the committee simply asked the CO to arrange for the discussions to take place.[1]

Following Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, the Defence (Transition) Committee discussed the evacuation of those Maltese who lived in Egypt. The plan was that evacuees of UK origin would be brought back to Britain, and those of Mediterranean origin would be sent to Cyprus pending their final repatriation.[2] However, at a later meeting the FO suggested that these Maltese should be persuaded to stay because there was no guarantee that Egypt would allow them to return, and in any case they were in far less danger than UK based British subjects. The committee agreed to this with no CO dissension.[3]

This committee established two sub-committees, one to arrange the reception in the UK of British subjects evacuated from Egypt, the other to deal with the evacuation from Egypt and the reception arrangements in Cyprus and Malta.[4] Both these sub-committees discussed Malta frequently, because the Maltese government was reluctant to offer even staging facilities for Maltese evacuees and refused to accept any permanently. Although political expediency demanded that Britain needed to make arrangements to receive in the UK any Maltese who wanted to leave Egypt, and that those arrangements should not appear to discriminate in favour of evacuees of UK origin, the worry was that the end result would be that Britain would have to accept more refugees. This concern led the committee to ask for a ministerial decision on what policy to adopt, and to prepare a paper for the parent committee.[5] Committees could therefore provide a convenient way of passing the buck.

At the next meeting of the Reception of British Subjects from Egypt Sub-Committee, the CO opposed any form of discrimination between British subjects, and in response it was argued that open entry to Britain could lead to Maltese coming to Britain just to improve their economic prospects.[6] The parent committee's discussions of the sub-committee's report show that basically Britain wanted to discriminate against Maltese refugees, but did not want to be seen to be doing so. No CO objection to this was recorded; the committee just went on to discuss the best way of ensuring that Britain received as few Maltese refugees as possible.[7]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/815, DTC(56)15th, 18 September 1956, p. 2.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/815, DTC(56)8th, 17 August 1956, p. 4.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/815, DTC(56)11th, 28 August 1956, p. 1.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1652, DTC(RB)(56)1, 11 December 1956, p. 1.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/1652, DTC(RB)(56)1st, 10 December 1956, p. 2.
[6] PRO, CAB 134/1652, DTC(RB)(56)2nd, 17 December 1956, p. 2.
[7] PRO, CAB 134/815, DTC(56)29th, 19 December 1956, pp. 1-2.

These three bodies show the coordinating function of the committee system when dealing with cross-departmental issues, especially matters which were emergencies, which by their nature were unlikely to be issues that could be dealt with by a single department. They also illustrate the interconnections between committees and the way certain basic administrative tasks were delegated to sub-committees. Furthermore, they provide evidence that the CO did not always stand up for colonial interests, a point which shows the position of the CO within government; it was expected to represent the interests of the colonies, yet at the same time it was after all a department of the British government, and as such it is difficult to see how it could have pushed for anything that would damage British interests.

Issues could assume a very different shape at committee level from the one they had at Cabinet level. During 1956 at Cabinet level integration appeared to be almost all about economic equivalence, whereas at committee level much time was spent on the question of future departmental responsibility, a problem which became increasingly tangled up with the wider issue of the constitutional future of the smaller colonies. The difficulties caused by the conference recommendation that responsibility for Malta should be transferred to the Home Office seem in many ways to foreshadow the eventual collapse of the integration proposals. When the CPC considered this matter Lennox-Boyd suggested that the transfer was part of the broader question of future ministerial responsibility for territories gaining full internal self-government within the Commonwealth, and that this whole issue should be examined by officials from the departments most closely involved. The committee, however, agreed that there was not yet any need to take a decision; the justification for this being that no decision was required until after completion of the other constitutional changes recommended by the conference.[1] This tendency to avoid taking a decision whenever possible was a constant feature of the system. There seemed to be no dynamic in the system to ensure that decisions were made.

Lennox-Boyd's attempt to link the issue of departmental responsibility for Malta to a wider issue was not particularly helpful. The question of the constitutional development of the smaller colonies had already been considered on a number of occasions, albeit without any firm conclusions being reached, and to suggest that officials go over it again at this juncture seems pointless, not least because the government already had difficulties enough in dealing with Malta, and to suggest that it should be considered in the context of another intractable matter, rather than in its own right, could only complicate the problem.

Both the Home Office and the CO examined this question and each submitted a memorandum to the official CPC. These papers show the type of practical implications of

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(56)6th, 6 February 1956, p. 6.

policy proposals which the committee system dealt with. Both departments had strong but opposing views on departmental responsibility. The CO considered that a territory that was represented in Parliament should not remain under its jurisdiction, and pointed out that both the main Maltese political parties would find continued CO control unacceptable. The Home Office argued that Maltese representation at Westminster did not mean that the island would become part of the UK, and that in any case it had neither the staff, facilities, nor experience to take on responsibility for Malta. Nevertheless, the general feeling of the committee was that it would be difficult to keep Malta under the authority of the CO once representation at Westminster had been granted.[1]

The discussion then moved on to the broader picture, when one member suggested that a new secretary of state post could be created for those colonies that had reached an advanced state of constitutional development. Another official pointed out that such an arrangement could lead to demands for Westminster representation from other colonies when they achieved a similar state of constitutional development, whereas assigning Malta to the Home Office would emphasize its uniqueness, and also demonstrate the government's intention to make integration a practical reality. Summing up, Brook said that the political case for taking Malta from the CO, and of emphasising its special position, was a strong one, and that because of the Home Office's existing responsibility for the Channel Islands it was the most suitable department. He added, however, that it was not yet necessary to make a firm recommendation to ministers on this and the committee agreed to discuss the matter again at a later meeting.[2] Yet again there was a reluctance to take a decision. At best this could be a sensible prioritisation of work, but it sometimes seemed that a decision was only taken when there was no choice but to do so.

Perhaps the relative ease with which the CO appears to have had its case accepted was not only due to the logic of its position, but also because of the influence of the overseas departments on this committee. The Home Office officials present, Sir Frank Newsam, was an outsider, its three permanent members were drawn from the CO, FO and CRO, and Brook took a keen interest in colonial policy. In the event, however, the breakdown of the integration proposals meant that this matter did not have to be pursued.

The difficulties integration posed were all too apparent when Malta was discussed for the last time that year. The problem of economic equivalence, up to now the province of the

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1203, CA(O)(56)4th, 1 June 1956, p. 1. The official CPC discussed Malta at three of the four meetings it held in 1956. At the first two meetings officials discussed a CO memorandum on the implications of Maltese representation at Westminster. Unfortunately the minutes do not give any information on these discussions - they simply say that a number of amendments were agreed on. See PRO, CAB 134/1203, CA(O)(56)1st, 30 January 1956 and PRO, CAB 134/1203, CA(O)(56)2nd, 4 February 1956.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1203, CA(O)(56)4th, 1 June 1956, pp. 1-2.

Cabinet, was discussed by the ministerial CPC. The Lord Chancellor, the Chancellor and the Home Secretary were 'also present' at this meeting. Ministers considered a paper by Lennox-Boyd in which he proposed a compromise formula for economic equivalence along the lines that it was the aim of both governments to develop the Maltese economy, so as to achieve economic equivalence so far as this would be practicable and in Malta's interest; that the Maltese government would make every effort to improve productivity; and that Britain would provide assistance, taking into account its own financial ability.[1]

Macmillan opposed this idea, and proposed that the maximum amount of aid Britain would be prepared to give should be made clear from the start. He suggested that the integration bill should state the amount of Britain's contribution to Malta's budget over a period such as five years, define the criteria for assessing future levels of aid, and provide machinery for the settlement of this. In such provision, he argued, the 'vague generality' of economic equivalence would be out of place.[2]

After discussion the committee approved Macmillan's suggestion, and asked him to draw up financial provisions in consultation with Lennox-Boyd.[3] Perhaps one reason why the CPC came down on Macmillan's side was that Lennox-Boyd seemed lacking in confidence about his own proposals. His whole attitude to economic equivalence seems inconsistent and self-deluding. He seems to have initially persuaded himself that when Mintoff requested economic equivalence he was not expecting real economic parity, or if he was then he could be persuaded to moderate his demands. By the time it became clear that Mintoff was intent on getting real economic equality, Lennox-Boyd was in the position of trying to square the circle. Thanks to British strategic needs and to Maltese political aspirations, he was promoting a policy - to which he had no alternative - that had at its core an unacceptable demand.

IV. MINTOFF AND INTEGRATION: IMPASSE

Although talks resumed in February 1957, they ended without result in April after they became deadlocked over economic equivalence. Britain then proposed a five-year interim arrangement, but this suggestion was received with little enthusiasm by the Maltese government. By June Britain felt that Mintoff might be more flexible about economic equivalence and that discussions could perhaps be resumed; informal talks with the Maltese

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1202, CA(56)32, 15 November 1956, p. 5.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1201, CA(56)39th, 20 December 1956, pp. 1-2.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Attorney-General seemed to support this assumption. Further talks started in October but ended in November without agreement. December saw a more confrontational atmosphere developing. First Mintoff resigned, but then withdrew his resignation, and then the Maltese Legislature passed a resolution declaring that if Britain would not guarantee alternative employment for any dockyard workers made redundant, Malta would be released from any obligations it had to Britain. The deteriorating situation led the Governor to visit London in January for guidance, and Mintoff to visit in March for yet more futile talks.

Just before the initial resumption of the talks in February 1957, the CPC met to consider the general framework within which the discussions should be conducted. The constitutional aspects caused no problem; these envisaged a legislature with wide-ranging powers to make laws for all matters other than defence, external affairs and the operation of civil aircraft, and left all matters of interpretation to Britain. The committee noted them with approval.[1]

Predictably, the financial aspects of the proposed integration bill caused disagreement. The attitude of the Chancellor, Peter Thorneycroft, was implacably hostile; direct taxation of Malta by Parliament would be impossible in the foreseeable future, nothing should be done to imply acceptance of the idea of economic equivalence, and UK assistance should be by means of a quinquennial block grant. In response, Lennox-Boyd offered the bland observation that although no guarantee of economic equivalence should be given, it was reasonable to recognize this as a natural aspiration that the Maltese should be encouraged to obtain in the fullness of time. He felt that a formula along these lines would be worth trying, and would not adversely affect the amount of economic aid Britain might be asked to provide in the future.[2]

Kilmuir, by far the most enthusiastic ministerial proponent of integration, suggested that the statements about UK aid in the report of the Round-Table Conference were perfectly reasonable; they referred to the attainment of economic equivalence as difficult to envisage at the present time, and emphasized the need for a clear understanding about the maximum level of UK assistance. However, Thorneycroft's hostility to economic equivalence was uncompromising; he said it was an impossible idea and that it would be irresponsible to arouse unrealizable expectations. Furthermore, if Malta's importance as a naval base was reduced then Britain's financial responsibilities would become even larger. Because of this intractable disagreement all the committee could do was agree that Thorneycroft and Lennox-Boyd should consider the matter further and raise it in the Cabinet if necessary.[3]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)4th, 8 February 1957, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

As chairman, Kilmuir had considerable influence and often used his summing up to support the CO's position, but this influence had to be used carefully. He had to take into account not just the extent of disagreement in the committee; the source of the opposition was perhaps even more important. There was little Kilmuir could do when there was outright disagreement between Lennox-Boyd and Thorneycroft, and indeed little likelihood of the CPC being able to resolve such a dispute.

An *ad hoc* committee had to be established to discuss the problem of economic equivalence, because relatively early on in the talks it had become clear that Mintoff was unwilling to accept Britain's latest offer. The extent of the doubts some ministers had about the whole project was made clear when one unnamed minister argued that the impossibility of achieving economic parity, and the fact that Britain could not face the expense of increasing Maltese incomes to the much higher level which would be required, meant that there might be 'some illogicality' in offering Malta political integration.[1]

The CO used this committee to try and take the initiative, and had a revised formula prepared. Taking his cue from Lennox-Boyd's suggestion at the CPC meeting a couple of weeks earlier, Perth proposed that the government should support the ultimate aim of comparable standards of living, but that both governments should agree that this would take a long time to achieve, and that special arrangements would be needed in the meantime to improve the Maltese economy. At the end of a specified period the Maltese government would be allowed to ask for their economy to become an integral part of the UK, which would involve changes in Maltese taxation and social services contributions. However, Malta and Britain would agree that this development would only be appropriate if and when the level of both countries' economies became comparable.[2]

Although the committee agreed to this formula, it held little appeal for the Maltese government. One flaw with the sort of compromises that could emerge when there was profound disagreement on a Cabinet committee was that they could be so insubstantial as to be meaningless. In the attempt to find a compromise that both the Treasury and the CO could agree on, the question of Maltese agreement seems to have been overlooked.

The consultations between Lennox-Boyd and Thorneycroft produced more substantial proposals. Lennox-Boyd reported to the Cabinet that the parity Mintoff had proposed would cost Britain about £20-£30 million a year, and that he and the Chancellor had now agreed on more realistic counter proposals - which the Cabinet later approved - involving expenditure of

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/122, GEN 575/1st, 25 February 1957, p. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*.

£6 million a year for a five-year period.[1] £5 million a year of this sum would go on a capital programme to increase productivity, and about £900,000 a year would be spent on health, education and social welfare. In addition, Britain would recognize that a review of this arrangement might be necessary if changes in defence policy resulted in Malta having a higher level of unemployment than Britain for six consecutive months.[2]

These new proposals made little difference to the talks; the stumbling block was still economic parity. On 17 April Lennox-Boyd reported to the Cabinet that the negotiations were deadlocked, and recommended that the government should now consider the possibility of accomplishing integration in stages, with a review of the situation at the end of a five-year period.[3] This proposal seems a curious one, given that in a memorandum Lennox-Boyd had said that Mintoff had rejected the economic proposals, arguing that it was unfair to expect Malta to accept a permanent constitutional solution when the financial proposals amounted to a five-year trial period. Nevertheless, he suggested this staged scheme, which would offer financial assistance and constitutional advance, although without representation at Westminster for the time being.[4] Kilmuir, showing in the Cabinet the enthusiasm for integration which he had already demonstrated in the CPC, said that it would be unwise to reject any opportunity of encouraging a dependent territory to develop closer ties. Macmillan took the lead, and succeeded in getting the Cabinet to agree that Lennox-Boyd should arrange for the proposals to be examined by officials and then by the ministerial Malta Committee.[5]

There was no immediate resumption of talks. In May the ministerial Malta Committee discussed, as Macmillan had requested, Lennox-Boyd's new proposals. Lennox-Boyd argued that refusing any constitutional change would unite all Maltese political parties against Britain, and that abandoning the prospect of integration might lead to Malta unilaterally declaring independence, a move that would have a damaging affect on world opinion and might lead to an unsatisfactory defence agreement. Although the discussion produced general agreement that the new proposals were worth trying, Thorneycroft, as always, took a negative view and argued against the proposals without contributing anything constructive. He did not want any proposals to be set in the context of ultimate economic equivalence, and opposed the initiative being handed to an independent commission at the end of the five-year trial period. He argued that it would be best to revert to the 1955 proposals on Malta's social and economic development, and couple them with a brief statement on the financial arrangements Britain was now prepared to

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[1] CAB 128, CC(57)23rd, 25 March 1957, p. 7.
[2] CAB 129, C(57)76, 21 March 1957, p. 2.
[3] CAB 128, CC(57)35th, 17 April 1957, p. 5.
[4] CAB 129, C(57)98, 16 April 1957, p. 1.
[5] CAB 128, CC(57)35th, 17 April 1957, pp. 5-6.

offer. Thorneycroft got his way with little opposition from Lennox-Boyd, perhaps another indication that the latter had little confidence in his own proposals. It was agreed that the preamble to the proposed agreement should just affirm that the UK and Malta desired closer association, and that Lennox-Boyd should consider whether all references to the establishment of an independent commission could be excluded.[1]

The effect of changes in defence policy on employment in Malta complicated matters. Yet again the government seemed to think that to offer less than what had already been rejected was a way of reopening discussions. The First Lord of the Admiralty opposed the six month formula on unemployment because the dockyard workforce might have to be reduced by as much as fifty percent, and he did not want the implementation of this to be threatened by any undertaking on employment. In other words Britain wanted to withdraw this offer now that there was an increasing chance that its qualifying conditions might be fulfilled. The committee agreed that the revised offer should not relate the level of unemployment in Malta to that in Britain, and asked Lennox-Boyd to prepare, in the light of the discussion, draft proposals for consideration by the Cabinet on 6 May.[2]

At this meeting Lennox-Boyd suggested to his colleagues that Mintoff should be offered a choice between the constitutional proposals put forward during the recent negotiations and the five-year interim arrangement. One reason for the government's confidence that negotiations could be resumed on this basis was that Malta's lessening strategic importance - signalled by the recently published Defence White Paper - made them feel that Britain was regaining the whip hand; hence in discussion it was suggested that the impact of defence cuts should make Malta accept the new offer. This bullish mood is confirmed by the further statement that there was no point in sacrificing those defence savings by giving economic concessions to Malta. Ministers approved Lennox-Boyd's proposals.[3]

Two days later the Malta Committee discussed a draft letter to Mintoff setting out the new proposals. Most of the discussion was about unemployment measures, during which Lennox-Boyd was more assertive in standing up for Maltese interests than he had been in the Cabinet. He insisted it was important that the defence departments should produce as soon as

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(57)1st, 3 May 1957, pp. 1-2.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

[3] CAB 128, CC(57)38th, 6 May 1957, p. 7. During a visit to Malta the Minister of Defence, Duncan Sandys, told Mintoff that Malta's strategic importance had diminished, and if wages and costs rose there then it would become more economical to rely on British dockyards. See PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(57)1st, 3 May 1957, p. 2. The 1957 Defence White Paper had outlined a policy based on nuclear weapons and a small, well equipped mobile strategic reserve stationed in Britain. The main element of the Royal Navy would be a small number of carrier groups, and apart from carriers the number of large ships was to be restricted to the bare minimum. As a result naval power was of less importance and so Malta had become less valuable. See *Defence: Outline of Future Policy*, Command 124, April 1957.

possible a statement on Malta's future as a defence base for the Maltese government. He then urged that there should be prior consultations with Malta on the defence reductions there, and that every effort should be made to spread the reductions over as long a period as possible. Appealing to British self-interest, no doubt with the aim of getting Exchequer support, he added that to avoid heavy expenditure on unemployment benefit, it would be necessary to provide assistance to increase emigration and encourage alternative industries.[1]

The attitude of the Minister of Defence, Duncan Sandys, was uncompromising; Service Votes should not be used to subsidize employment which was not required for service needs, a point no one contested. Although the committee approved the draft letter, they did so on condition that a proposal to establish a special body to deal with unemployment should be removed, and that less emphasis should be placed on the previous offer of integration, although it should be made clear that it still remained open. Ministers also agreed that Mintoff should be told privately that the government was ready to accord Malta the status of one of the British Isles.[2]

At the end of May the Malta Committee met again: to discuss Mintoff's rejection of the proposals. Lennox-Boyd said that he did not feel that it would be right or proper to vary the terms of the offers, even though the Governor of Malta had informed him it was possible that all Maltese political parties would support a demand for independence; nobody disagreed and the committee spent the rest of the meeting discussing how to counter the misleading account of the negotiations that they feared Mintoff would publish in a forthcoming White Paper.[3]

When the Cabinet met the next day Perth informed ministers that as well as rejecting the integration proposals, Mintoff had said that the interim scheme was such a radical change that he would have to prepare a White Paper and consult the Maltese people. Perth reported that the Malta Committee wanted a delay in the production of this White Paper, so that Britain could publish its own simultaneously. He also informed the Cabinet that Malta's Governor considered the Maltese might now demand independence.[4]

In a tentatively phrased criticism of policy, one minister suggested that the five-year scheme was more likely to be regarded by public opinion as a reasonable response to the demand for economic equivalence if Britain took some definite action to promote Maltese economic development. Nevertheless, the general feeling of the Cabinet was similar to that of the Malta Committee; the decreased strategic reliance on Malta had strengthened Britain's hand.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(57)2nd, 8 May 1957, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(57)3rd, 28 May 1957, p. 1.
[4] CAB 128, CC(57)43rd, 29 May 1957, p. 7.

As a result, ministers agreed that if Mintoff adopted a policy of independence then the implications of Malta's reduced military significance should be made plain to him.[1]

Drift on the part of Britain and political posturing by Mintoff continued to characterize the issue. By June British complacency about the strength of its position, which perhaps encouraged Britain to misread signals, had helped foster a feeling that Mintoff might be prepared to be more flexible. Lennox-Boyd told the CPC that it appeared from approaches made by the Maltese Attorney-General that the Maltese government was willing to modify its insistence on a guarantee of economic equivalence, and would like a minister to visit Malta to clarify the government's proposals. The committee agreed in a rather piqued manner that this should not happen, because it was up to the Maltese to return to London to resume the talks they had broken off. However, ministers did agree that Kilmuir should meet the Attorney-General, and that any representations the latter made should be studied by officials, who should then report to the Malta Committee.[2]

The memorandum produced by officials reported that the Maltese government might be ready to agree to the integration proposals if there was some change in the wording of the statement on the policy objectives of the two governments, if UK social services aid was increased, and if an independent commission was established to report annually on what progress had been made on economic aims.[3]

Both Lennox-Boyd and Kilmuir took a positive approach to this development. The former was the more cautious of the two, however, saying that this approach should only be followed if Mintoff provided written evidence that he had abandoned his insistence on economic parity. Kilmuir was as enthusiastic as ever, and said that during the talks he had received the impression that the Maltese generally wanted to pursue the integration scheme, and that they had recognized that Britain could not undertake an unlimited commitment of a guarantee of economic equivalence within a fixed period.[4] Both Kilmuir and Lennox-Boyd seem quite self-deluding, and appeared to be unable to face up to the reality of the situation, perhaps because this would involve admitting how feeble and reactive government policy was.

Thorneycroft's response was equally predictable. He opposed further concessions because they would only lead to the Maltese making more demands. He felt that any revision of the statement of objectives could be read as implying a UK commitment to aiding the attainment of economic equivalence, and that an independent commission would push Britain further along such a path by making recommendations for increased financial assistance. He

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[1] CAB 128, CC(57)43rd, 29 May 1957, p. 7.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1555, CPC(57)10th, 20 June 1957, p. 3.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(57)4th, 5 July 1957, p. 1.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

also suggested that rather than increasing Britain's contribution towards health and education by £400,000 over a number of years, as Lennox-Boyd had recommended, any available funds should be used to encourage emigration and employment.[1]

Such an inflexible and narrow attitude, redolent of Lord Derby's exhortation that the purpose of the opposition was to oppose everything, seemed wilfully to ignore political factors, and made it unlikely that an offer that would stand a chance of being accepted by the Maltese would ever be formulated. Thorneycroft's argument about reserving any available funds may have made some sense in a narrow financial way, but politically the argument was nonsensical; Lennox-Boyd was being asked to resume negotiations with nothing new to offer, not even a relatively inexpensive goodwill gesture. All the committee was able to decide, however, was that the Maltese government should be informed that active consideration was being given to the suggestions made by their Attorney-General, because the extent of any concessions could not be determined until Britain's future policy on both Cyprus and Malta's naval installations had been more clearly established.[2] Unlike on other occasions, at least an awareness was being shown of the need to coordinate Maltese policy with defence policy.

The course of these discussions in the Cabinet and its committees suggests that there was something slightly unreal about this whole matter. That this was so was partly due to the government not yet appreciating that in many areas Britain was no longer making the running in policy, and also because nobody had any constructive ideas about what Britain could do in this situation, and a semblance of activity, however futile, conveniently disguised this fact.

When the committee later discussed the question of reopening negotiations, Lennox-Boyd was cautious about doing so but willing to try; Kilmuir was wholeheartedly enthusiastic, indeed uncritically so; but Thorneycroft was adamantly opposed. Little new emerged from the discussion. Lennox-Boyd said he thought it reasonable to go some way to meeting Maltese wishes regarding a reworded preamble, an economic commission and an increased contribution towards education. He added, presumably in attempt to mollify Thorneycroft, that Mintoff would have to declare in writing that he would not demand economic equivalence within a fixed period. In addition, he said that he would not make any commitments in discussions with Mintoff without first consulting his colleagues, although he stressed that he needed to be free to indicate that the government was willing to make some concessions. Thorneycroft responded that to agree to the three Maltese requests would only encourage them to make further demands. Sandys felt that the existing proposals were already very generous, and suggested that if necessary the Maltese government should be confronted with the implications of independence.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(57)4th, 5 July 1957, p. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*

Strategic arguments were then utilized to support the proposals. Lennox-Boyd said that getting a settlement was important at this juncture in the Mediterranean, and Kilmuir added that it was important for Britain's position in the Mediterranean not to reject Malta. After arguing that Britain should be receptive to the Maltese proposals, Kilmuir said the matter should now be referred to the Cabinet.[1]

Kilmuir's decision was in line with how the committee system was supposed to function: referring a matter to the Cabinet when it was the subject of a dispute between ministers that could not be resolved. Nevertheless, the fact that pointless discussions such as this one were held, where arguments were simply restated, shows that the system could encourage inefficiency because there seems to have been a reluctance to take disputes to the Cabinet.

When the Cabinet discussed this dispute Lennox-Boyd repeated his opinion that if Mintoff was prepared to give up on economic equivalence, Britain should be prepared to go some way towards meeting the Maltese requests. Thorneycroft softened his approach for the Cabinet; instead of truculently dismissing the proposals, he said that he had some doubts about reopening negotiations on this basis - in the committee he had been opposed to the reopening of negotiations full stop - because the proposed preamble could be interpreted as a guarantee of economic equivalence, and the Maltese would try and turn this implied guarantee into a reality. Kilmuir pointed out that the proposed revision to the preamble would not affect its substance, that the extra grant for education was relatively small, and that the proposed new commission would only have an advisory status. He also added that it was essential that the problem of Malta was considered in the context of the many difficulties which the Western powers were currently experiencing in the Mediterranean. Such an appeal to the military bottom line usually worked, and was perhaps one reason why the Cabinet authorized the resumption of negotiations along the lines proposed by Lennox-Boyd.[2] At the end of July he circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet saying that following talks with Mintoff, there was now a satisfactory basis on which to resume negotiations.[3]

In October the talks recommenced. At the beginning of November Perth informed the Malta Committee that the discussions had produced agreement on the broad principles upon which a new constitution and an integration bill would be based. Under the agreed new constitutional structure, Malta would have three MPs at Westminster and autonomy in all matters except defence and external affairs. On the economic side, it had already been agreed that after a twelve or fifteen-year period Malta could request that its economy became an

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(57)5th, 17 July 1957, pp. 1-3.
[2] CAB 128, CC(57)55th, 19 July 1957, p. 6.
[3] CAB 129, C(57)183, 30 July 1957, p. 1.

integral part of the British economy. Perth acknowledged that there were some difficulties, of British and Commonwealth opinion, as well as of substance; nevertheless he felt that the balance of advantage lay in agreeing to Malta becoming part of the UK.[1]

Butler, now Home Secretary, was worried that the negotiations might be running ahead of the development of British public and political opinion, and thought that it would not be easy to get acceptance of Maltese representation at Westminster, especially when under the proposed arrangements Malta would be able to impose tariffs on British goods and refuse entry to British citizens. He suggested that some less formal association between the two countries might be possible, but nobody took him up on this. The meeting finished with Kilmuir 'summing up' - or more accurately stating his own opinion rather than reflecting the course of the discussion - that although the difficulties of integration were outweighed by the advantages, the matter should be further examined and then brought to the Cabinet.[2]

It became apparent at a Cabinet meeting the following week that the negotiations were not going as well as Perth liked to believe they were. Macmillan expressed his concern that in making more financial demands Mintoff was trying to get a pretext to break off the talks, and asked for a statement of Britain's position to be prepared for incorporation into a letter to Mintoff.[3] Certainly, it would be best for Mintoff if he could present the talks as breaking down due to British intransigence, rather than them ending with him failing yet again to achieve his aims. Another motivation could have been that independence now seemed a more viable option to Mintoff, because the British connection was becoming of less financial value thanks to defence economies.

A week later the Cabinet discussed a memorandum by Lennox-Boyd which emphatically concluded that 'it is both necessary and desirable that the fullest and most explicit expression should be given in the new arrangements to Malta's equality of status with us'.[4] After discussing various ways of giving Malta equality of status with the UK, the Cabinet only asked for a further memorandum. Lennox-Boyd then pointed out that Malta's dependence on service expenditure was unsatisfactory and the Cabinet agreed that the problem should be further examined.[5] This issue was not, however, resolved and would later cause great difficulties. The

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(57)6th, 1 November 1957, pp. 1-2.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
[3] CAB 128, CC(57)78th, 6 November 1957, p. 3.
[4] CAB 129, C(57)262, 15 November 1957, p. 4.
[5] CAB 128, CC(57)80th, 14 November 1957, p. 5. The additional memorandum was prepared by the Home Secretary in consultation with the Colonial Secretary, the Commonwealth Secretary and the Law Officers. The Cabinet discussion of it is not very enlightening because it focuses on very narrow legal procedures and technicalities. See CAB 128, CC(57)84th, 12 December 1957, p. 7.

committee system does not appear to have been very good at anticipating problems, a shortcoming that was probably a manifestation of the fact that policy was so reactive.

In March 1958 Mintoff was back in London for yet more talks, and as always the stumbling block was economic aid. Lennox-Boyd told the Cabinet that Mintoff would probably ask whether integration was still government policy, and would try to make it dependent on Malta getting an unacceptable amount of economic aid. If Britain rejected this approach it was likely Mintoff would hold a general election on the basis of independence for Malta. Such a development would threaten Britain's strategic interests and the government would therefore have no option but to suspend Malta's constitution. Lennox-Boyd, however, went on to suggest, in another bout of groundless optimism, that Mintoff might be more conciliatory and accept a reduction in Britain's contribution to Malta's budget, and agree to Britain's stipulation that the Maltese Legislative Assembly should withdraw the 'no obligations' resolution. In response to the suggestion that this resolution justified Britain abandoning the integration plan, it was pointed out that the failure should be seen to be Mintoff's, and that in any case it was best to avoid integration becoming an issue in the talks because Conservative MPs were deeply divided over this issue. Macmillan said the negotiations should be conducted so that the project would not appear to founder on the reduced contribution to Malta's budget, and so that Mintoff would be convinced that recent events had shaken British confidence in him. If Mintoff wanted to proceed with integration, he should be asked for a written statement of how he would cooperate with the British government on economic and constitutional development.[1]

It is clear that by this time the talks were about little more than one side manoeuvring to make the other side appear responsible for them breaking down. This fact underlines the essential futility of the various integration talks. Britain had no alternative to offer to the integration proposals, and given the strategic significance of Malta, was afraid to spurn approaches lest Malta demand independence. Mintoff, for his part, would not want to be seen to be responsible for the breakdown of the talks, in case the whole project then came to be seen as a serious miscalculation on his part.

A week later Lennox-Boyd reported to the Cabinet that Mintoff had rejected the offer of a working party to consider how to deal with unemployment within the framework of the proposed economic and financial arrangements. In addition, Mintoff was again insisting that integration implied full economic equivalence, and that until this was achieved Malta should have the right to reject integration and declare independence. The Cabinet readily agreed that this demand was unacceptable.[2] The very next day Lennox-Boyd informed the Cabinet that

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[1] CAB 128, CC(58)21st, 11 March 1958, p. 3.
[2] CAB 128, CC(58)24th, 18 March 1958, p. 5.

Mintoff now seemed willing to compromise, especially over his demand for economic equivalence.[1] In the end, however, the talks failed.

The next Cabinet meeting showed the committee system acting as it was supposed to; the Cabinet took a decision on a major matter, and then arranged for a committee to examine certain aspects of it. Lennox-Boyd told his Cabinet colleagues that Olivier and his party were unlikely to support Mintoff's intransigent attitude. The latter had now sent a letter saying that the budget decrease was unacceptable, and that if financial resources were not increased then they would be exhausted by April and he would be compelled to resign. Lennox-Boyd felt that Mintoff would try and create financial and administrative chaos and blame this on Britain, and perhaps was hoping that Britain would suspend the constitution, which would extricate him from the difficult political situation he had created for himself. The Cabinet agreed that the budget could not be increased, and asked the Chancellor, Derick Heathcoat Amory, to consult with Lennox-Boyd, and then arrange for officials to consider what advice the Governor of Malta should be given if Mintoff sought to precipitate a financial crisis. The Cabinet also asked the ministerial CPC to consider what advice should be given to the Governor if a constitutional crisis arose.[2] Once again contingency plans were not being prepared until the last minute.

During this period Malta was discussed as often by the Cabinet as it was by its committees. The fact that this was so was not, however, a sign of the committee system being inefficient; rather, it indicates how important an issue Malta was, and the level of disagreement there was between ministers, particularly between the Colonial Secretary and the Chancellor. Although the ministerial CPC only dealt with Malta on two occasions, this was before the ministerial Malta Committee was reconstituted, and because neither the Home Secretary nor the Chancellor were members of the CPC, and Malta was of considerable interest to both of them. The extent of Treasury interest is underlined by the fact that when the Malta Committee was reconstituted, the Treasury representative was changed from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to the Chancellor himself.[3] Another significant change in membership was that the Defence Secretary became a member for the first time; given Malta's strategic significance it is surprising that he did not sit on the committee from the very beginning.

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[1] CAB 128, CC(58)25th, 19 March 1958, p. 4.

[2] CAB 128, CC(58)26th, 27 March 1958, pp. 4-5.

[3] In a note sent to Lennox-Boyd at the end of 1958, Macmillan said that Malta's problems usually went to the Cabinet because most of them required the presence of the Chancellor. See PRO, PREM 11/4117, Macmillan to Lennox-Boyd, 14 November 1958.

V. FROM DIRECT RULE TO SELF-GOVERNMENT

The deteriorating situation reached it nadir in April. The Maltese government resigned over the issue of the level of UK aid needed during the period required to hold a general election, although after Olivier refused to form a temporary government, Mintoff agreed to carry on in a caretaker capacity. After disturbances broke out Mintoff refused to authorize police action to control the riots, leading the Governor to accept Mintoff's resignation. A general strike was immediately called, and at the end of April the Governor declared a state of emergency; this enabled him to carry on the routine business of government without ministers and gave him additional power to secure law and order.

Three months later announcements were made in Parliament that Maltese political parties would be invited to talks on future constitutional arrangements, and that the Malta naval dockyard would be converted into a commercial yard. The promised talks started in London in November and ended without agreement the following month. The next year saw direct rule resumed when an interim constitution, providing for the administration of Malta by the Governor with the assistance of a nominated executive council, was established. At the end of 1959 Macleod visited Malta for discussions with the various political parties, the following year a constitutional commission was appointed, and in 1961 a new constitution was established along the lines of the commission's recommendations.

A policy vacuum existed following the end of the talks in March 1958, because of the collapse of the integration scheme and the absence of any British contingency plans. When the ministerial Malta Committee met at the beginning of May, Lennox-Boyd said that two decisions needed to be made. Firstly, the government needed to decide whether it should try and work with Mintoff, or oppose him with all means possible. Secondly, the government needed to decide whether or not to hold an early general election. Doing so would disarm Mintoff's criticism that Britain was exploiting events to resume direct rule, but he did not think it would be wise to hold elections until law and order was fully restored. Finally, there was the question of independence. If it was decided in view of the CoS's review of Malta's strategic value that it was impossible to grant independence, then the government would need to decide if it should make a statement on this before any election was held in Malta; the danger of doing so was that the result might be to increase support for Mintoff's integration proposals.[1]

Three main points were made in discussion. It was argued that experience elsewhere suggested that it would be unwise to make an outright declaration against independence, and

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(58)2nd, 6 May 1958, p. 1.

that further thought should be given to the possible consequence of such a move, for example, Britain might have to consider placing the external defence of Malta under some form of international control, perhaps through NATO. A minister then proposed that deferring elections for a year might give time for the economic consequences of independence to be brought home to the Maltese. The situation finished with the suggestion that it might be that the economic needs of the Maltese far outweighed the island's strategic value, so long as the Maltese did not place themselves in the hands of a hostile power. The only outcome of this discussion was that Lennox-Boyd was asked to examine the points which had been raised.[1] The general impression from this discussion is that ministers were at a loss for ideas and were desperately trying to convince themselves that the government had some initiatives to offer. There was no acknowledgement that Mintoff was the one making the running.

The next significant discussion of Malta took place not in the Malta Committee but in the CPC when it discussed the question of UK financial aid for Malta. Macmillan, who did not officially resume the chairmanship of this committee until December 1958, chaired this meeting. The Governor had asked that Britain should still honour the offer of financial assistance made in the context of proposed integration (£25 million pounds over five years for capital development together with percentage grants for social services) and that he should be given the freedom to spend up to £500,000 of the £25 million during the current financial year, in addition to the £5 million pounds already provided for 1958-59. He also wanted the capital required for the conversion of the dockyard to be additional to the £25 million.[2]

Unusually, the CO was the department that opposed the financial proposals. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, John Profumo, said he was not sure whether the sum requested for the present financial year was justified, because a CO official who had recently visited Malta considered that it should only be given an extra £300,000. More usually, the Chancellor was uncooperative, reserving his position both on the £25 million, until details of the projects proposed were worked out, and on the dockyard capital proposal.[3]

Macmillan was more responsive, because he thought it politically important that Britain should demonstrate that its direct rule was superior to that of Mintoff. Nevertheless, he felt that the scope and purpose of the Governor's proposals needed further clarification, and said that the CPC should be given full details of Malta's financial position and expenditure, so that it could properly consider the Governor's proposals.[4]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(58)2nd, 6 May 1958, p. 2.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1557, CPC(58)12th, 28 August 1958, p. 2. In July it had been announced that the naval dockyard would be converted into a commercial yard. See *The Colonial Territories, 1958-59*, p. 47.

[3] PRO, CAB 134/1557, CPC(58)12th, 28 August 1958, p. 2.

[4] *Ibid.*

However, the CPC did not undertake this assessment because an *ad hoc* committee was established for this purpose. Given that there were already two committees, the CPC and the Malta Committee, which seemed suitable to deal with this matter, the setting up of an *ad hoc* committee seems strange. It could be that the CPC already had a heavy workload, or was not considered suitable because the Admiralty was not represented on it. Similarly, the Malta Committee might not have been thought suitable because the FO and the CRO were represented on it. However, it could be that the main reason the matter was discussed by an *ad hoc* committee was because Macmillan wanted to keep this matter under close control.

The *ad hoc* committee discussed a joint memorandum by the Chancellor and Perth which outlined the Governor's proposals, to which the Treasury had agreed. This seems a remarkable victory for Maltese interests, especially considering that not even the CO was convinced that the £500,000 for the current year was justified. But, in discussion a minister pointed out that if the dockyard expenditure was added to the costs of the other measures envisaged, this would mean expenditure of £9 million per year for two years, a scale of expenditure that would likely be impracticable because of the physical limitations of the Maltese Public Works Department, and the likelihood that the demand for labour created by this size of expenditure would cause inflation.[1] This was an unusual situation because usually it was the Treasury which took the economic hard line.

Summing up, but in effect putting his own interpretation on the meeting, Macmillan said that Britain should concentrate on those measures that could be taken in the near future, and that the Governor should be assured that provision would be made in the Estimates so he could start the capital projects he had in mind. The Governor should also produce a detailed development scheme, and this should be considered along with the dockyard scheme so that the order of implementation could be decided. Macmillan finished by saying that Britain needed to be able to demonstrate during the forthcoming talks that it was taking a positive approach, and that after doing so it would be politically more feasible to consider longer-term remedies for the problems of the Maltese economy.[2] Macmillan seems to have been concerned with policy presentation and, although cautious about expenditure, did not want Malta to become more of a problem than it already was. The general impression given by Macmillan's attitude to Malta is that he was determined to keep this matter on a tight rein, not because he was particularly interested in Malta *per se*, but because he seems to have regarded such colonial matters as an annoying distraction and wanted to prevent them developing into major problems.

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[1] PRO, CAB 130/153, GEN 664/1st, 5 September 1958, pp. 1-2. The Treasury, FO, CRO, CO, MoD and Admiralty were the departments represented at this meeting.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

The Malta Committee met in November because constitutional talks were due to start in London that month. Lennox-Boyd told ministers that in these discussions he intended proposing an interim constitution whose terms would be reviewed in five years time or sooner if circumstances justified it. The constitution would contain some of the features of the integration constitution which had been rejected by the Maltese government, and also protection for members of the police and other public servants against victimization by any future elected Maltese government. Apart from the latter measure and one or two other items, particularly defence, which would be reserved to the UK, as much as possible of the island's administration would be devolved to an elected Maltese government. However, Lennox-Boyd felt that the prospects of success were not great because it was likely that both the Malta Labour Party and the Nationalist Party would press for independence, and this could not be granted in the present circumstances. It was not thought that there was much chance of serious trouble breaking out in Malta if the talks broke down, and it was likely that the majority of the population would be content to accept a period of direct rule.[1]

The talks failed, which was hardly surprising given that the new proposals were based on the ones Mintoff had rejected in March. These talks underline just how much at a loss Britain was when it came to developing policy for Malta. Mintoff demanded independence immediately or by 1962, Olivier wanted more precise assurances on Malta's eventual position within the Commonwealth than Britain felt able to give, and both objected to the constitutional safeguards for the police and public service. [2]

There was, however, a glimmer of slightly more constructive thinking. When Lennox-Boyd reported to the Cabinet on the discussions, he started by suggesting that British interests lay in making the best possible arrangements for a period of direct rule because it was unlikely that an agreed form of constitution could be evolved at this stage. He then proposed that Britain should suggest that if at some stage the island could say that it was financially self-supporting, it would then be regarded as a 'Dominion'. Although one minister warned that any new form of Dominion status would need careful consideration, the Cabinet asked Lennox-Boyd to consult with the Commonwealth Secretary on a possible statement on Malta's future status.[3]

Making the arrangements for direct rule involved the introduction of several pieces of legislation. One difficulty, as Lennox-Boyd told a meeting of the CPC, was that under the existing constitution a session of the Legislative Assembly had to be held at least once in twelve

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2234, MM(58)5th, 13 November 1958, p. 1.

[2] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)8, 7 July 1959, p. 8. No plenary sessions were held because neither the Nationalist Party nor the Malta Labour Party would take part in any discussions with the Progressive Constitutional Party. See *The Colonial Territories, 1958-59*, p. 47.

[3] CAB 128, CC(58)84th, 10 December 1958, pp. 5-6.

months, and so the Governor would be acting unconstitutionally if he failed to call a meeting of a new Assembly by April 1959. Because of this, the fact that neither of the main political parties would be willing to form a government under the present constitution, and the pledge to protect the police and public servants from victimization by any future Maltese government, there would need to be changes made to the constitution. Lennox-Boyd therefore proposed to introduce a bill to restore to Britain full prerogative powers of legislation with respect to the constitution of Malta.[1]

Most unusually, Lennox-Boyd and Kilmuir disagreed over a Maltese matter. Kilmuir, in the chair, summed up - that is expressed a totally new opinion - by criticising the proposals on the grounds that they involved the assumption of very wide powers. He suggested that if it was confirmed that legislation was necessary, then the immediate proposals should be limited to a transitional bill to enable the Governor to continue with the present method of government for a specified period, which could be followed up if necessary with another bill enshrining the new constitution. Kilmuir's view prevailed; the committee asked Lennox-Boyd to give further consideration to the necessity for legislation and to limit its scope if it should be found necessary to introduce any.[2]

Lennox-Boyd was unwilling to give in and at a later meeting of the CPC, chaired by Macmillan, he repeated his arguments, and proposed that a bill should be introduced immediately after the upcoming Parliamentary recess to restore Britain's prerogative powers. He said that Kilmuir's proposals would not meet the needs of the situation; the Governor would have to continue governing under emergency powers even though there was no longer any emergency, and it was undesirable for some of the measures he would have to take, especially regarding the disposal of the dockyard, to be promoted by a government acting under emergency powers.[3]

In response to the criticism that Lennox-Boyd's proposals could be attacked in Parliament for being a very arbitrary approach to the problem, it was pointed out that limited legislation would not allow the introduction of the successive measures of constitutional advance which Lennox-Boyd was considering applying after a period of direct rule. Furthermore, comprehensive legislation could be represented as a constructive move designed to lead Malta back to internal self-government as soon as possible. Macmillan summed up that the balance of advantage seemed to lie with Lennox-Boyd's proposals.[4]

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1557, CPC(58)13th, 4 November 1958, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1557, CPC(58)15th, 15 December 1958, p. 1.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

In 1959 the CO announced that the Maltese constitution would be revoked, an interim government would be established, and £29 million over five years would be provided for economic development. The Malta (Letters Patent) Act restored to Britain the prerogative power to amend or revoke any part of Malta's constitution, and the Malta (Constitutional) Order in Council revoked the 1947 constitution.

Although a paper circulated to the ministerial CPC by the official CPC in July 1959 stated that it would be necessary to find a way out of the present constitutional impasse, because the interim constitution could not be continued for more than a limited period, there were no constructive developments until the following year, a visit to Malta by Macleod in December 1959 having proved fruitless.[1] Malta was not discussed in either the Cabinet or its committees until July 1960, when Macleod outlined proposals to give Malta the 'widest measure of self-government consistent with United Kingdom responsibilities for defence and foreign affairs'. It was, he said, not a question of whether, but of how and when Malta should be given greater self-government, and this problem could best be handled by a commission which would work to strict terms of reference and give due weight to defence and security considerations. Following a short but favourable discussion, the Cabinet agreed that a commission should be established.[2] This was one of the few times when Britain took the initiative in Maltese policy. However, in some ways this change of approach under Macleod was one of presentation rather than of substance because Britain still had no intention of giving Malta independence.

The commission was headed by Sir Hilary Blood, an experienced colonial administrator who had recently served as constitutional commissioner for British Honduras. The commission's appointment was announced at the end of July; by October it was in Malta; and by December its report was with Macleod. His initial reaction was that the report was a competent piece of work, and that the constitution it suggested was advanced and liberal.[3]

Because this issue had such broad and important ramifications, the report was discussed not only by the CPC, but also by the Cabinet and the Defence Committee, the latter being involved because it had been agreed that the defence aspects of the report should be considered separately by this body.[4] The first ministerial discussion took place in the CPC when Macleod outlined the Blood Commission's proposals. These were that Malta should become known as the 'State of Malta' and have its own head of state, who would as far as possible be a constitutional representative of the crown, and who would eventually be Maltese, although only when the post no longer exercised special functions in relation to the police and public service.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1558, CPC(59)8, 7 July 1959, p. 8.
[2] PRO, CAB 134/1559, CPC(60)6th, 20 July 1960, pp. 1-2.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)1, 3 January 1961, p. 4.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)2nd, 15 February 1961, p. 1.

Defence and foreign affairs would remain with Britain, but the Maltese Legislature and government would have concurrent powers in these fields, although UK instructions would prevail in the case of conflict. The report also recommended that Britain should pay for the police force while it was controlled by the head of state, but Macleod did not think this recommendation should be accepted. He also felt that apart from the possibility of additional finance for the conversion of the dockyard, no further capital aid should be given beyond that already agreed for the period up to 1964. His overall view was that the recommendations were likely to be critically received in Malta, and that to gain the support of moderate opinion it would be necessary to give some hope of a final status which was compatible with the real aspirations of the Maltese people.[1]

Most ministers approved the proposals, although Harold Watkinson, the Minister of Defence, added that it was important that the head of state should not be Maltese while Britain retained defence interests there, and another minister cautioned that Macleod's proposed statement seemed to imply that Britain would be willing to go further in the direction of independence in the future than would be compatible with UK defence interests. Macmillan accepted both these points in his summing up and said that the proposals should be changed accordingly, but stated that, subject to more detailed consideration of the defence implications, they appeared to offer the best means of restoring representative government to Malta and should be examined by the Cabinet.[2]

Two days later the Defence Committee considered a memorandum by the Minister of Defence on the defence implications of the proposals. During a long discussion Watkinson told ministers that the decision that the head of state would not be Maltese, as long as this was in Britain's interests, had reassured the service ministers and the CoS. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, then expressed his concern that having concurrent powers in defence and foreign affairs would lead to continual friction, and suggested it would be best if foreign affairs, and perhaps defence also, were entirely reserved to the UK. In a fundamental criticism of the proposals, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Francis Festing, argued that the government should refrain from any constitutional development at the present time which might impair Britain's use of the island for defence purposes, even if this led to disturbances. He felt that pressure for further constitutional change would be irresistible, and that if it became more difficult as a result to use the facilities in Malta, it might even be preferable to abandon Malta as a base, even though this would be a severe blow to Britain's defence arrangements in the Mediterranean. Perth's response was that although there would be internal security problems, especially if

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)2nd, 15 February 1961, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Mintoff resumed power, refusing any constitutional change would alienate all parties in Malta. Macmillan ended the discussion by saying that the whole question, including its defence aspects, should be further considered by the Cabinet.[1]

The Cabinet discussion started with Macleod outlining the doubts expressed in the CPC and the Defence Committee and then responding to them. He said that concurrent powers were unlikely to cause friction because there would be little scope for legislation by the Maltese government on external matters. As for Britain's defence interests, they were fully guarded by the proposals, especially now it had been agreed that the Governor would retain control of the police, and would be non-Maltese as long as this was considered to be necessary. As for his statement, Macleod was adamant that his approach was correct because he felt it was best, although the Governor felt otherwise, that it should be made clear that Britain was willing to give Malta self-determination when the time was appropriate.[2]

In discussion the creation of the post of UK Commissioner was criticized by the Secretary of State for Air, Julian Amery, who said that establishing this position was bound to reduce the authority of the Governor. In response it was suggested that introducing a commissioner would help isolate the Governor from political conflict. More importantly, it was pointed out that although it would be possible to relinquish Malta and still fulfil defence obligations in the Mediterranean, doing so would be difficult and expensive. Furthermore, it would still be necessary to deny the facilities of Malta to the Soviet bloc, and this would require a continued British presence.[3]

The discussion continued at the Cabinet's next meeting. Macleod compromised over his statement, saying that it would not now contain any reference to future development, and that if pressed he would say it was not part of government policy 'to deny to the Maltese people the right to determine for themselves, at the appropriate time, their own destiny in association, we hope, with the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth family'.[4]

In response to the suggestion that it might be difficult to withdraw responsible self-government once it had been granted, it was pointed out that there was no legal foundation for such a view. Ministers then agreed that on balance it would be best to restrict the grant of concurrent powers to defence, and to provide powers in the field of external affairs only by specific delegation. More doubts were expressed about the UK Commissioner post, although to no effect. The Cabinet finished by deciding that as it was unlikely that Malta could be given self-determination in the foreseeable future because of its strategic importance, any statement

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[1] PRO, CAB 131/25, D(61)4th, 17 February 1961, pp. 6-7.
[2] CAB 128, CC(61)10th, 28 February 1961, pp. 4-5.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
[4] CAB 128, CC(61)11th, 7 March 1961, p. 4.

that might have to be made 'should not refer to the right of the Maltese people to determine for themselves their own destiny'. Subject to this amendment the Cabinet authorized Macleod's statement.[1] This was a rebuff to Macleod. He may have been willing to contemplate what Lennox-Boyd would not - an independent Malta- but his Cabinet colleagues clearly still thought along the same lines as Lennox-Boyd and wanted to keep Macleod in check.

The report of the Blood Commission was published on 8 March. It said that Malta was too small and important to proceed automatically down the path of constitutional development, and recommended that the Maltese Parliament and government should be responsible for all domestic matters including internal security, except that for an interim period ultimate responsibility for the police would rest with the Governor. The Maltese government would have concurrent powers in defence, but in external affairs its only powers would be those specifically delegated to it. UK responsibilities for defence and external affairs would be in the hands of a UK Commissioner, who would have the powers to override local legislation in the event of a dispute between the Maltese and British governments. Finally, the functions of the Governor would be analogous to those of a constitutional head of state.[2] In October 1961 the Malta (Constitution) Order in Council gave effect to the Blood Commission's recommendations.[3]

During the next six months Malta was not discussed at all in the Cabinet, but at committee level there was much activity. This came about because of the need to reduce overseas expenditure. The government decided that because of economic difficulties, especially the balance of payments situation, overseas expenditure would need to be restricted to £400 million a year, and as a result the Minister of Defence was asked by Macmillan to secure savings of £35 million a year in overseas defence expenditure in all areas apart from Germany.[4]

The extent to which Malta would suffer from these cuts depended on the assessment of its strategic significance. It was now thought that the naval requirements of Britain's defence policy in the Mediterranean could be met by making more use of Gibraltar, or possibly even UK bases, using Malta only as an advance base, and that Malta was not vital to NATO.[5] Although still strategically valuable, Malta was less essential than before to the type of operations that

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[1] CAB 128, CC(61)11th, 7 March 1961, p. 5.

[2] *The Colonial Territories, 1960-61*, p. 37.

[3] *The Colonial Territories, 1961-62*, p. 51.

[4] PRO, CAB 131/25, D(61)17th, 6 December 1961, p. 3. There had been a sterling crisis in March caused by an upward revaluation of the mark, and the balance of payments had been unfavourable for the previous two years. As a result of these and other economic problems, Macmillan had written to all spending ministers in July asking them to scrutinize their expenditure with great stringency and make real and lasting savings. See Lamb, *The Macmillan Years*, pp. 72-75.

[5] PRO, CAB 134/1938, FP(B)(61)2nd, 21 August 1961, p. 1. At its previous meeting it had been stated that defence expenditure in Malta was very heavy and that the strategic reasons for retaining forces there should be restated and re-examined. See PRO, CAB 134/1938, FP(B)(61)1st, 4 August 1961, p. 2.

British forces were likely to be involved in.[1] As a result of this assessment Macmillan told the Minister of Defence that when examining savings in overseas defence expenditure, it should be assumed that Malta would be required only to provide forward operating facilities for the navy and staging facilities for the RAF, and that its internal security garrison would be reduced to one major unit.[2] This changed use of Malta was part of the move to a strategy relying on seaborne and airborne forces using forward operating facilities, rather than bases in the traditional sense, which was required by the planned reduction in overseas defence expenditure.[3]

The CO was deeply concerned about the impact of such cuts on Malta because the island's economy was so dependent on British defence expenditure. When the Study of Future Policy Steering Committee considered the question of reducing overseas military expenditure in September 1961, the committee was told that on purely military grounds it might be possible to discontinue using Malta except as a minor naval base. A CO official was quick to point out that this would have serious economic and political consequences for Malta, and that even if Britain provided financial compensation, it would still be difficult to provide alternative employment for redundant Maltese workers. The committee asked the CO and the Admiralty, in consultation with the MoD and the other service departments, to assess what savings would be made, and what financial or other compensation to Malta might be involved.[4]

Surprisingly, it was December before this matter was raised in a committee. When the Defence Committee discussed the proposed reduction in overseas defence spending, an unnamed minister pointed out that the cuts could have a disastrous consequences for Malta's economy and political stability. The plans already in hand to offset the effect of the naval reductions that had already taken place would be disrupted, and further cuts would ensure that there would be no prospect of restoring representative government under the Blood Commission proposals. Nevertheless, the minister added, undermining all that he had just said, it would be wrong to distort defence requirements in order to provide economic aid. However, the committee did agree that the phasing of reductions should be considered further, so that it could

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1938, FP(B)(61)4, 29 November 1961, p. 3.
[2] PRO, CAB 131/26, D(61)67, 23 November 1961, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 131/27, D(62)1st, 12 January 1962, p. 3.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/1932, FP(A)(61)2nd, 7 September 1961, p. 3. The financial cost of compensation had already been briefly considered by the Study of Future Policy Working Group. One of its members suggested that the committee should investigate the possibility of persuading other countries to share in providing economic assistance to Malta. This somewhat desperate suggestion was dismissed by the MoD on the grounds that it was unreasonable to assume that other countries would take on such an obligation. See PRO, CAB 134/1938, FP(B)(61)2nd, 21 August 1961, p. 1 and PRO, CAB 134/1938, FP(B)(61)3rd, 29 August 1961, p. 3.

be estimated more accurately what the effect of the cuts would be and how their impact could be minimized.[1]

In a memorandum to the Defence Committee, Maudling said that he needed to bring to the attention of ministers the serious effect the reduction in defence expenditure in Malta would have, adding that time had not permitted the consultation with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Minister of Defence suggested at the committee's last meeting. He pointed out that because the services directly employed eighteen percent of Malta's working population, the keystone of Malta's economy was service expenditure.[2] He told a meeting of the committee that the 1959 reductions had been a serious blow to Malta's economy, and that the new proposals would create another 7,500 unemployed. Britain would be expected to deal with this problem, and the cost of doing so might be as much, if not more, than the savings made by the reductions. He ended his statement with the warning that if these proposals became known before the elections that were due to be held in February 1962, it might become impossible to restore representative government, and that any breakdown in administration would make it more difficult to maintain internal security. After some discussion the committee agreed that it would be necessary to consider further the phasing of the proposed reductions.[3] Clearly, the tactic of appealing to British self-interest was an effective one because a breakdown of internal security would not only be embarrassing and require British intervention, it would also jeopardize the effective use of the island's military facilities.

At the first meeting of the Defence Committee the following year, Perth built on Maudling's approach by warning ministers that the proposed reduction of British forces in Malta might produce political reactions there which could result in Britain not being able to use Malta for any military purposes.[4] The next month Maudling asked the Defence Committee for the authority to make a statement about Malta's future at the time of publication of the 1962 Defence White Paper, and requested the continued cooperation of all relevant departments in trying to minimize the difficulties that would ensue in Malta. He said that although the new policy could not be challenged on economic or defence grounds its effect would be severe, and he would like the timing of the reductions re-examined and would seek to find ways of reducing the cost of compensatory measures. Because a general election was shortly to be held in Malta, he wanted to avoid the sort of reaction to the cuts that would make it impossible for a new

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[1] PRO, CAB 131/25, D(61)17th, 6 December 1961, pp. 4-5.
[2] PRO, CAB 131/26, D(61)82, 18 December 1961, p. 1.
[3] PRO, CAB 131/25, D(61)18th, 19 December 1961, p. 6.
[4] PRO, CAB 131/27, D(62)1st, 12 January 1962, p. 4. There was considerable disagreement between Perth and Macmillan over this reduction. Macmillan's view was that the deployment of British forces overseas should be determined by strategic requirements. See PRO, PREM 11/3870, memorandum from Macmillan to Perth, January 1962 (full date not given).

government to take office under the new constitution. Watkinson seemed sympathetic, saying that he thought it was possible that the reductions could be phased in over a longer period. However, he actually made the CO's position more difficult by pointing out that even if there had not been any cuts in expenditure, the Admiralty would still have wanted to reduce the naval strength in Malta as part of a planned redeployment of the navy.[1]

As always the Treasury was hostile. Henry Brooke, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, pointed out that the cost per head of Malta's current redevelopment plan was far higher than comparable figures for all other colonies, and said that Maudling's proposed statement should not give the impression that any remedial action beyond the scope of the development plan would be taken. As usual Britain's defence and economic interests prevailed and Maudling was asked to revise his statement in consultation with Brooke. However, Maudling had some success in defending Maltese interests because the committee asked Watkinson to re-examine the timing and phasing of the planned reductions in consultation with Maudling, Brooke and the service ministers.[2]

VI. THE FINAL STEPS TO INDEPENDENCE

By the time the Defence Committee considered Watkinson's memorandum a general election had been held under the new constitution and won by Olivier. Watkinson told the committee that while he recognized the difficulties pointed out by Maudling, he did not feel that they could be appreciably lessened by any practicable change in the present plans. Maudling took a new tack and responded that it was necessary to consider the effect of the change in British strategy on the political relationship with the new Maltese government; policy presentation had to be handled very carefully now that Malta's strategic importance, which had been the chief objection to giving independence, had fallen. He finished by asking that those ministers concerned should be allowed to discuss these political questions before the committee took a final decision on what action should be taken on the run down of military facilities in Malta.[3] Presumably, Maudling hoped that if he could talk round those ministers with a direct

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[1] PRO, CAB 131/27, D(62)3rd, 7 February 1962, pp. 3-4. Nevertheless, Maudling did try to challenge the reduction on policy grounds, writing in a memorandum circulated to the Defence Committee that although the cuts in Malta would save £7 million a year, from the balance of payments point of view this saving might be more than counterbalanced by a reduction in British exports, a reduction in Maltese savings sent to Britain and by the expenditure on relief methods. See PRO, CAB 131/27, D(62)8, 5 February 1962, p. 1.

[2] PRO, CAB 131/27, D(62)3rd, 7 February 1962, p. 4.

[3] PRO, CAB 131/27, D(62)6th, 13 April 1962, p. 4.

interest in the matter then the other members of the committee would be less likely to oppose him, or be less successful in doing so. His tactics, however, seemed somewhat desperate.

Brooke said he would welcome further discussion of the question of policy presentation, but emphasized the need for the financial savings that the rundown would produce. The First Lord of the Admiralty insisted that it was important that the rundown should not be delayed, because the naval programme was based on the assumption that reductions would have started at the beginning of the current financial year. On a more hopeful note for the CO, it was suggested that it might be possible to defer the start of army and air force reductions, and perhaps of Maltese civilian employees, while allowing the reductions in naval personnel to proceed as planned. After this discussion the committee agreed to Maudling's suggestion about further deliberations, and asked Watkinson, Brooke, Maudling and the First Lord of the Admiralty, to prepare a report on the best political presentation of the changes in Malta's strategic role and the consequences of the changes.[1]

This further examination helped the CO because the committee agreed that the rate of the rundown of army and RAF personnel would be reduced, and in return Maudling agreed that the naval rundown plan could be implemented as soon as Olivier had been informed of the government's intentions. The committee asked Brooke to write to Macmillan and obtain his agreement to this deal.[2] Even when a decision had been made by a very senior committee it still had to be approved by Macmillan, showing the tight grip he kept on the committee system.

The fact that the Cabinet did not discuss Malta very often during this period might be seen as an indication that the committee system was functioning efficiently. Nevertheless, Malta was a source of great disagreement between some ministers and it might therefore have been expected that some disputes would have been brought before the Cabinet. Presumably the reason that this did not often happen was because the Colonial Secretary knew that colonial interests would not prevail when they were up against fundamental British economic and defence interests. Bringing such disputes up in the Cabinet and being defeated there could only weaken his authority, and forcing the Cabinet to deal with such issues would only antagonize his colleagues. Furthermore, because Malta had declined in strategic importance, Sandys had less leverage than before when it came to pushing Maltese interests, and could no longer make as much use of the tactic of appealing to British self-interest.[3]

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[1] PRO, CAB 131/27, D(62)6th, 13 April 1962, pp. 4-5.
[2] PRO, CAB 131/27, D(62)7th, 18 April 1962, p. 5.
[3] This decline had its roots in the 1957 Defence White Paper. Malta's importance was further diminished by the 1960 Defence White Paper which had concluded that the Mediterranean was of less strategic significance, and the conclusion of the Study of Future Policy that Malta should only be used as an advance base. See PRO, CAB 134/1938, FP(B)(61)2nd, 21 August 1961, p. 1. and PRO, CAB 134/1938, FP(B)(61)4, 29 November 1961, p. 3. At the end of 1962 the CoS concluded that although

In March 1962 general discussions had taken place on what should be done about constitutional development. The CPC was told by Maudling that Olivier was in London and had proposed certain constitutional changes. Two of these requests were particularly difficult. Firstly, he wanted control of the police to be restored to the Maltese government, a request which Maudling could give no decision on because the advice of the Minister of Defence was required. Secondly, he wanted the Maltese government to take charge of the Maltese Civil Service. Maudling said this demand was unacceptable because such an arrangement was not allowed in any colony, in order to prevent political appointments to senior posts and maintain a sound administration. Although Maudling warned the Cabinet that refusing these demands might result in Olivier resigning, the Cabinet agreed that they should be rejected.[1]

An *ad hoc* committee, the Working Party on the Constitutional Development of the Commonwealth, had earlier concluded that it was likely that Malta, if only because of its sophistication and geographical situation, would become independent in some form between 1963 and 1965, despite its small size and economic weakness.[2] This was one of the earliest acknowledgements of the realities of the situation, although it came about a year after Macleod's attempt to get the Cabinet to face up to the inevitability of independence. Up until now all discussions had assumed that Malta could not become independent in the foreseeable future. Yet despite what seems a major change, if not in policy at least in the assumptions underlying policy, neither the Cabinet nor its committees discussed Malta again until November, which suggests that British policy was essentially reactive and that, partly as both a cause and a manifestation of this, that there often was no sense of urgency in the committee system. The system did not function effectively when there was no clear sense of purpose.

It is surprising that it was November before Malta was discussed again because in August Olivier had requested, with the support of both the principal Maltese political parties, that a date should be fixed for independence.[3] This discussion took place on the Oversea Coordinating Committee, an official committee, when its members were informed that Sandys had agreed to consider Olivier's request, and that in consequence two problems of interdepartmental interest would arise. Firstly, suitable arrangements for the continuation of defence facilities would need to be considered. The second problem would arise from the probability that Malta would make a strong claim for economic aid to assist the transition to independence, aid that was all the more

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Malta was still most valuable, its importance had decreased. See PRO, CAB 134/2276, OC(O)(62)8th, 28 November 1962, p. 1.

[1] PRO, CAB 134/1561, CPC(62)6th, 30 March 1962, p. 4.

[2] PRO, CAB 130/180, GEN 758/3(Revise), 9 March 1962, p. 21.

[3] However, the Church and some of the smaller political parties were opposed to independence. See PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)7th, 1 July 1963, p. 1.

necessary because of the economic problems caused by Britain's reduced defence interests there.[1] Independence, so firmly rejected in the past had now been quietly accepted as an inevitability.

The discussion concentrated on the defence problem. It was suggested that the first thing to do was to establish which defence facilities in Malta were absolutely essential and whether, and at what cost, they could be replaced elsewhere. This needed to be done because although it would be uneconomical to give the facilities up, and although Britain did not want an unfriendly power using the island, if the negotiations became difficult Malta might threaten to refuse to allow Britain to use the facilities. That this could conceivably happen was a clear sign of Britain's diminished power, but it was one that was not acknowledged and it did not contribute to policy development. Sandys had suggested that Britain's defence interests could be served by a formal defence agreement, but an official suggested that experience had shown that such detailed agreements were open to a number of practical objections. Finally, echoing a suggestion that had been quickly dismissed some years earlier it was suggested it would be advantageous if an independent Malta was a member of NATO, especially if NATO countries could be persuaded to help the Maltese economy. In response it was suggested that NATO's only interest in Malta was in denying its use to unfriendly powers, and in any case NATO would be reluctant to take on a further financial burden.[2]

At its next meeting this committee was told that although the CoS considered that Malta's defence importance had decreased considerably, they felt it was still of some value, and it was again suggested that defence interests should be secured by formal agreement.[3] This agreement, the committee was later informed, would involve a treaty of protection without a terminal date, providing for the defence of Malta and for the denial of use of Malta by unfriendly powers; and a status of forces agreement, with a date for review, covering detailed arrangements for the use of those facilities that Britain wanted to retain for at least some years. Sandys had approved an agreement along these lines and would raise the matter during the talks he was due to have with Olivier.[4]

At the beginning of the following year the Oversea Coordinating Committee was told that, following talks with Sandys, Olivier had agreed to take the lead in drafting an independence constitution for discussion at the talks due to be held that summer. It had also been agreed that Britain would take the initiative in drafting a defence agreement.[5] No

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2276, OC(O)(62)7th, 14 November 1962, p. 5.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
[3] PRO, CAB 134/2276, OC(O)(62)8th, 28 November 1962, pp. 1-2.
[4] PRO, CAB 134/2276, OC(O)(62)9th, 5 December 1962, p. 5.
[5] PRO, CAB 134/2277, OC(O)(63)1st, 9 January 1963, p. 6.

discussion took place because often Cabinet committees did not function as decision-making bodies, frequently they were just a device for keeping interested departments informed of developments.

Most activity concerning Malta took place in the summer of 1963 when the second Round-Table Conference was held. Before the start of the conference, the Oversea Policy Committee was told by Sandys that drafting a revised constitution for an independent Malta should not be that difficult, even though there was disagreement between the Maltese political parties over the official status of Catholicism, membership of the Commonwealth, and whether an independent Malta should be a monarchy or a republic. He felt that it would not be wise to alter the official status which the constitution gave Catholicism because the overwhelming majority of the population would be opposed to such a change. Membership of the Commonwealth also had popular support. Although most Maltese favoured a monarchy, the Malta Labour Party was opposed to this and wanted a referendum on this issue, but he warned that whatever Britain decided, it was important that this issue should not become an issue of party politics at successive elections.[1]

He then told ministers that there were two main issues to settle outside the conference. A defence agreement was needed because although military facilities there were no longer indispensable, Britain needed to prevent unfriendly powers establishing themselves there. The Maltese government was willing to conclude an agreement, but it might wish to hold a referendum before singing it. Although a referendum would make it difficult for any future Maltese government to repudiate the agreement, favouring a referendum on this but not on the three points of dispute might make Britain look inconsistent. As for the question of financial aid after independence, interdepartmental agreement had not yet been reached, but it would be sufficient if some general assurance of continuing aid could be given. This last statement is a surprising one, given the economic problems Malta was experiencing and the consequently increased importance of British aid; perhaps such complacency contributed to the failure of the conference. In general, Britain often seems to have been somewhat self-deluding about the possibility of success in negotiations with Malta, especially where financial and economic matters were concerned. The meeting finished with Sandys being asked to bring the matter before the Cabinet.[2]

Sandys repeated most of the background information he had given to the Oversea Policy Committee when the Cabinet discussed Malta. The ensuing discussion was of little value. The only point of dissent made was that it might not be best either to wait until after an election

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/2371, OP(63)7th, 1 July 1963, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

before concluding a defence agreement, or to submit this issue to a referendum, because although Malta was no longer of paramount strategic importance, the USSR needed to be prevented from getting a foothold there. It was pointed out that the only alternative was to reject the request for independence, which would have unacceptable political consequences. The Cabinet therefore approved Sandys' memorandum on what to seek at the conference.[1]

Three weeks later Sandys reported to the Cabinet that it was clear from the conference that the majority of the Maltese people wanted independence, and he proposed to grant this by January 1964. However, there were irreconcilable differences between the Malta Labour Party and the other parties; the former wanted Malta to become a republic, wanted most of the privileges of the Church removed, and did not want any prior commitment made on Commonwealth membership. In contrast to his earlier opinion, Sandys now said that the best course of action would be to arrange referendums on these disputed issues.[2] Presumably the conference discussions had convinced him that referendums were unavoidable. The minutes do not record any discussion or decision, it appears that Sandys was simply reporting to ministers; perhaps there was simply no scope for discussion because British policy, now that Malta was no longer seen as strategically vital, was, as it had been when Malta was strategically vital, about little more than responding to Maltese moves.

As Sandys had forecast, the conference ended without agreement. He reported to the Cabinet that in these circumstances independence should be delayed until May 1964, which would allow time for a referendum.[3] After its failure Malta disappeared from the agenda of the Cabinet and its committees until January 1964, when Sandys reminded a meeting of the DOPC that the government was publicly committed to giving Malta independence no later than 31 May 1964. He had asked Olivier to hold discussions with all Maltese political parties in order to establish an agreed constitutional basis for independence, but Olivier had failed to get any agreement and now wanted Britain to accept sole responsibility for settling the independence constitution. Sandys suggested that Mintoff would create trouble if independence was given on this basis, and Britain might be asked to intervene if the Maltese government could not handle the situation. The government therefore needed to decide which was the bigger risk: granting independence by the agreed date or deferring it. There was general agreement that it would be best to defer independence because imposing an independence constitution would alienate all

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[1] CAB 128, CC(63)44th, 4 July 1963, pp. 4-5. The Colonial Secretary's memorandum to the Cabinet on this suggested that Malta's military facilities were no longer indispensable, although some were important and others would be expensive to replace elsewhere. See CAB 129, C(63)112, 1 July 1963, p. 2.

[2] CAB 128, CC(63)48th, 25 July 1963, p. 3.

[3] CAB 128, CC(63)51st, 1 August 1963, p. 4.

Maltese political parties, and because any post-independence military intervention would require a considerable number of troops, and might have to be carried out at a time when there were already heavy demands on Britain's military resources. The committee asked Sandys to give further consideration to postponing independence.[1]

A fortnight late Sandys told the Cabinet that he felt the matters under dispute in Malta were such that any arbitration by Britain would only be practicable if the parties concerned first accepted British findings in principle.[2] After further considering this matter Sandys suggested to ministers that the government should propose a new constitution but should not try to impose it. In addition, Britain should stipulate that the new constitution would not be introduced until it had been approved either by a referendum or by a resolution of the Maltese Legislative Assembly. If this solution was not acceptable then independence would have to be postponed. In response, it was suggested that the second option might appear to allow the Assembly to suggest an alternative solution, and therefore it should only be stipulated that the proposals must be agreed in a referendum. The Cabinet agreed to a statement along this line.[3] The following day Sandys informed the DOPC that the postponement of independence was almost inevitable because it was unlikely that the referendum would produce a majority in favour of the new constitution.[4]

Olivier, however, changed his mind about Britain taking on sole responsibility for the independence constitution, and Sandys told the Cabinet that as a result it had been agreed that Olivier could submit his party's proposals to the Legislative Assembly and then to a referendum. The UK would make no commitment to endorse the result of this, and the government would need to consider what policy to adopt when the result was known.[5] Sandys was uncomfortable with the idea of independence and unsure what to do. He told a later meeting of the Cabinet that if the results of the referendum were inconclusive, this would give a welcome excuse to defer the decision on independence, but if the vote was in favour the government would be faced with a difficult decision, because the constitution was unacceptable in certain respects.[6] Clearly, more than ever, Britain was not in control of Maltese constitutional development and was simply responding to events and Maltese proposals, rather than developing its own policy.

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[1] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)5th, 29 January 1964, p. 3.
[2] CAB 128, CM(64)11th, 13 February 1964, p. 3.
[3] CAB 128, CM(64)15th, 27 February 1964, p. 4.
[4] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)11th, 28 February 1964, p. 5.
[5] CAB 128, CM(64)19th, 17 March 1964, p. 3.
[6] CAB 128, CM(64)25th, 30 April 1964, p. 4.

Following the referendum, which was held in May 1964, Sandys informed the DOPC that it had shown an enormous majority in favour of independence, but only a small majority in favour of the independence constitution proposed by the Maltese government.[1] Only 51% of the electorate had voted in favour of Olivier's constitution and 20% had abstained, about half of those probably deliberately, and he was therefore waiting for the report of the election observers before deciding if the referendum should be dismissed as inconclusive.[2]

The Minister of Defence, Peter Thorneycroft, suggested that because of the uncertainty about the future of Britain's other defence facilities in the Mediterranean, it would be desirable, if possible, to withhold the grant of independence for the time being.[3] He also pointed out that if any defence agreement did not allow vessels carrying nuclear weapons to use Malta then it would be valueless, and that this point would need to be satisfactorily resolved before independence was granted. The committee merely took note of these points.[4] As will be seen the nuclear issue was to become a major problem.

The next day Sandys told the Cabinet that independence might have to be conceded, and that although the original date of 31 May was not now practicable, independence could not be delayed for long. Nevertheless, Thorneycroft repeated and expanded his argument of the previous day; the insecurity of Britain's position in Cyprus and Libya meant that Maltese independence could be a serious threat to Britain's defence interests in the Mediterranean, and any restrictions on defence facilities in Malta would make these facilities almost valueless. A withdrawal from the Mediterranean, he forcibly insisted, would have serious repercussions on Britain's global strategic interests; particularly if, as a result, Britain was forced to rely on the route round the Cape for communications with the Far East.[5]

This intervention by Thorneycroft is surprising for two reasons. Firstly, it came about so unexpectedly; much discussion had taken place, especially in the Defence Committee, about Malta's reduced strategic value, and no dissension had been voiced; it was seemingly accepted that Maltese independence would not threaten Britain's strategic interests because Malta was now only significant in a negative sense, in that its use should be denied to unfriendly powers. Secondly, the timing of it seems strange - after a referendum on independence had taken place;

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[1] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)21st, 8 May 1964, pp. 3-4.

[2] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)20th, 6 May 1964, p. 6. Britain had agreed to the grant of independence on the basis of a bare majority for the nationalist proposals. See Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire*, p. 94.

[3] Britain's security of tenure of its bases in Libya and Cyprus had become uncertain; fighting had broken out between the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus at the end of 1963, and in 1964 Libya had asked for a review of its 1952 treaty with Britain, which gave Britain military rights in the small post of El Adem.

[4] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)20th, 6 May 1964, p. 7.

[5] CAB 128, CM(64)26th, 7 May 1964, p. 3.

a sense of timing which suggests a complete lack of understanding of political realities. To now suggest now that Malta should be denied independence on strategic grounds when the momentum for independence had increased, not least because of the government's own actions, seems an absurd folly. It is almost as if the MoD existed in isolation from the rest of the government, paying no attention to the discussions on Malta's constitutional future and not voicing any concerns. Yet the existence of the committee system, and the representation of the MoD on those committees that dealt with Malta, meant that this department was fully informed on Maltese issues, and had had plenty of opportunities to contribute to the debate and make its concerns known.

Nobody supported Thorneycroft's position in the subsequent discussion. It was pointed out that refusing independence could lead to the fall of Olivier's government, and that if Mintoff became Prime Minister again, he might refuse to negotiate any sort of defence agreement at all. But one minister pointed out that the privileged constitutional position of the Church was opposed by certain sections of opinion in Britain, and that in this respect the constitution proposed by Mintoff was more acceptable. It was also argued that the economic importance of the base to Malta might lead a Maltese government to conclude a satisfactory agreement. The discussion ended with the warning that now the government had accepted independence in principle, the actual implementation could not be delayed for long without provoking the sort of serious political repercussions that would jeopardize British interests. The Cabinet agreed to give the matter further consideration.[1]

As can be seen from this meeting, two particular aspects of the issue of Malta were starting to move to the fore: the constitutional position of the Church and the defence agreement, and as the year went on they came to dominate matters completely. There was some discussion of independence, but this did not really exist as an issue in its own right, because it was so closely tied up with the question of getting a satisfactory defence agreement. When the DOPC considered a memorandum by Sandys on the financial assistance to be given to Malta after the current financial year, Sandys informed ministers that the Treasury was reluctant for Britain to be financially committed to Malta for more than five years; Britain should therefore agree to give £5 million a year for capital expenditure and emigration, for each of the next four years, as well as whatever budgetary assistance was annually agreed. However, neatly undermining his own apparent acceptance of the Treasury's position, he added that the Maltese government would expect the financial aid agreement to last the same time as the defence

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[1] CAB 128, CM(64)26th, 7 May 1964, pp. 3-4.

agreement and it was for consideration whether a five-year defence agreement would be acceptable.[1]

The committee quickly agreed that a five-year agreement would not meet British requirements and that financial assistance would therefore be required for more than five years, even though it was pointed out that the proposed figure was more than had been provided in the past, and was proportionally more than that given to any other territory. After discussion ministers agreed that provided Malta was prepared to conclude a satisfactory defence agreement of at least ten years, and to accept a joint development board - Maltese administration of British aid was felt to be inefficient - then the island should be offered if necessary a sum of up to £45 million for the nine years beginning at the end of the current financial year.[2] Financial aid was only discussed three more times, and never in its own right. The last time it was discussed, the emphasis was still on the defence agreement, and how it should be linked to financial assistance.[3]

The question of the future constitutional status of the Church was often raised. The basic difficulty, as Sandys told a meeting of the DOPC, was that Olivier's independence constitution gave the Church the type of official status that would enable it to exert an undue political influence, and this would be unacceptable to British public and Parliamentary opinion. The fact that Britain had no real initiatives to offer, and was still unsure about Maltese independence, is emphasized by Sandys' suggestion that the government should propose that the constitution should alter the status of the Church and then a further referendum should be held on it; such a course might be unacceptable to Olivier, but it would enable Britain to allow the position to remain as it was indefinitely, on the grounds that it had been impossible to reach agreement on a suitable independence constitution. The committee's response, however, was only to ask Sandys to give further consideration to Maltese policy.[4]

At a later DOPC committee meeting, Sandys said that although he had made clear to Olivier the government's objections to the status of the Church, Olivier was unwilling to see it changed.[5] A week later Sandys told the committee that any change would need to be acceptable to both Parliament and the Vatican, although he was hopeful that he could devise a formula which would achieve this.[6] Shortly afterwards he told the Cabinet that agreement had been

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[1] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)26th, 12 June 1964, p. 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
[3] CAB 128, CM(64)38th, 16 July 1964, p. 6. For the other two discussions see PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)31st, 6 July 1964 and CAB 128, CM(64)33rd, 25 June 1964.
[4] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)21st, 8 May 1964, pp. 3-4.
[5] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)24th, 27 May 1964, p. 7.
[6] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)25th, 3 June 1964, p. 8.

reached with the Vatican.[1] However, Sandys had to tell the next Cabinet meeting that despite Vatican endorsement, Olivier would still not agree to his proposals. A minister suggested that Olivier's refusal should be used as a pretext to break off the talks because there was no certainty that a satisfactory defence agreement, especially one covering nuclear weapons, would be obtained.[2] The matter remained unresolved, but this was as much due to British tactics as to Olivier's obduracy. Although Sandys felt it was possible that agreement could be reached, he wanted the Church issue kept open so that it could be blamed if the talks broke down. He wanted to ensure that Olivier would not be able to put the blame on the nuclear weapons issue.[3]

Because of the government's worry that Mintoff might become Prime Minister again if Olivier fell, in which case there was less likelihood of a satisfactory defence agreement being negotiated, it was suggested in the DOPC that the government should tell Olivier that it would be prepared to grant independence, but only if provisions to safeguard defence interests were so entrenched in the independence constitution that Britain could be certain that it could freely use the Maltese base for at least another ten years. It was even suggested that on this basis it would be worth developing the facilities further, and that Olivier might agree to this because of their economic importance.[4]

Thorneycroft's worry was that no matter what constitutional safeguards were provided, independence would make the base less secure, because if Mintoff regained office he would probably refuse to maintain any defence agreement. In these circumstances it would not be wise to send more troops to Malta; indeed it would be preferable to withdraw some, unless there was greater security for the facilities. The DOPC agreed with him that the best way of obtaining this would be to link the defence agreement to the continued provision of economic aid.[5]

Malta was now regaining its strategic significance because, as the DOPC was informed, if Britain lost its defence facilities in Cyprus and Libya, Malta would become of critical importance. It was therefore suggested that independence should be withheld if the government could not get a satisfactory defence agreement that could not subsequently be abrogated. However, it was argued that because doing this would unite all Maltese political parties against Britain and could bring Mintoff back to power, the government should instead examine other ways of maintaining a military presence in the Mediterranean.[6] As so often with discussions on Malta, ministers took no decision. And as so often in the committee system there had been no

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[1] CAB 128, CM(64)33rd, 25 June 1964, p. 5.
[2] CAB 128, CM(64)34th, 2 July 1964, p. 4.
[3] CAB 128, CM(64)35th, 7 July 1964, p. 4.
[4] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)21st, 8 May 1964, p. 4.
[5] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)23rd, 14 May 1964, pp. 5-6.
[6] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)25th, 3 June 1964, p. 8.

long-term or contingency planning, and so no thought appears to have been given to the possibility that Malta might regain its strategic significance.

Olivier now suggested that he would be prepared to allow ships and aircraft in transit that were carrying nuclear weapons to use Malta, although he would still not allow nuclear weapons to be stored there. However, when Sandys informed the DOPC of this development it was decided that it was important to avoid compromising Britain's rights to keep nuclear weapons there and that it would therefore be best to postpone further discussions.[1] The Cabinet was informed that the CoS felt that Britain should not compromise on the nuclear issue, because any limitation of Britain's freedom of action in Malta was not only unacceptable in itself, it would set an undesirable precedent regarding other military bases where Britain needed to be able to stockpile nuclear weapons. Again it was suggested that it would be best if a settlement was achieved with Olivier, because if he was replaced by Mintoff, Malta might succumb to the influence of the United Arab Republic and the USSR. It was also suggested that it could be worth considering Olivier's transit compromise, because if the talks broke down over the issue of nuclear weapons then this sensitive issue would be brought to public attention. In response it was argued, yet again, that the implications for other overseas bases needed to be considered, and also that the interests of the United States must not be overlooked, because America would be disturbed about the effect of such a precedent on its own position.[2]

At a Cabinet meeting in July Sandys showed that he was unwilling to see the prospect of independence for Malta disappear because of British inflexibility on the nuclear issue. He argued that the effect of Olivier blaming any breakdown in the talks on Britain's insistence that it should be able to deploy nuclear weapons in Malta would, as far as Britain's rights to deploy nuclear weapons elsewhere were concerned, be as damaging as agreeing not to stockpile nuclear weapons there. Curiously though, in view of his previous statements about the status of the Catholic Church, he now suggested that even if agreement had not been reached on this, public opinion would be more likely to concentrate on the failure to conclude a defence agreement. In consequence, the government would be accused of refusing to grant Malta's promised independence because the Maltese government was not willing to allow Britain to establish a nuclear base off the coast of Africa. Refusing to grant independence would therefore damage Britain's relations with African countries. This in turn would discredit any statement which the government might make, at the forthcoming Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, on Britain's intention to give independence to the remaining colonies as soon as possible.[3]

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[1] PRO, CAB 148/1, DO(64)31st, 6 July 1964, pp. 3-4.
[2] CAB 128, CM(64)35th, 7 July 1964, pp. 4-5.
[3] CAB 128, CM(64)36th, 8 July 1964, p. 1.

Another minister warned of the danger if Olivier decided to break the deadlock by offering to accept independence without either a financial or defence agreement. If this happened then Britain would find itself in the position of still having to assume some financial responsibility for Malta, but without having the defence facilities which had been agreed upon. It might therefore be best to offer Olivier a private assurance that apart from the storage of nuclear weapons in transit, Britain had no foreseeable need to maintain a nuclear stockpile in Malta. In addition, he should be told that that if it became necessary to have such a stockpile, Britain would consult with, or seek the agreement of, the government of Malta. Thorneycroft argued against such an arrangement because he felt it would inevitably become public knowledge, and as a result would damage the principle maintained both by Britain and America, that the presence of nuclear weapons on a particular base was neither confirmed nor denied.[1]

In discussion, after the standard warning about the dangers of Mintoff coming to power had been issued, it was suggested that although Olivier might in the end compromise over the Church, internal political reasons seemed to be forcing him to refuse the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, despite the fact that there was no significant popular concern about nuclear weapons. It was also pointed out that because of the religious issue and the absence of a defence agreement, the Independence Bill would be controversial, and there was only enough Parliamentary time left to pass an uncontroversial bill. Home summed up that it seemed preferable to postpone further discussions on Malta's independence until the autumn, a suggestion endorsed by ministers.[2] This decision seems a very weak one given the protracted difficulties that Malta had caused, and the fact that Britain so often found itself having to respond to Maltese moves. It almost appears that the government was anxious to find a reason for avoiding making a difficult decision.

Because Olivier showed more flexibility in his talks with Sandys, the latter was able to tell the next Cabinet meeting that Olivier was now willing to sign a defence agreement which would not restrict Britain's right to stockpile nuclear weapons on Malta. However, Olivier had said that he would need to send a confidential letter to his government explaining that he had only been able to assent to this agreement because of certain assurances Britain had given him, and had reserved the right of the Maltese government to raise objections in the future to the use of Malta as a nuclear base. This letter would have no legal effect, and would not modify the agreement in any way, but Olivier needed to be able to satisfy his political colleagues that he had not agreed to the establishment of a nuclear stockpile in Malta.[3]

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[1] CAB 128, CM(64)36th, 8 July 1964, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[3] CAB 128, CM(64)37th, 10 July 1964, p. 1.

Two main objections were made to the proposed agreement; the letter would place an unacceptable limitation on Britain's freedom of action to use Malta as a nuclear base if it was necessary to do so, and this precedent might prompt the governments of other territories to seek similar agreements. It was therefore suggested that Britain should try and get a compromise, based on an oral assurance to Olivier that Britain was not currently contemplating stockpiling nuclear weapons, and a clause in the defence treaty allowing both governments to raise any issue connected with the treaty if changing circumstances made this necessary. However, so that Britain would not be at the mercy of a hostile Maltese government, it should be made clear that neither party would have to accept any amendment of the treaty which the other might propose. Home stated that an agreement along these lines should be sought.[1]

By the time the Cabinet next met the situation had changed yet again. Sandys told ministers that there was now some reason to believe that Olivier would accept the storage of nuclear weapons if the Governor agreed not to alter the constitutional status of the Church, but Parliament would be unlikely to agree to Maltese independence if the status of the Church was not changed. Another problem would be linking the defence agreement to financial assistance for a ten-year span; only the last seven years of this period could be linked to a satisfactory discharge of Malta's obligations under the defence treaty, because financial support for the first three years would have to be provided in any event. It was then suggested that it would be best to let the negotiations breakdown because the Malta Labour Party, which was known to be determined to break the defence agreement, could come to power. In response, it was argued that because of Malta's increased strategic importance, allowing the negotiations to breakdown would damage British interests. Home agreed and said Sandys should try to get agreement based on leaving the Church's status unaltered, in return for Maltese agreement to the storage of nuclear weapons there.[2] Less than a week later Sandys informed his Cabinet colleagues that a defence treaty had been agreed upon, and it would not incorporate any unacceptable limitations on Britain's right to store nuclear weapons on Malta if necessary.[3]

Britain had clearly been mistaken in thinking that the nuclear issue was the most importance one to Olivier; the Church was the issue on which he was unwilling to compromise. This misjudgement was one reason why it took so long to obtain a satisfactory agreement. Perhaps the most striking and intriguing aspect of this last stage in events, is Sandys' about turn on using the Church issue as a pretext for the talks breaking down. When it appeared that the talks were certain to founder, he argued most strongly that this issue would not provide a

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[1] CAB 128, CM(64)37th, 10 July 1964, pp. 1-2.
[2] CAB 128, CM(64)38th, 16 July 1964, pp. 5-7.
[3] CAB 128, CM(64)40th, 21 July 1964, p. 3.

credible pretext for a breakdown. He was not necessarily determined that Malta should become independent - he said on one occasion that he would be happy for a stalemate to develop - rather he feared the damaging consequences of independence being seen to be withheld because a colony would not agree to accept a stockpile of nuclear weapons. Given that he was both Commonwealth Secretary and Colonial Secretary, these consequences could have been a major headache for Sandys. There would likely have been severe disturbances in Malta, making the maintenance of internal security difficult, and the alienation of all the island's political parties would have caused immense difficulties in the future. The other members of the Commonwealth, and especially the newer ones, could have been antagonized, and relations with them would probably have become more difficult. Finally, the effect on the remaining colonies would have been a destabilizing one, if they saw independence being denied because of what they would regard as an unreasonable British demand.

VII. CONCLUSION

An assessment made in 1961 of future constitutional advance in Malta was clear about two things; the stage at which the UK could relinquish control over the island would depend to a large extent on the general world political situation, and until Britain had the island could not be given independence until Britain had relinquished its strategic interests there.[1] Those strategic interests were the reason why for many years Maltese independence had been unthinkable for Britain; even when the island's strategic significance had decreased Britain was still unwilling to give independence because of its defence value. Yet Malta was given its independence at the very time when its strategic value had increased again.

The strategic value of Malta, and the fact that it did not occur to the government that Britain might have no option at some point but to grant Malta independence meant that British policy on Malta was almost entirely reactive, with Britain staying quiescent until it had to respond to a Maltese initiative. Because of its strategic significance Malta could not simply be treated as a colonial issue. However, even so, defence policy and Maltese policy were not always in step, for the most part because of the way assessments of Malta's significance decreased and then increased again. The result was that a momentum for constitutional change built up when Malta was seen as less valuable, with the result that constitutional change could not be denied even when Malta's strategic value increased again.

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[1] PRO, CAB 134/1560, CPC(61)2nd, 15 February 1961, p. 2 and PRO, CAB 131/25, D(61)4th, 17 February 1961, p. 7.

It was partly due to the Cabinet committee system that this happened. It was poor at looking ahead and inadequate when it came to contingency planning and so no thought was given to the possibility that assessments of Malta's value might change and what should be done if that happened. One reason for this failure was the existence in the system of what has been termed 'groupthink' - where a body lights on a particular idea and builds into it reasons why it should be adopted.[1] The results of this can be an incomplete survey of objectives and policy alternatives, a failure to examine the risks of the preferred choice, a failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives, a selective bias in the processing of information and a failure to work out contingency plans. Malta provides examples of the occurrence of all these possible flaws, especially in the way the committee system dealt with Mintoff's integration proposals. There was no real attempt to come up with worthwhile policy alternatives, the possibility of independence and a defence treaty was never reappraised, the proposals were not properly scrutinized because it appeared that nobody wanted to find any reasons for them being unacceptable, and no contingency plans were ever developed. In a report produced by officials in 1964 on the future of the smaller colonies it was stated that Britain had been 'prepared to accept the disadvantages of integration in the case of Malta in 1953 (*sic*) because at that time our defence interests in keeping Malta from independence seemed large enough to warrant it'.[2] This was precisely the problem; Britain did not really want integration with Malta, but had no alternative to offer. The lack of British policy initiatives and the absence of contingency plans produced an element of policy drift and led to the eventual overturning of all the arguments against Maltese independence. This was never acknowledged; many arguments were forgotten when they became inconvenient, with policy-makers exhibiting a kind of collective amnesia.

The case of Malta also demonstrates that the committee system clearly was a source of informal power; that is the means and devices that can be utilized by ministers and officials that arise incidentally out of a political system's structure.[3] Kilmuir frequently used his summing up as chairman of the Malta Committee to express his own point of view rather than summing up the feelings of the committee. Macmillan used such powers to keep a tight grip on issues that particularly concerned him. Macmillan was probably the main beneficiary of the informal powers bestowed by the system. He could manipulate the committee system by creating or disbanding committees, by deciding on their composition and terms of reference, and by

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[1] For a historical study that utilizes this concept see J. Tratt, *The Macmillan Government and Europe: A Study in the Process of Policy Development* (Basingstoke 1996). For the concept itself see I. L. Janis, *Groupthink* (2nd edition Boston 1982).

[2] PRO, CAB 148/5, DO(O)(64)16, 23 March 1964, p. 9.

[3] See Tratt, *The Macmillan Government and Europe*, p. 6.

chairing them. In addition he could also pass matters to a committee with a malleable chairman when he considered that he was not getting his own way in the Cabinet.

Given all the above factors it is clear that the Cabinet committee system was not simply a neutral piece of administrative machinery. It provided the government with the means of avoiding taking decisions and allowed it to go through the motions of policy-making. The system could provide a semblance of activity and so hide policy inertia, and in consequence British policy was essentially reactive, with decisions taken only when Britain had no other choice.

In the case of Malta, the overall impact of the system on the CO's position in government was a positive one. The nature of the problem of Malta was such that other departments would inevitably have been involved. The fact that discussions took place in committees, rather than on a bilateral basis with other concerned departments, gave the CO the chance to try and get allies to support and strengthen its position. It also gave the CO the opportunity of getting the support of a committee's chairman if he was sympathetic to the CO's position, as happened in the case

Malta was in many ways the beneficiary of British miscalculations. By the time Britain realized that the island's strategic value had increased again Britain had, by agreeing to Olivier's request in 1962 that independence should be granted, set in motion a process that could not be reversed. Britain also miscalculated who had the upper hand, wrongly assuming that the island's reliance on British defence expenditure gave Britain more leverage over Malta than Britain's strategic need for the island gave Malta over Britain. In developing policy Britain also seems to have been oblivious to the effect of the reductions in defence spending on this relationship. What had at one time seemed an impossibility became an inevitability. The combination of Maltese division on the island's constitutional future and Britain's lack of initiatives produced a policy drift, but a drift that inexorably headed in the direction of independence.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

A civil servant observed in a memorandum to Brook how 'extraordinarily difficult it is for someone from outside...to get the feel of what goes on in the Ministerial/administrative machine and how decisions are actually made'.[1] Implicit in this assumption is that the operation of the machine was fully understood by those working within it. However, it could be that those inside the machine are those least likely to be aware of how it actually functioned and the implications this had for the development of policy. Historians and political scientists have not yet examined how the Cabinet committee part of the machine actually functioned, and therefore cannot offer any information on the policy development implications of the actual operation of the committee system. This study has set out to rectify this situation, and to offer an assessment of policy outcomes by making an analysis of the policy process. It has concluded that both the policy process and the policy outcome were flawed.

This study has not found any evidence to suggest that those involved in the Cabinet committee system considered it to be anything other than a neutral - in the sense that it did not influence policy outcomes - piece of government machinery that contributed to the efficient working of government, and that it was a decision-making system. And indeed in a number of ways the committee system was a decision-making machinery and did improve the efficiency of government. Its most obvious achievement was in reducing the workload of the Cabinet as a whole, although the individual workload of senior ministers was to an extent not reduced, but simply reallocated from the Cabinet to the major committees on which they sat. Nevertheless, by bringing non-Cabinet ministers into the collective work of the government the pressure of work on senior ministers was eased to some extent and the doctrine of collective ministerial responsibility was reinforced. In addition, it was not often that a disputed matter had to be brought before the Cabinet because a committee had been unable to reach agreement. The use of Cabinet committees meant that some major issues, such as the creation of Malaysia, barely had to be discussed by the Cabinet. There was little loss of ministerial control because such issues tended to be discussed by ministerial committees, with only the less important details of a scheme, rather than the proposal itself, dealt with by official committees.

However, in its day-to-day functioning the Cabinet committee system demonstrated a number of shortcomings. One important one was that issues sometimes bounced around from

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[1] PRO, CAB 21/3903, memorandum to Brook (sender's signature illegible), 13 July 1960.

one committee to another, or between the Cabinet and various committees with no clear logic or pattern evident, giving little sense that a particular issue was being processed by the system. Few issues went through the system in accordance with the neat model of official examination of details and options, then ministerial committee decision-making, or ministerial committee clarification of problems and disputes before referral to the Cabinet for a decision. Issues also appeared not to be processed by the system because often committees did not follow issues up; they sometimes just seemed to disappear into a bureaucratic black hole. As a result some committee work appeared to be unproductive because many committee discussions did not produce any concrete results. Often in the system no conclusions were reached or decisions taken, and there was a tendency for the same arguments to be repeated again and again until events forced the government to take a decision.

A common feature of the day-to-day functioning of the committee system was the number of pointless debates that took place when Britain actually had no policy options to choose from; ministers and officials seemed to have a pathological aversion to acknowledging that they had no choice but to take a particular course of action. And when the government did have a choice of policy alternatives, the committee system did not always assess the practicability of all of them. This happened because there was a failure to scrutinize rigorously any options that appeared obviously attractive, with the result that the risks of a particular option were not fully assessed and contingency plans were not made. Furthermore, even when an official committee had scrutinized such a proposal, ministers might simply ignore that work because they did not want to hear of any drawbacks to a favoured course of action. This lack of careful scrutiny was particularly evident when Britain had no counter-proposal to an initiative by a colonial politician, as if the government did not want to find flaws with such proposals. Duplication of work was another shortcoming of the committee system. The same topic was sometimes discussed by different committees, and this could produce inconsistent debates and decisions. Sometimes committees did not always perform an effective ground-clearing function for Cabinet discussions, such as clarifying the areas of disagreement, and as a result Cabinet discussions were sometimes needlessly lengthy. Committee discussions could also be unnecessarily long because there was a reluctance to take disputes to the Cabinet and so there could be a lot of repetitive discussion in an attempt to get agreement. Taking all these day-to-day shortcomings as a whole it appears that Cabinet committees were no longer the bodies for decision-making and the efficient despatch of business that Attlee had intended them to be. In many ways the system had become little more than a talking shop or, to put it more kindly, a consultative apparatus.

Some problems arose not just from the actual day-to-day functioning of the committee system in practice, but also from various aspects of the nature of the system. One of the main problems with the Cabinet committee system was that in many ways it did not always function as a system. It was so vast and sprawling that often its constituent parts did not connect up properly. As a result issues could be very slow in reaching the Cabinet, and debates and ideas did not always flow up through the system, with the result that committees often failed to build on the work of other committees. Only rarely did committees refer to the activities of other committees, even when another committee had studied the same or a similar issue. One result of this was that the many policy studies appear to have been of little value because they do not seem to have been utilized that much by ministerial committees to inform their work and illuminate ministerial thinking.

The failure of committees to operate as part of a system also meant that the work of officialdom could be quite futile because it was not transmitted to ministers, or even if it was ministers seemed disinclined to build on it and simply ignored it. There are numerous examples of official memoranda either not being circulated to ministers, or not being discussed by the ministerial committees to which they were circulated, and so it is not clear how the work of official committees contributed to the development of policy. It would appear that the system failed to provide a proper bridge between ministers and the bureaucracy. In addition, it is clear that there was a problem with the ways of working of officialdom. Official committees carried out slow, detailed studies, and sometimes by the time they were finally produced political developments had made them obsolete; the mindset and often plodding pace of officialdom could be ill-suited to the pace and unpredictability of political change. There could be a lack of urgency in official committee discussions; leisurely debates took place which suggest a blinkered approach by officials who seemed intent on ignoring the fact that their plans and recommendations could be affected by unforeseen events or by the political initiatives of their political masters.

One consequence of the work of officials not reaching ministers, or being ignored by them was that the Cabinet committee system did not increase the power and influence of officials, and so the use of official committees did not lead to policy options being foreclosed. The contention that officials manipulate ministers, and try to ensure that the policy alternatives they favour are foisted on a reluctant minister, is not borne out by the papers of the Cabinet committees. Officials did not have to surreptitiously try and push a favoured alternative from a range of options simply because ministers often asked official Cabinet committees to make a specific policy recommendation. Clearly, this gave them more influence than merely being asked to come up with a list of policy options, but it did mean that officials had to be open about

their favoured options. However, it did not mean that officials were in any way subverting ministerial authority; any loss of ministerial control was a direct result of how ministers themselves decided to make use of official committees. It was only rarely that policy recommendations were made in the absence of ministerial instructions to that effect. Officials did not as a matter of course try and set the political agenda, and so did not have the sort of baleful influence over policy-making that some politicians claim they have. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that officials rarely used the committee system to force ministers to take a decision; rather what happened was that in the absence of a lead from ministers there was policy drift and officials could engage in some fairly futile activity.

The way of working of officials meant that the committee system had a conservative influence on policy development and meant that it was unlikely to come up with innovative proposals. The more radical ideas tended to be weeded out early on in official committee discussions; officials seemed to have been wary of innovative suggestions and were unwilling to bring them to the attention of ministers. There also appears to have been reluctance on the part of officials to suggest ideas that they thought ministers would be hostile to or reject. This all meant that even if official committees did not lead to policy options being foreclosed, they could lead to them being narrowed. Cabinet committees went to great lengths to reach agreement and this was another reason why the committee system had a conservative influence. The desire for consensus could mean that policy options were not scrutinized fully, current policy was not always re-appraised, even when a decision later appeared to have been ill-considered, and there was a reluctance to question fully the assumptions which underlay current policy. Furthermore, some of the compromises that emerged when there was profound disagreement on a committee could be such weak decisions as to be meaningless - no more than what Samuel Beer characterizes as bland administrative pap.[1]

One problem with the committee system was that it had no inbuilt momentum or drive. In general it only worked effectively when ministers gave a lead, or when an imperative was imported from outside the system by events or a significant individual; otherwise there was policy drift. There in fact appears to have been an inbuilt inertia in the system because decisions were often only made with the greatest reluctance. Committees often seemed relieved when they found a reason not to take a decision, and in such cases the system did little more than help camouflage the evasion of decision-making. There was a disinclination to take the initiative, a general unwillingness to fully face up to problems, and a lack of political will in the system that produced a tendency to shy away from facing up to difficult issues. One consequence of all this

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[1] Beer, *Treasury Control*, p. 120.

was that the system was unable to face up to the implications of decline. This should have been the big issue that the system had to deal with but it failed to do so.

The committee system's failure to coordinate policy was one of its most serious and damaging failures. This was a particularly significant shortcoming for the development of colonial policy, given that it was linked to so many other policy areas. This meant, for example, that the implications of colonial constitutional development for defence policy were not always considered. The committee system did not help the government develop an overall strategy because colonial issues were often discussed without reference to related policy areas and vice versa. This meant that the committee system did not ensure that when there was a change of policy in one area, the ramifications for related areas were studied. Indeed, it appears that the system led to policy fragmentation because nobody was looking at the big picture; although a number of committees dealt with the same policy area, they only looked at their own particular part of it, and so the result was a lack of direction and a failure to form the various strands of policy into coherent whole. All these shortcoming, in combination with the fact that the committee structure often did not function as a system, meant that it was not good at looking ahead and so it did not make much of a contribution to either long-term or contingency planning.

This lack of coordination was in part due to the fact that the tactics used by departments to protect their own interests undermined the system. The CO, for example, would bring to the attention of a committee the connection between colonial policy and other policy areas if it was in its own interests to do so; if it was not then it kept its head down. The policy coordination problem was therefore not simply due to shortcomings in the committee system, it also reflected a problem with the nature of government because it does not appear that there was actually any will to coordinate policy. Such coordination would mean that ministers and senior officials would need to subordinate their departmental interests to some general government interest and accept a reduction in the autonomy of their departments. The evidence suggests that in fact one of the concerns of departments that sat on Cabinet committees was to prevent the committee system from eroding their autonomy. In addition, any higher general government interest would not necessarily be easy to identify, or to get agreement to given the rivalries and conflicting goals in government.

As has been shown the CO was deeply involved in the Cabinet committee system, and became progressively more involved as its responsibilities diminished. This closer involvement in the committee system reflected a greater interest in colonial matters on the part of the government as a whole, which could have reduced the CO's authority and autonomy because more departments and ministers now had a say in colonial policy. Certainly, when a colonial

interest clashed with a core British interest the latter would usually prevail, but this would have happened whether the Cabinet committee system had existed or not. In practice, the increased involvement of the CO in the committee system was not entirely a bad thing for the CO. The committee system provided the CO with a forum in which it could draw attention to colonial problems, and because it was an able player in the bureaucratic game, it was generally fairly successful at using a variety of means to promote colonial concerns. One standard tactic was to appeal to British self-interest by linking colonial issues to wider concerns, for example by pointing out the strategic benefits Britain would receive from additional expenditure on a strategically valuable colony. In addition, the discussion of colonial matters in Cabinet committees, rather than in general interdepartmental discussions, could be to the CO's advantage if the chairman was sympathetic to the CO's concerns, as was the chairman of the CPC, Lord Kilmuir. One important advantage of colonial matters being more frequently discussed in Cabinet committees was that it gave the CO the chance to get the support of other departments, particularly the other overseas departments, against the Treasury, and gave it a far greater chance of success than it would have had in bilateral discussions with the Treasury. The CRO's representation on committees could be particularly valuable when independence settlements were discussed, because it had a strong self-interest in ensuring that territories it would later have responsibility for were not, thanks to the Treasury, alienated by a derisory financial settlement on independence.

It is clear that Macmillan made astute use of the committee system to increase his authority. To get the decision he wanted on a matter he would ensure that it went to a Cabinet committee first, so that if agreement was reached, and it was only infrequently that committees failed to reach agreement, he could then raise the matter in the Cabinet with the authority of a committee's approval behind it. In addition most, if not all, of those ministers with a departmental interest in that proposal would have been party to the committee discussions. As a result Macmillan could raise the proposal in the Cabinet, safe in the knowledge that those ministers with a departmental interest in the issue had already agreed to the proposal and could not then oppose it in the Cabinet. Furthermore, any other minister who wished to oppose the proposal would be handicapped by not having the specialist knowledge of the issue gained from committee discussions. Macmillan also ensured that all potentially controversial decisions, especially one that could cause problems within the Conservative Party, that had been agreed on in a committee were ratified by the Cabinet. He did this to prevent any Cabinet colleagues from being able to disassociate themselves from such a decision on the grounds that they were not members of the Cabinet committee that had taken it, and so made sure that the government as a whole was identified with politically sensitive decisions.

Given all the many shortcomings of the Cabinet committee system, it might be asked why it survived unaltered. This relates to another feature of the system: its inherent strength. The system did provide for thorough consultation and so all the interests could be reassured that they had a voice in the process: there would be discussion and not dictatorship. This helps explain why throughout the period under study it remained more or less unchanged, and despite Churchill's attempt to reduce drastically the number of committees. The robustness of the system was due to a number of factors. Firstly, there were no crises that showed the system to be a failure. The only major crisis was Suez and it actually had the effect of making the committee system seem all the more valuable and led Macmillan to urge that more use should be made of Cabinet committees.[1] Conditions were sufficiently similar from 1951 to 1964 that they did not force any changes in the system. Secondly, there was not any incentive to change or replace it simply because there does not appear to have been much awareness on the part of those working within the system that there were flaws with its functioning and nature. In addition, as will be argued later, the system was not self-reflective, and so it would not be able to identify its shortcomings.

Norman Brook took the lead in managing the system and although he considered that the system had potential shortcomings, he also believed that the system worked. He monitored the system because it had a built in tendency to expand and become unwieldy, unfocussed and a source of information overload, and he wanted to ensure that it remained highly structured. His experience had convinced him that a highly structured system worked - he had seen such a system cope with the exigencies of war and the demands of post-war reconstruction. However, what Brook does not seem to have been aware of was that because the system had been developed at times when there were strong external pressures on it, it needed those pressures to function properly. In effect the committee system needed immediate pressing problems that it had no option other than to deal with as a matter of urgency to give it its dynamic, and this happened when the system was faced with the imperatives of war and post-war recovery. But this was not the case from 1951 to 1964. There were of course problems - such as the level of overseas expenditure - but such difficulties were different from those the system had been developed to deal with, and they could be, and were, mulled over in an almost leisurely manner. Therefore from 1951 to 1964 there were few external pressures on the system to ensure it functioned as intended. Brook seemed unaware that in respects the political atmosphere had changed and was trying to preserve a system that was in many ways not suited to the different conditions of this period. However, in one respect there was one big issue that should have

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[1] See Chapter Two, p. 49.

given the system momentum, British decline and its implications. This did not happen because there was obviously a reluctance to face this issue. The implications of decline for policy were mentioned, but at various times and in various committees, with the result that it was dealt with in such a diffused matter that it never became a large, solid entity that pushed the committee system into action. It remained so nebulous that nobody was aware of it.

One basic problem with the system was that it had no educative function. It was not self-reflective in that there were no policy post-mortems to see what could be learnt from failures, lessons learnt in one area were not applied to other areas, it did not assess current policy in the light of relevant earlier failures, it did not re-assess initially rejected alternatives and there was a general reluctance to reappraise policy. The system was not able to learn from its mistakes because to do so it would first have had to acknowledge its mistakes, and it appears to be in the nature of government that this is rarely done. The system also exhibited the symptoms of selective amnesia: when a particular course of action became unavoidable all previous objections to it were forgotten, and as a result there was no acknowledgement of, and preparation for, possible problems, and no contingency plans were drawn up. Indeed, on the whole there was a general absence in the committee system of contingency planning. Obviously all possibilities could not be planned for - the committee system would have sunk under this burden of work and would have no actual positive policy recommendations to offer - but there does not seem to have been any sort of allowance for 'events'.

Looking at colonial policy within the context of the Cabinet committee system reveals much about the realities of that policy and how it was developed. In contrast to those studies that credit Britain with decisiveness, a clear sense of direction and long-term goals, the papers of the Cabinet committee system demonstrate how muddled, inconsistent, reactive and indecisive colonial policy actually was. Above all, the committee papers show there was no such thing as a long-term, planned and coordinated process of withdrawal from the colonies - there was no master plan underlying the granting of independence. When Britain initially talked about independence, what was actually meant was no more than full internal self-government within the Commonwealth, with Britain retaining responsibility for defence and foreign policy. It was only gradually, on a colony-by-colony basis, that Britain realized it had no option but to grant genuine independence. Although Britain was happy to withdraw quickly from valueless colonies, the committee papers demonstrate that in the case of a number of colonies, Britain withdrew quicker than it would have preferred to have done, giving independence only grudgingly when the costs of attempting to retain them were assessed as being too high. Granting independence only when Britain felt it was not in a position to refuse it is hardly consistent with a programme of decolonization. In addition, decisions to withdraw were

individual ones taken in their own right, and not as part of any general plan. Colonial policy lacked consistency and cohesion because it was little more than a disparate collection of policies for individual colonies, rather than some grand overarching strategy. This lack of policy coherence could in part be directly attributable to the Cabinet committee system because there appeared to be no memory in the system and so made it unlikely that there would be policy consistency and an awareness of knock-on-effects. In other words even for similar colonies, the committee system made it likely that they would be dealt with in their own right even when they could have been dealt with more effectively together.

What is also overwhelmingly clear is the extent to which British policy was essentially reactive, and how few policy initiatives Britain had to offer. In the case of a number of colonies Britain did little more than respond to the initiatives and demands of colonial politicians. The extent to which Britain was responding to events and the initiatives of others suggests that there was no such thing as a single entity that could be labelled as colonial policy. In many cases British policy could simply be characterized as a tendency to stay quiescent until pushed into action by unforeseen events or the initiatives of others, and then to remain at rest until given another push; one forced move created further pressures to which the government had to respond in a process of political attrition.

An analysis of colonial policy in the context of the committee system shows to what a large extent colonial policy was determined by other policy concerns; indeed in many ways by the early 1960s Britain no longer had any colonial policy, it simply had colonial aspects to its defence and foreign policies. In consequence colonial policy was not, and could not be some single entity produced by the CO, and so there could not have been any planned process of withdrawal because there were so many policy variables involved. In some cases, colonial constitutional advance was completely determined by strategic considerations, with the military bottom line prevailing over colonial concerns. A combination of Cold War concerns and Britain's strategic needs was what lay behind the creation of Malaysia for example, and constitutional advance in Aden was entirely determined by Britain's strategic requirements. However, although strategic considerations had a great influence on colonial policy, it was not the case that decolonization was the result of some strategic reappraisal. As the various studies of external policy show the government was unable to make any decision about giving up or reducing the global role. Furthermore, the colonies were not given independence because a change in Britain's strategic requirements meant that the colonies no longer had any strategic value. The debates in the committee system show that certain colonies were still regarded as strategically valuable, and indeed that the strategic value of some had actually increased, but it was often those colonies that became independent before those that were of no strategic value.

If an accurate evaluation is to be made of claims that there was a planned process of withdrawal from the colonies, then the actual order of this withdrawal is important. In the case of British Guiana, British Honduras and The Gambia, it is clear that colonies with little or no strategic value were given their independence later than colonies that were of value such as Malta and Kenya; the order is therefore the reverse from what one would expect would be the order of a planned process. Although this study has not dealt with economic topics, it seems reasonable to suggest that a similar argument can be applied - that a change in the economic value of the colonies was not responsible for Britain deciding to withdraw because economically worthless colonies became independent after ones which were of more economic value.

An analysis of the papers of the Cabinet committee system demonstrates that Macmillan and Macleod's claims that there was a deliberate speeding-up of the pace of change in Africa are inaccurate and give a false sense of decisiveness. There was no general and intentional increase in the speed of change. Indeed in certain instances in East Africa there was an attempt to slow down the pace of change. Their version of events suggests that the African colonies were considered collectively; they often were not. As a result even when Britain's hand was not entirely forced, as was the case with the ready granting of early independence to Tanganyika, the result was a knock-on effect that Britain was not fully prepared for. Tanganyikan independence, and the changes it stimulated in Uganda, made the granting, with the greatest reluctance, of early independence to Kenya unavoidable. The main reason why Britain came to recognize that it had to give quick independence to its African colonies was the government's perception of the threat posed by African nationalism. Whether there was any real threat from African nationalism is irrelevant because what mattered was the perception of that threat on the part of the policy-makers of the time. The committee system papers show that they believed there was a genuine nationalist threat, and that resisting demands for independence would create an uncontrollable level of unrest. Perhaps one of the reasons that nationalism had an important influence was the nature of the committee system. Given that it was so bad at contingency and long-term planning the system tended to generate a reactive policy and so made it more likely that Britain would react to nationalism in the way it did. Cold War concerns also played a part in the transfer of power in Africa because they made Britain anxious not to alienate colonial politicians by refusing constitutional advance, in case they became uncooperative after independence or even moved into the Soviet camp. The actions of the other colonial power also had a significant influence. On the other hand US pressure did not play a part.

Judgements can be made about the work of the ministerial and official CPC that tie up the committee system to colonial policy. As far as the official CPC is concerned, this body was a complete failure, contributing little to the long-term development of policy and doing nothing to

assist the functioning of the ministerial CPC. The latter clearly failed to provide any overview and long-term direction of policy, with most of its time taken up by 'events' and the details of policy, particularly the details of constitutional development. In addition it did not perform a ground-clearing function because many of many of its discussions on constitutional development were repeated in the Cabinet. The fact that many colonial issues went to the Cabinet rather than the CPC seems a tacit recognition that it was not performing its intended functions. But the fact that the CPC was not taking a long-term view of policy was not simply a failure of this committee; it was an indication that the government as a whole had no coherent long-term strategy to offer. As a result of this the CPC was doing little more than deal with problems as they arose, ones that were often the product of the demands of colonial politicians.

Overall, when colonial policy is studied within the context of the committee system a less favourable picture of colonial policy emerges. It can be characterized less favourably because it can be seen how essentially reactive British colonial policy was and how few policy initiatives Britain had to offer. Many policy decisions were actually nothing more than forced moves rather than preferred choices. In addition the lack of cohesion and consistency in colonial policy becomes clearer.

Examining policy within the context of the committee system gives a rigour and structure to that examination of policy. The warning at the beginning of this study that using selected examples from different policy areas would mean that practically anything could be 'proved' about the committee system may also apply to colonial policy because of the sheer extent of primary material available on it. This may be why such widely different interpretations of decolonization exist, and so it could be that perhaps a new framework for colonial policy is needed, new parameters to avoid the danger of too much generalization from any one colony. What a study of the government machinery can do is to give a better focus to policy studies. It may therefore be that other policy areas would benefit from being examined in the context of the committee system, in order to investigate further this relatively neglected part of government, particularly by looking at aspects of domestic policy to see what that tells us about the system and whether they were better served by the system than external concerns. Such studies would also provide a focussed analysis of those policy areas themselves and would ensure that policy outcomes are fully understood by being considered in the context of the process of policy development.

APPENDIX ONE
CABINET COMMITTEES ON WHICH THE COLONIAL OFFICE WAS REPRESENTED

CAB 130 COMMITTEES

ACCESSION PROCLAMATION (GEN 387)

ALLOCATION OF STEEL (GEN 391)

APPLICATION BY ANDREW MWENYA FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS (GEN 689)

BOYCOTT OF SOUTH AFRICAN GOODS (GEN 703)

BRIEFS FOR THE MEETING OF THE COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL IN ACCRA (GEN 742)

BRITISH SOMALILAND (GEN 444)

BRITISH SOUTH AFRICA COMPANY (GEN 881)

CENTRAL AFRICAN AFFAIRS (GEN 775)

COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (GEN 708)

COMETS FOR CHINA (GEN 840)

COMMON MARKET AND THE FREE TRADE AREA (GEN 580)

COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS (GEN 664)

COMMONWEALTH AND EUROPEAN ECONOMIC QUESTIONS (GEN 610)

COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC AFFAIRS (GEN 393)

COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC CONFERENCE, DETAILED ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS (GEN 416)

COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC CONFERENCE, FURTHER CONSULTATION (GEN 420)

COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC CONFERENCE, FURTHER CONSULTATION (MINISTERIAL) (GEN 424)

COMMONWEALTH IMMIGRANTS BILL (GEN 756)

COMMONWEALTH MEMBERSHIP (OFFICIAL) (GEN 435)

COMMONWEALTH POLICY (GEN 834)

COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS' MEETING (GEN 518)

COMMONWEALTH TRADE AND ECONOMIC CONFERENCE (GEN 631)

COMMONWEALTH TRADE AND ECONOMIC CONFERENCE (MINISTERIAL) (GEN 650)

EUROPEAN FREE TRADE AREA STEERING GROUP (GEN 613)

EVACUATION OF MALTESE FROM EGYPT IN EMERGENCY (GEN 452)

EXHIBITIONS OVERSEAS (GEN 386)

EXPENDITURE IN EASTERN ASIA (GEN 557)

EXTERNAL ECONOMIC POLICY WORKING PARTY (GEN 412)

FACILITIES AT CHRISTMAS ISLAND (GEN 777)

FREE TRADE AREA (GEN 580)

FUTURE COMMERCIAL POLICY (GEN 549)

FUTURE DEFENCE POLICY (GEN 796)

FUTURE PLANNING WORKING GROUP (GEN 774)

FUTURE POLICY (GEN 624)

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE, COLONIAL WAVER (GEN 489)

GOVERNMENT PUBLICITY (GEN 561)

GREATER MALAYSIA (GEN 754)

IMMUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (GEN 853)

INDO-CHINA AND ROYAL TOUR: GIBRALTAR (GEN 467)

INQUIRY INTO OVERSEA INFORMATION SERVICES (GEN 407)

JORDAN (GEN 552)

JORDAN AND CYPRUS (GEN 605)

KENYA (GEN 810)

KENYA: BUILDING SOCIETIES (GEN 721)

MALAYA (GEN 400)

MALDIVES (GEN 675)

MALDIVES (GEN 704)

MALTA (GEN 575)

MALTA DOCKYARD (GEN 667)

MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH FINANCE MINISTERS, WORKING PARTY ON ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS (GEN 398)

MEETING OF MINISTERS ON MIDDLE EAST DEFENCE (GEN 476)

MEETING WITH DANISH MINISTERS (GEN 791)

MIDDLE EAST POLICY (GEN 540)

MILITARY AID TO PAKISTAN (GEN 874)

MILITARY IMPLICATIONS OF GENERAL TEMPLER'S REPORT (OFFICIAL) (GEN 501)

MR. DILLON'S VISIT (GEN 698)

MUSCAT AND OMAN (GEN 609)

MUSCAT AND OMAN (GEN 717)

NIGERIAN RESOLUTION ON COLONIALISM (GEN 748)

OFFICE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM COMMISSIONER-GENERAL IN SOUTH EAST ASIA (GEN 494)

OVERSEA BROADCASTING (GEN 542)

OVERSEA BROADCASTING (MINISTERIAL) (GEN 554)

OVERSEA CIVIL SERVICE (GEN 519)

PLOWDEN REPORT (GEN 832)

POLITICAL ASSOCIATION WITH EUROPE (GEN 553)

POSITION OF UK IN WORLD AFFAIRS (GEN 659)

PREPARATIONS FOR COMMONWEALTH FINANCE MINISTERS' MEETING, UK WORKING PARTY ON COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT (GEN 446)

PREPARATIONS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS' MEETING (GEN 531)

PREPARATIONS FOR MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS (GEN 433)

PRIME MINISTER'S COMMONWEALTH TOUR (GEN 622)

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON AND OTTAWA (GEN 649)

PROGRESS OF THE REVIEW OF THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE (GEN 476)

PURCHASE OF CUBAN SUGAR (GEN 427)

QUEEN'S VISIT TO PORTUGAL (GEN 571)

RHODESIA AND NYASALAND (GEN 680)

ROYAL STYLE AND TITLES (GEN 404)

ROYAL VISITS OVERSEAS AND VISITS BY FOREIGN HEADS OF STATE (GEN 693)

SCIENTIFIC POLICY (GEN 438)

SECURITY IN CYPRUS (GEN 503)

SECURITY IN THE COLONIES (MINISTERIAL) (GEN 485)

SINGAPORE (GEN 687)

SOMALILAND PROTECTORATE AND THE HORN OF AFRICA (OFFICIAL) (GEN 556)

SOUTH ARABIAN FEDERATION (GEN 871)

SOUTHERN RHODESIA (GEN 792)

SOUTHERN RHODESIA (GEN 846)

STEEL PRICES (GEN 402)

SUEZ CANAL: PUBLICITY ARRANGEMENTS (GEN 558)

TARIFF POLICY ON JAPAN (GEN 436)

TELEVISION ENTERPRISES OVERSEAS (GEN 869)

TERRITORIAL WATERS (GEN 642)

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GEN 486)

TRADE WITH SOVIET RUSSIA (GEN 679)

TREATY OF ROME WORKING GROUP (GEN 732)

UK DELEGATION TO COMMONWEALTH OFFICIALS' CONFERENCE (GEN 602)

UNESCO CONFERENCE 1956 (GEN 521)

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (GEN 860)

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (OFFICIAL) (GEN 861)

UNITED NATIONS COSTS (GEN 760)

UNITED NATIONS DEBATE ON SOUTH AFRICA (GEN 711)

UNITED STATES FRUIT (GEN 504)

YEMEN (GEN 776)

CAB 131 COMMITTEES

DEFENCE

CAB 134 COMMITTEES

AFRICA (MINISTERIAL)

AFRICA (OFFICIAL)

AFRICA (OFFICIAL), SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE FOUNDATION FOR MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA

APPLICATION OF THE CROWN PROCEEDINGS ACT IN THE COLONIES

ASSISTANCE IN THE FIELD OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH TO COMMONWEALTH AND FOREIGN COUNTRIES (MINISTERIAL)

ATOMIC ENERGY (MINISTERIAL)

ATOMIC ENERGY (OFFICIAL)

BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PROSPECTS

BERLIN CONTINGENCY PLANNING (NON-MILITARY COUNTERMEASURES), WORKING PARTY ON LEGISLATION

BOOK EXPORTS WORKING PARTY

CENSORSHIP STANDING INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE

CIVIL AND SERVICES TELECOMMUNICATIONS

COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT

COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT, SUB-COMMITTEE ON IMPORT PROGRAMMES

COLONIAL IMMIGRANTS (CAB 134/1210)

COLONIAL IMMIGRANTS (CAB 134/1466)

COLONIAL POLICY (MINISTERIAL)

COLONIAL POLICY (OFFICIAL)

COMMERCIAL POLICY (MINISTERIAL)

COMMERCIAL POLICY (OFFICIAL)

COMMON MARKET NEGOTIATIONS

COMMON MARKET NEGOTIATIONS (OFFICIAL)

COMMON MARKET NEGOTIATIONS (OFFICIAL) STEERING COMMITTEE

COMMON MARKET NEGOTIATIONS (OFFICIAL) SUB-COMMITTEE

COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT, SUB-COMMITTEE ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION

COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION CONFERENCE

COMMONWEALTH IMMIGRATION

COMMONWEALTH MEMBERSHIP

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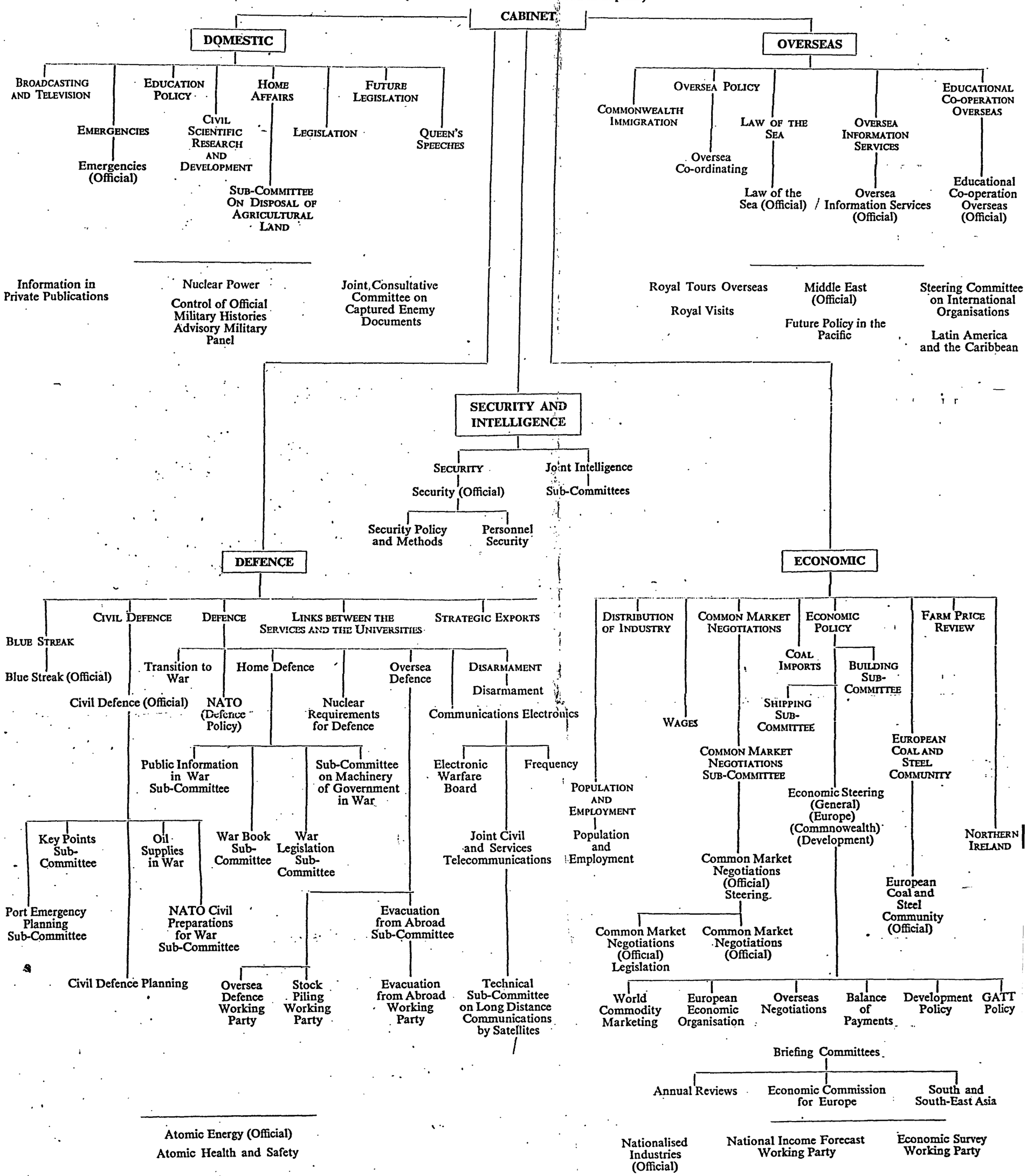
JOINT INTELLIGENCE, MILITARY GEOGRAPHY SUB-COMMITTEE

CABINET COMMITTEE ORGANISATION

(Ministerial Committees are shown in Capitals)



NOTE: Certain Committees are excluded from the Committee Organisation Book

Cabinet Office, S.W.1,
August, 1962

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