University of Southampton

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

History

Empire and Federation in South Arabia, 1952-1967

by

Joseph Higgins

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2022

University of Southampton

Abstract

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

History

Doctor of Philosophy

Empire and Federation in South Arabia, 1952-1967

by

Joseph Higgins

This thesis examines the development and failure of the idea of a South Arabian federal state at the end of the British Empire. As an effort to shape a postcolonial future that would protect British imperial agency against the forces of decolonisation, this thesis argues that the federal idea and resulting Federation of South Arabia were undermined by contradictions in British imperial policy, primary amongst these being the effort to fuse the mutually incompatible goals of bringing South Arabia to independence whilst simultaneously denying local agency over, and facilitate British control over, South Arabia's post-colonial future. With the colony of Aden's merger into the Federation, the contorted rationalisations of achieving merger without local consent created a precarious entanglement and fuelled the move towards the anti-federal, radical, and violent trajectory of nationalist politics. With federal thinking and its official advocates dominant within the colonial administration, there was little scope for a revaluation of policy as the precarity of the federal project became more exposed and the security situation deteriorated. Whilst the Wilson Government sought to reset collaborative relations in the face of an intractable inheritance, an informal network of British officials and politicians attempted to maintain the Federation's preferential position and reverse Government policy. Yet both efforts were overtaken by the intractability of the situation, the collapse of the Federation, and escalating violence in Aden as the British prepared for withdrawal. After fighting for dominance against its rivals, the National Liberation Front would instead emerge to take South Arabia to independence as the People's Republic of South Yemen in November 1967. This thesis demonstrates that the centrality of the federal idea to British policy, powerfully maintained by British officials in South Arabia, drove the conflict with a growing nationalist opposition in Aden, shaped the course of the end of empire, and precluded the chance of a stable postcolonial federal future.

Table of Contents

Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Joseph Higgins

Title of thesis: Empire and Federation in South Arabia, 1952-1967

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Parts of this work have been published as:-

'A federal panacea?: British policy and the idea of a South Arabian federal state, 1952-1963', in Clive Jones & Noel Brehony (eds.), *Britain's Departure from Aden and South Arabia*, (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2020), pp. 77-93

'The nature of Britain's imperial mission in South Arabia', *British-Yemeni Society Journal,* (26, 2018), pp. 45-53, URL: http://b-ys.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/BYSJ%202018.pdf

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Acknowledgements

I am especially grateful for the financial support provided at various stages by the Royal Historical Society, the British-Yemeni Society, the Sir Richard Stapley Educational Trust, and the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Southampton that facilitated the researching and writing of this thesis. The British-Yemeni Society deserves particular thanks for providing a welcoming inlet into the wider academic community that studies modern Yemen and for providing the opportunities to share my research.

I would also like to thank the staff at the British Library, the National Archives Kew, the Liddell Hart Military Archive Kings College London, the Weston Library Oxford, the Middle East Centre Archive at St. Anthony's College Oxford and the BFI Archive Southbank for the work that underpins this thesis.

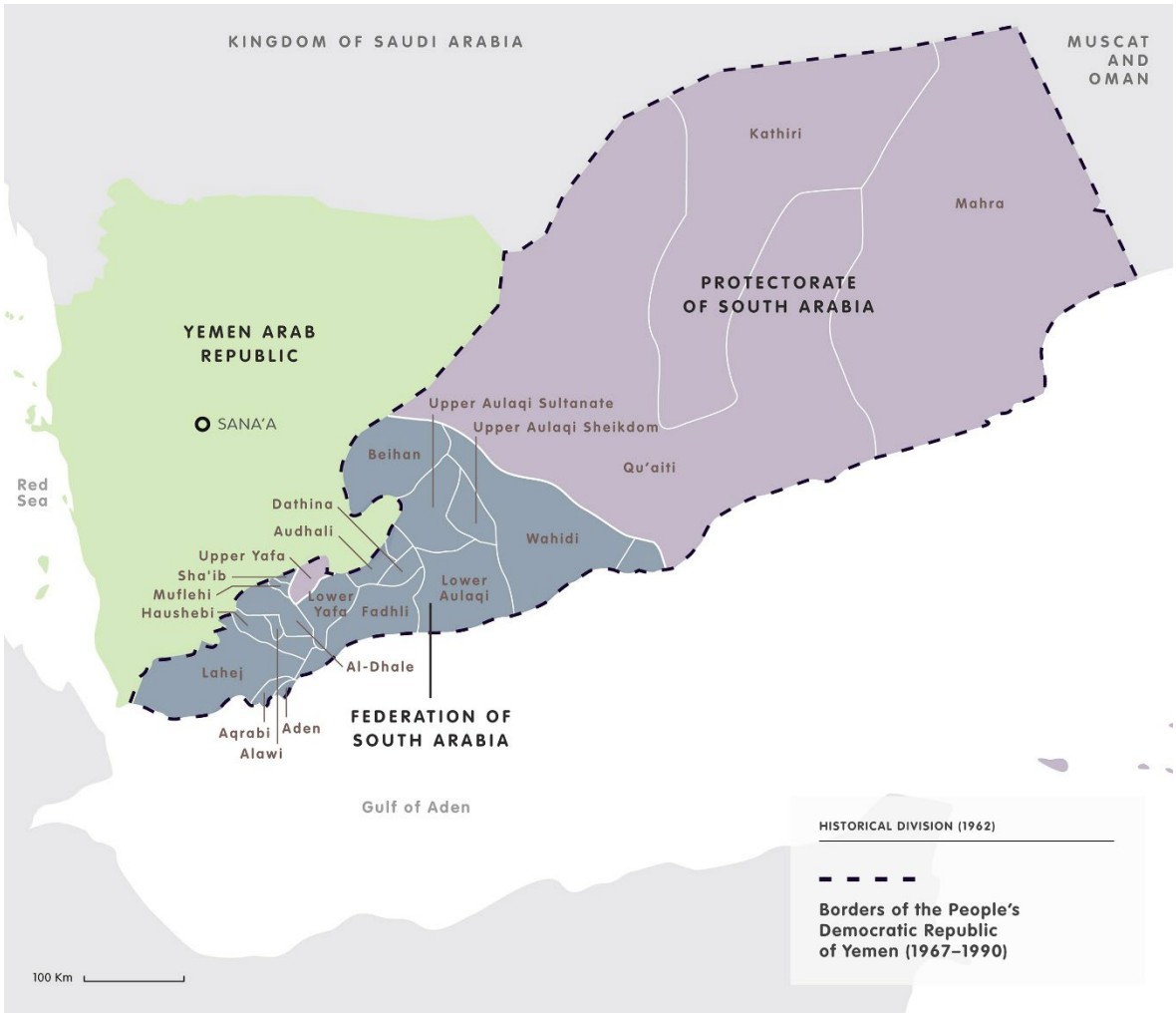
Thank you those who took the time to offer their expertise, offer feedback, respond to my questions, and discuss all things to do with federation, empire, and South Arabia; Maria Holt, Peter Brooke, David Halford, Karl Pieragostini, Noel Brehony, Clive Jones, Adel Aulaqi, Thanos Petouris, Jason C. Parker, Chris Vaughan, and Wm. Roger Louis. I am especially grateful to those who were very generous in sharing their individual and family experiences of the end of empire; Sultan Ghalib al-Qu'aiti, James Nash, Stewart Hawkins, John Harding, Stephen Day, Oliver Miles, Haider Shaif, John Ducker, Sheikh Mohamed Farid al-Aulaqi, and Rupert Wise.

I am particularly grateful to my examiners, Spencer Mawby and Charlotte Reilly, who expertly delivered a brilliant, engaging, tough viva that I enjoyed immensely. Their time, effort, and insights are greatly appreciated. At the University of Southampton, I give special and infinite thanks to Chris Prior for his continually patient, supportive, and invaluable supervision. Through it all I could not have wished for a better supervisor who provided everything to nurture and encourage my academic development and provide more than a fair share of personal support, always taking the time and finding the words to keep this project going. He has repeatedly vindicated my decision to undertake this project at Southampton, and there are simply not enough ways in which I can express my gratitude. Thanks to Mark Cornwall and Joan Tumblety for their advice and suggestions as this thesis progressed, especially to Joan who provided insightful suggestions and reassurance during the late stages of writing and rewriting this thesis, and to Kendrick Oliver and Priti Mishra for their invaluable feedback during my upgrade viva. For all their support, any mistakes and oversights in this thesis remain my own. Thanks to the 'Lunch Brigade'; Rob Joy, Alex Ferguson, Tom Ellis, Abaigh McKee, Isaac Gustafsson Wood and Robbie McGregor; who regularly provided much needed respite from the doldrums of study.

I cannot thank my mother enough for her unceasing support throughout my time in higher education and I hope this thesis is a suitable testament to everything she has done to encourage me every step of the way. Finally, I am indebted to my wife Rosie, without whom none of this would have been possible. I owe her everything and more for all she has done and continues to do to make every day brighter and for being my rock throughout the time it has taken to produce this thesis, least of all during a once-in-a-hundred-year pandemic.

This thesis is dedicated in forever loving memory to Leonard Horsley and Andrew Higgins, who are dearly missed.

Map of the region



Map of South Arabia and Yemen Arab Republic

(Public Domain)

Abbreviations

ATUC ..... Aden Trade Union Congress

EAP ..... Eastern Aden Protectorate

FLOSY ..... Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen

HMG ..... Her Majesty's Government

NLF ..... National Liberation Front

OLOS ..... Organisation for the Liberation of the Occupied South

PORF ..... Popular Organisation of Revolutionary Forces

PSP ..... People's Socialist Party

SAA ..... South Arabian Army

SAL ..... South Arabian League

SBA ..... Sovereign Base Area

UAR ..... United Arab Republic

UAS ..... United Arab States

UNP ..... United National Party

WAP ..... Western Aden Protectorate

YAR ..... Yemeni Arab Republic

Introduction

On 28 November 1967, a ceremony of army officers, police, and officials gathered within the confines of RAF Khormaksar. The ceremony was to see off the last High Commissioner of Aden, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, as he prepared to depart for HMS Intrepid, one of twenty-four warships assembled offshore in the Gulf of Aden to oversee the British evacuation. There were no congratulatory speeches, no lowering and raising of flags, or trading of national anthems because the state intended to receive the formal handover of power, the Federation of South Arabia, had disintegrated five months earlier. Created in 1959 from the disparate Sultanates, Sheikhdoms and Emirates that made up most of the western half of the Aden Protectorates, the tribal hinterland surrounding the colony of Aden. The Federation's dependency on British financial, political, and military support, as well as its muddled constitutional framework, made it a troubled entity from the outset. The incorporation of Aden into the Federation in 1963 created an antithetical political settlement that attracted the condemnation of local nationalists, the wider Arab nationalist cause led by Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, and the UN. Simultaneous attempts to assert the Federation's authority in the Protectorates created an entanglement for British and federal troops that was exploited by Yemen and Egypt who supported tribal dissent. The 1962 revolution in Yemen galvanised Adeni nationalists, and the attempted assassination of the High Commissioner Sir Kennedy Trevaskis in December 1963 marked the beginning of the Aden Emergency and a growing insurgency in the colony. The election of a Labour government under Harold Wilson in 1964 brought an eventual reassessment of British policy and the decision of the 1966 Defence Review to abandon the British presence. As the insurgency escalated, the National Liberation Front (NLF) emerged as the dominant force fighting British troops, gradually eliminating the NLF's main rival, the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY), to establish the Marxist-orientated People's Republic of Yemen on 30 November 1967, the day after the final British troops were evacuated. It was far from the idealised transfer of power Britain had seemingly rehearsed across its decolonising empire, and the Royal Marines band overseeing Trevelyan's departure from RAF Khormaksar judged 'Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'Be' as a suitable number to play out nearly 130 years of British rule over South Arabia. This thesis examines the failure of the Federation and unrealised federal idea as features of the end of empire in South Arabia.

The Federation of South Arabia's collapse marked the last in several British experiments in federal state-building at the end of empire, and their high failure rate is well examined

within the historiography of decolonisation.[1] Yet recent interest in federation as a distinct phenomenon has thrown up broader questions beyond post-mortems of failed state-building. In large part this was sparked by Michael Collins, who characterised a post-war 'federal moment' that challenged the seemingly inevitable transition from empire to nation-state. The Central African Federation, the focus of Collins' work, demonstrates the continuity of 'the role of imperial ideology and Britain's determination to continue a missionary imperialism' after the Second World War as the basis of 'imagined alternative forms of sovereignty and political organisation' that sought to redefine and reassert Britain's imperial role against the force of decolonisation and challenge the eventual primacy of the nation-state. It is also suggestive, he argues, of a 'deeper historical connection' among nineteenth-century notions of imperial unity, post-war British federal experiments in Malaya, East Africa, the West Indies and South Arabia, and other European imperial federal experiments. This warrants further examination by historians to interrogate the 'historical space between empire and nation-state' where federation might have provided a route out of empire, and to examine how 'national states became *the only* alternatives to empires.' This potentially wide field of research could thus serve to enable better understanding of the 'most important trans-national and world historical developments in twentieth century history.'[2]

Frederick Cooper, highlighting such federal routes out of empire, argues that local conceptions of federation in French West Africa offered 'multiple pathways out of colonial domination' and that local political movements imagined futures that did not just 'follow the scripts set out for them by colonial apologists, modernization theorists, or believers in revolution.' Where these federal visions did not come to fruition the 'inevitability' of the route to the nation-state, he argues, 'only appeared … in retrospect'. Studying these failed federal futures, he concludes, helps recapture 'the sense of possibility during an uncertain time in world history' and highlights the need, as Gary Wilder similarly puts it, to interrogate 'the gap between the actual, the possible and the desirable [which] was often

---

[1] Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The retreat from empire in the post-war world,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988); Frank Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation 1945-1963,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002); Andrew Cohen, *The Politics and Economics of Decolonization in Africa: The Failed Experiment of the Central African Federation,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017); A. J. Stockwell, 'Malaysia: The making of a neo-colony?', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 26:2 (1998), pp. 138-156; Spencer Mawby, *Ordering Independence: The End of Empire in the Anglophone Caribbean, 1947-1969,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

[2] Michael Collins, 'Decolonisation and the "Federal Moment"', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 24:1 (2013), pp. 21-40

infinitesimal yet seemingly unbridgeable' as an integral part of a contest over the formation of post-imperial settlements.[3] Adom Getachew argues that, for Eric Williams of Trinidad and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana/Gold Coast, federation presented 'a spatial and institutional fix for the postcolonial predicament' of avoiding neo-colonial domination after formal independence. Federation's failure in the West Indies and West Africa was more to do with the 'precise balance' between federal and state powers and should thus not be viewed as examples of the 'necessary incompatibility of nationalism and internationalism or as an instance of a utopian project bound for failure.' Though short-lived, these federal moments illustrate 'that the culmination of empire in nation-states continued to be challenged even at the highpoint of decolonization.'[4] Broadly speaking, a revisionist federal turn has problematised a teleological reading of the post-war advent of the nation-state and has sought to affirm the historical utility of examining contingent routes not taken out of empire to better understand the post-colonial global order.

There have, however, been varied responses to these revisionist claims. Richard Drayton, responding to Cooper, emphasises the inescapable conclusion that the nation-state ultimately won out over its rivals, driven in large part because of the divergence between imperial powers' and local figures' conceptions of federation. Whereas African leaders in French West Africa may have sought 'some form' of federation, he argues, there is little to suggest that French policymakers were at all committed to such an endeavour. For the French, the continuities of racialised thinking and the unwillingness to give up the metropoles' power meant that federation 'was almost from its beginnings a lie' and the fundamentals of imperial power 'would always win out' against 'the idea of a shared future' of a federal route out of empire.[5] A similar argument is made by Musab Younis in his critique of Wilder's claims about the viability of a francophone federal future, especially one, Younis argues, that consisted of millions who 'didn't consider themselves French at all' and had recently 'been subject to arbitrary rule'. Any resultant federation would have shifted the 'political gravity' away from Paris, and it seems unlikely that any French

---

[3] Frederick Cooper, 'Routes out of Empire', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* 37:2 (2017), p. 410; Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 434, 447; Cooper, 'Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective', *The Journal of African History,* 49:2 (2008), pp. 167-196; Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonisation and the Future of the World,* (London: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 166

[4] Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 107-141

[5] Richard Drayton, 'Federal Utopias and the Realities of Imperial Power', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* 37:2 (2017), p. 404

politicians would 'ever have acquiesced to a truly democratic federal solution along these lines'.[6] Others, such as Samuel Moyn and Michael Goebel, have stressed the inevitable victory of nationalism over alternative forms of political organisation that was 'so rapid, so thorough, and so exciting', and claim there is little historical 'cogency the further we step back from individual examples' of possible federal routes out of empire.[7] Overall, the push-back against revisionist federal claims has stressed the limited or non-existent extent to which post-war federalism constitutes a genuine historical moment or a viable alternative to the nation-state which invariably followed the end of imperial dominance.

Yet it not clear that such arguments refute revisionist claims. Other scholars have sought a synthesis to redress the debate without recourse to determinist assessments of the emergence of the nation-state that is difficult for critics to convincingly assert in the face of the breadth of post-war federalism, whilst avoiding revisionists' more utopian claims about the potential of federal alternative routes out of empire. For Goebel, Chris Vaughan and Merve Fejzula, examining federalism or regionalism as antipodal to nationalism is unlikely to yield much of an insight into the eventual triumph of the nation-state. Instead, they argue scholars should examine 'various discourses envisaging a postcolonial world as competing or mutually complementary stands of nationalism'.[8] For East African leaders, Vaughan argues, the nation-state remained the 'most likely exit route from colonial domination' because the significance of federal politics, widely aspired to for varying reasons, lay in it being a useful tool that spurred recognition of the nation-state as the best means for securing local and national interests 'rather than in its potential to create an alternative post-national future for the region.'[9] Fejzula, in a crucial review of the historiography, similarly suggests that federalism's and nationalism's 'historical permeability' has been overlooked by revisionists and their critics. Yet, as critics of revisionists have pointed out, it is not clear how such an approach could be utilised to examine imperial rather than anti-colonial federalism, but Fejzula is right to highlight federation's 'plasticity' and breadth of application rather than uniform ideological coherence or utility. Fejzula further suggests

---

[6] Musab Younis, 'Against Independence', *London Review of Books,* 39:13 (29 June 2017), URL: https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v39/n13/musab-younis/against-independence [accessed 1 September 2017]

[7] Samuel Moyn, 'Fantasies of Federalism', *Dissent,* 62 (2015), pp. 145-151; Michael Goebel, 'After empire must come nation?', *Afro-Asian Visions* (8 Sept. 2016), URL: https://medium.com/afro-asian-visions/after-empire-must-come-nation-cd220f1977c [accessed 1 September 2017]

[8] Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 251

[9] Chris Vaughan, 'The Politics of Regionalism and Federation in East Africa, 1958-1964', *The Historical Journal,* 62:2 (2019), pp. 523, 540

that scholars should redirect their attention towards anti-colonialists' critiques of the state and treat debates over federalism and nationalism as part of a much wider debate about state power and function.[10] As useful as such a perspective might prove for explanations of the collapse of some experiments in imperial federation, caution should be given as to how far it could provide a causal explanation for the utilisation and imposition of federal states by imperial powers. Might the horse of imperial federalism pull the cart of contested statism?

Though tentative steps towards some form of consensus are being attempted, there still remains scope to answer the claims of revisionists and their critics by looking further at the particulars of post-war federalism to better establish its place within the formation of the postcolonial order. South Arabia has largely been at the fringe of the historiography of decolonisation and though there has recently been a significant increase in scholarly attention there remains an opportunity to utilise it as a case study in this broader historiographical debate about post-war imperial federalism. To do so, this thesis will address the following core questions. How viable was the Federation of South Arabia and what does this demonstrate about the cause of its failure? How and why did some historical actors think it was viable? How and why was federalism utilised, what was the impact of this in South Arabia, and how can this inform the broader discussion of the federal moment?

At one level, most scholars of the end of empire in South Arabia are concerned with the forces which acted upon the Federation of South Arabia to explain its collapse and British withdrawal in November 1967. Of principal interest is debate about how far the Wilson government's policies, especially the 1966 Defence Review which announced Britain's unilateral withdrawal without a defence treaty, constituted what J.B. Kelly regards as 'a total betrayal' that undermined the Federation, enthused Nasser, and motivated nationalists to fight rather than negotiate with the retreating imperial power. This retreat, Tore Petersen suggests, was driven by Labour's ideological antipathy towards maintaining an imperial role in the Middle East rather than due to financial or economic scarcity.[11] Others have placed more of an emphasis on the circumstantial and inopportune problems

[10] Merve Fejzula, 'The Cosmopolitan Historiography of Twentieth-Century Federalism', *The Historical Journal*, 64:2 (2021), pp. 477-500

[11] J. B. Kelly, *Arabia, the Gulf and the West* (London: George Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980), p. 25; Peter Hinchcliffe, John Ducker, and Maria Holt, *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat from Aden,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 6, 74, 140; Tore Petersen, *The Decline of the Anglo-American Middle East, 1961-1969: A Willing Retreat,* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), pp. 78-92

the Federation faced, with a significant number pointing to the September 1962 Yemeni revolution and subsequent civil war's major destabilising effect on Aden and the Protectorates.[12] Craig Harrington argues that because officials in Whitehall 'intentionally stalled' the process of state formation, the Federation 'could have been at least two years more mature when civil war erupted across its northern border.'[13] Similarly, Simon C. Smith and Robert McNamara argue that the Yemeni revolution 'came at exactly the wrong moment' to deny the Federation, though an 'unwieldy constitutional edifice', a chance to be put 'on a firm footing.'[14] As significant as such forces were, it is important to redress the emphasis on external causes and pressures that were brought to bear on the Federation and the British position, as focusing on such forces overlooks questions about the inherent viability of federation, and risks framing the process of late-imperial state building as solely a responsive rather than premeditative effort to shape the future of the region. It further risks verging into an examination of symptoms of state collapse; recent articles focusing on issues such as insufficient policing, pressures of the increased international presence in Aden, or the Labour government's wrangling over South Arabian policy, are emblematic of this.[15]

A focus on the influence of Arab nationalism across the Middle East, with Nasser as its figurehead, has been a central dynamic of historical explanations of the end of empire in South Arabia. However, Spencer Mawby's seminal monograph highlights the degree to which the force of the dichotomy between British imperialism and Arab nationalism shaped and directed the course of events.[16] British imperialism remained a potent influence within British policymaking as decision-makers sought to retain British global influence. Britain's 'forward policy' in the Aden Protectorates sought to secure the increasingly important military and strategic facilities in Aden against Yemeni and Egyptian encroachment, facilities that would service the continuation of Britain's global role. Federation was central

---

[12] Vitaly Naumkin, *Red Wolves of Yemen* (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 2004), p. 77
[13] Craig A. Harrington, 'The Colonial Office and the Retreat from Aden: Great Britain in South Arabia, 1957-1967', *Mediterranean Quarterly,* 25:3 (2014), p. 21
[14] Simon C. Smith, 'Revolution and reaction: South Arabia in the aftermath of the Yemeni revolution', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 28:3 (2000), p. 193; Robert McNamara, 'The Nasser factor: Anglo-Egyptian relations and Yemen/Aden crisis 1962-65', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), p. 53
[15] James Worrall, 'The missing link? Police and state-building in South Arabia', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 19-34; Asher Orkaby, 'The North Yemen civil war and the failure of the Federation of South Arabia', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 69-83; Aaron Edwards, 'A triumph of realism? Britain, Aden and the end of empire, 1964-67', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 6-18
[16] Spencer Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates, 1955-67: Last outpost of a Middle East empire,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005)

to this aim, establishing the Protectorate Rulers as the lynchpin of British influence in the region. This late-imperial expansion invariably caused a clash with an Arab nationalism which invoked a vision of unity for the Arab world and its people that could challenge and remove western imperialism from the Middle East. The upheavals of the Yemeni civil war brought Nasser's influence to South Arabia's doorstep, exacerbated the 'Sisyphean task of curbing tribal dissidence' in the Protectorate, and furthered Britain's confrontation with the nascent local trade union and nationalist movement in Aden that radicalised opposition towards escalating violence. Though the imposition of the federal state structure on Aden and the Protectorates occasioned the deterioration of the security situation and the Federation's collapse in 1967, Mawby's general emphasis on ideological considerations as central to examining the collapse of British rule successfully illustrates the explanatory limits of material and high political calculations within policy making to highlight a previously neglected episode of imperial resurgence during the era of decolonisation.

There is nevertheless still scope to examine the ideological and intellectual fundamentals of the federal policy that produced a federal state, and which proved anathema to nationalists' aspirations and inhibited a stable pathway to independence. Noel Brehony has noted that the conceptual contrast between Britain – which viewed the Protectorates as a *cordon sanitaire* to Yemeni and Egyptian influence – and the NLF – which viewed the Protectorates as a means to isolate and attack Aden – is crucial in explaining the NLF takeover and, potentially, Britain's faith in the Federation's ability to serve a local strategic purpose.[17] Of some of the other key attributes of British official thinking, Karl Pieragostini's conclusions on the increasing entrapment and programmed nature of official thinking that ascribed considerable material and strategic value to Aden before abandonment are prescient and largely reflected in the archival material that has become available since the publication of Pieragostini's work in the early 1990s.[18] Numerous historians have pointed to British interpretations of South Arabian politics and society, largely modelled on the Indian Princely states which, to varying degrees, did not conform to the realities of the Protectorate.[19] Mawby has since examined the force of Orientalism within official thinking

[17] Noel Brehony, 'Explaining the triumph of the National Liberation Front', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 53:1 (2017), p. 38

[18] Karl Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia: Abandoning Empire*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991)

[19] John M. Willis, *Unmaking North and South: Cartographies of the Yemeni Past,* (London: Hurst, 2012), pp. 17-44; Christian Tripodi, '"A Bed of Procrustes": The Aden Protectorate and the Forward Policy 1934–44', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 44:1 (2016), pp. 95-120; Glen Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's Relinquishment of Power in Her Last Three Arab*

on Britain's intelligence, military, and political policies in South Arabia, highlighting the opportunities to re-examine approaches to diplomatic and imperial history that have in large part been resistant to change.[20] Where much of the historiography of the end of empire in South Arabia is preoccupied with examining the symptoms of collapse, this strand of the historiography's emphasis on the official thinking that drove British policy offers considerable utility as both an explanation of the failure of post-war state-building in South Arabia and as a means of examining the wider post-war federal moment.

Given that local conceptions of unity in south-west Arabia abounded during the post-war period, and that restoring agency to colonial subjects has been the 'essential task' for scholars examining decolonisation, to examine the finer details of what British figures thought and said about federation 'may appear atavistic'.[21] The choice of examining the prospect of federal unity from the British perspective is therefore made with a number of considerations in mind. Local conceptions of unity are evident within British sources, but they were often side-lined, and their coherence undermined, by the British figures who produced those sources. By focusing on this aspect of their presence and presentation in the source material, this thesis examines a core part of the development of British policy; the British desire to retain an intellectual monopoly over federation against the challenge of local agency. There remains scope to examine local conceptions of unity in a deservingly comprehensive and cogent way, but the federal idea that produced the Federation of South Arabia and lay at the heart of the controversies surrounding British rule in Aden and the Protectorates was predominantly conceived by British figures. This was especially important to the course of the end of empire because, as Smith has argued and this thesis will confirm, it ultimately underpinned the challenges the Federation faced and was the principal reason for its collapse.[22] Furthermore, as Duncan Bell has argued, understanding post-war British imperial federalism as a proxy for late-imperialism cannot be achieved

---

Dependencies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 55; Kelly, *Arabia, the Gulf and the West*, p. 11

[20] Spencer Mawby, 'Orientalism and the Failure of British Policy in the Middle East: The Case of Aden', *History: the Journal of the Historical Association*, 95:3 (2010), pp. 332-353, n. 3; Dane Kennedy, *The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire,* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 7-55

[21] Mawby, *Ordering Independence*, p. 22

[22] Simon C. Smith, 'Managing and Mismanaging Departure: The South Arabian Federation and the United Arab Emirates in Comparative Perspective', in Noel Brehony & Clive Jones (eds), *Britain's Departure from Aden and South Arabia: Without Glory but Without Disaster,* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2020), pp. 169-184; Smith, 'Failure and success in state formation: British policy towards the Federation of South Arabia and the United Arab Emirates', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 84-97; Smith, 'Rulers and residents: British relations with the Aden protectorate, 1937–59', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31:3 (1995), pp. 509-523

'without grasping the ideas that … motivated its advocates, legitimated its practices, and animated resistance to it.'[23] For want of a dedicated assessment within the historiography, this thesis is primarily focused on providing an examination of this root idea, of British colonial elites' understanding of the ideas and implicit assumptions that underpinned their role in the formulation and implementation of British policy, and of the causal significance of both; all of which can be assessed without disavowing local responses to and initiatives for unity.

To do this, this thesis assesses official documents, cross-examined by interviews, personal papers, and memoirs, to establish the development and impact of the idea of imperial federalism in South Arabia. There are, of course, limits as to how far these sources can provide an insight into the range of themes central to this thesis. Documentary sources cannot provide insights into the innumerable discussions, telephone conversations and private meetings that did not enter the archival record but would have invariably contributed to the development of British thinking about South Arabian policy. They have also been justifiably subject to increased caution as leading collectively to a sanitised record of the end of empire, especially after the disclosure of a cache of documents known as the 'migrated archive' that includes strangely innocuous records from the colonial administration in Aden, and the destruction of material as part of Operation Legacy.[24] Yet this thesis' examination of the colonial archive takes the approach of considering it as a reservoir of and contest over the implicit assumptions of British imperialism as a basis of policy. The colonial administration was not intellectually homogenous, but the growth of federal thinking was occasioned by the increased dominance of the most ardent and persistent advocates of the federal idea as they rose through the ranks, reinforced their influence amongst their superiors, colleagues, and subordinates, and 'recorded an emotional economy' invested in the preservation of the role of British imperialism beyond

---

[23] Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 115

[24] David M. Anderson, 'Mau Mau in the High Court and the 'Lost' British Empire Archives: Colonial Conspiracy or Bureaucratic Bungle?', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:5 (2011), pp. 699-716; Huw Bennett, 'Soldiers in the Court Room: The British Army's Part in the Kenya Emergency under the Legal Spotlight', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:5 (2011), pp. 717-730; Caroline Elkins, 'Alchemy of Evidence: Mau Mau, the British Empire, and the High Court of Justice', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:5 (2011), pp. 731-748; Anthony Badger, 'Historians, a legacy of suspicion and the 'migrated archives'', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 23:4-5 (2012), pp. 799-807; Richard Drayton, 'Britain's Secret Archive of Decolonisation', *History Workshop Online,* (19 April 2012), URL: https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/britains-secret-archive-of-decolonisation/ [accessed 22 May 2021]

formal independence.[25] These officials recognised that the documentary records they produced were a tool that could be manipulated and utilised to shape the way decision makers perceived and rationalised the basis of policy and thus aid the advancement of an imperial, federal vision for South Arabia's future. Reading these records with this in mind forms the backbone of this thesis' analysis and doing so will highlight how such a documentary record can still provide fruitful, un-sanitised insights into the development of British policy at the end of empire.

This thesis' central argument is that the South Arabian Federation's conflicted intellectual underpinnings made it inherently unstable and significantly contributed to its failure. The primary, foundational contradiction was that the British federal idea sought to fuse the mutually incompatible goals of promoting and achieving independence whilst simultaneously denying local agency over, and facilitate British control over, South Arabia's post-colonial future. Efforts to achieve this produced and compounded further contradictions at the heart of British policy. Amongst these were efforts to develop the Protectorate through the advent of peace and modernity, whilst simultaneously reinforcing what Britain regarded as its necessarily violent and archaic nature to achieve this. Similarly, a convoluted rationalisation of the need to modernise the politics of the region whilst entrenching select, traditional, local elites underpinned the Federation's controversial constitutional framework. Conflicted, Orientalist perceptions of the local population and the Arab character underpinned British suspicion, hostility towards, and exclusion of local agency over South Arabia's future, which in turn stemmed simultaneous efforts to develop and promote the Federation to other Arab countries and to international opinion as an independent, autonomous state. Such efforts also conflicted with the goal of maintaining British control over Aden's strategic facilitates - principally its military base, port, and oil refinery - that would service broader ambitions to maintain Britain's regional and global role after South Arabia's formal independence. Aside from exacerbating tensions with Arab nationalism, British designs to maintain control in Aden by incorporating it into the Federation conflicted with the apparent need to not alienate the local population whose consent was considered essential to the maintenance of Aden's strategic facilities, but also a threat should there even be the possibility of that consent being rescinded. The culmination of these contradictions created a perilous situation in South Arabia that became

[25] Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance', *Archival Science,* 2 (2002), p. 101

increasingly difficult to unravel, curtailing the chance of achieving a stable postcolonial settlement.

This thesis further argues that an interrogation of the conflicted fundamentals of the British federal idea and thereby the British position never came because of two interconnected factors. Firstly, the federal idea's proponents were not passive interlocutors through which its basic notions flowed, nor solely reflecting or implementing a policy based on Britain's national and imperial interests. Instead, the development and entrenchment of the federal idea was to a considerable extent shaped by the personal investment and ambitions of individuals who initiated and sustained the idea's force and momentum through the 1950s and 1960s despite its underlying contradictions. Personal and inter-personal dynamics contributed to policy deliberations and the force of arguments in favour of federation often coupled with the force of personality, character, and status of those making them. The strength of commitment to the federal idea was further compounded by institutional, ideological, and personal loyalties that, especially into the 1960s, challenged the formal metropole-periphery policy-making dynamic with informal networks of like-minded figures who sought to keep the federal idea at the centre of British policy and thereby a central feature of the end of empire in South Arabia. Secondly, the British feared that the loss of intellectual agency over South Arabia's future might spur the loss of imperial control of the same; British 'will and ambition' continued to 'imagine their triumph over a paucity' of material *and* intellectual resources.[26] Initiatives for South Arabia's future emerging independently of British direction were thus regarded as an inherent threat, reinforced by a belief in nationalism's temperamentality and inauthenticity. The lack of engagement with local figures that might have achieved a viable route out of empire, this thesis argues, was as much a product of the lack of engagement with the dichotomies of the British federal policy as it was a product of the dichotomy between nationalist and imperial aspirations.

The federal idea thus, to a large extent, governed the direction of British policy at the end of empire and illustrates the degree to which the era of decolonisation, a period of profound global change, was marked by an undercurrent of intellectual continuity that was intended to be impervious to yet compatible with that change. Though amorphous in nature, the federal idea's common features sought 'to impose order on the untidy mass [and] construct a coherent view of the past, present, and future that served to justify the existence of empire', providing the intellectual means by which officials believed the inherent, self-

[26] Collins, 'Decolonisation and the "Federal Moment"', p. 35

evident validity of British imperial agency in and over the region and its peoples could be actualised despite the force of imperial decline.[27] The federal idea aimed for a particular conception of South Arabian society and its politics to be federated into suspended animation, utilising the state building process to manage and curate change and continuity towards a prospective future that could be simultaneously near and distant, certain and contingent, post-colonial and neo-colonial. Doing so afforded British officials and ministers the space to conceive of its continued global and imperial role without considering or conceding to the unsettling and threatening ruptures of decolonisation or a lesser global role.[28] This space became progressively confined through the 1960s as the situation grew ever more tumultuous, and the pool of officials committed to the federal idea found themselves increasingly isolated from formal policy-making channels. Yet the isolation and relative decrease in the numbers of officials in key positions committed to the federal idea belies the potency of that idea that, if anything, became more distilled as the dangers the Federation faced became more numerous and existential, ultimately fuelling a sense of loss and, for some, betrayal at the Federation's eventual collapse.

Chapter 1 examines the formulation of the federal idea and how it gained traction within official thinking. When the first serious proposals for a federation of the Protectorate states were presented, the idea was developed by its proponents into something of an apparent 'federal panacea'.[29] The federal idea was curated as a vision for how, in the broader context of perceived imperial decline, Britain's regional and global influence could be maintained through the seemingly self-evident efficiencies and benefits of a British-directed form of administration that could fulfil the lofty obligations and ambitions of British post-war imperialism. There was, for key officials in Aden and London, an inherent logic to the idea

---

[27] Bell, *Reordering the World*, p. 6

[28] A similar, more general argument is made in John Darwin, 'The Fear of Falling: British Politics and Imperial Decline Since 1900', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 36 (1986), pp. 41–43. A more recent assessment highlights public intellectuals' un-assuredness about the Commonwealth that complicates the binary of optimism and pessimism over Britain's future global role, though a climate of uncertainty could have provided additional reason for key officials to remain optimistic about the utility of the federal idea. See Christopher Prior, '"This Community Which Nobody Can Define": Meanings of Commonwealth in the Late 1940s and 1950s', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 47:3 (2019), pp. 568-590. For the broader challenges, impact and erosion of the imperial mindset, see Andrew Thompson and Meaghan Kowalsky, 'Cultural Representation: Empire in the Public Imagination', in Andrew Thompson (ed), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 251-297; Martin Thomas, *Fight or Flight: Britain, France, and Their Road from Empire,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 264-284; Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France,* (London: Cornell University Press, 2006)

[29] The term is taken from Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 9, 165-166

that had significant intellectual purchase beyond circumstantial or material calculations. Yet the logic and appeal of federation was grounded in its suppleness and ambiguity, which became increasingly exposed as consideration of the idea by Whitehall departments and Cabinet ministers highlighted contradictions between competing and mutually exclusive policy priorities. The inability to establish a federation before 1956 was largely a product of these inherent tensions and attempts by the Governor, Tom Hickinbotham, to force the issue. Nevertheless, key personalities on the spot sustained the intellectual momentum, if not the advancement, of the federal idea as a potentially viable and attractive policy.

Chapter 2 assesses the sudden revival of the federal idea and creation of the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South in 1959, arguing that it was the key moment in framing the course of the end of empire in South Arabia. The incorporation of local collaboration through the Protectorate Rulers into the logic of federation, though intended to mitigate those contradictions and respond to the challenge of nationalism, cast the Rulers into a mould that was ill-fitted to either cementing their authority or creating a stable state. The Federation, now the central focus of British policy in the Protectorate, became the precarious foundation upon which future policy was built. The creation of the Federation also marked the moment at which contingent routes out of empire were not taken, with Britain rejecting engagement with alternative local collaborators whose visions for South Arabia's future did not conform to the ideals that had coalesced within official thinking. As such, the divide between British imperialism and nationalism was demarcated around conformity to or rejection of the British federal idea.

This became ever more the case, as chapter 3 argues, with Aden's entry into the Federation. The duplicitous means through which the Aden merger was rationalised and enacted was the product of official commitment to the increasingly entrenched federal idea. This was coupled and reinforced by the growing assertiveness of the federal idea's staunchest advocates, who recognised the utility of challenging the administrative hierarchy to advance their intellectual and policy ambitions. The onset of the Yemeni civil war, beginning almost simultaneously to the merger's controversial approval by Aden's Legislative Council, electrified the conflict between nationalism and imperialism. But the merger also exposed the conflicted basis upon which British policy was being driven. This exposure prompted officials to press even harder to seek the fulfilment of the federal idea's future vision against a backdrop of growing crisis, creating an entanglement in Aden that would shape the escalating confrontation between the British and local nationalists.

Chapter 4 examines the decision to offer the Federation independence which, rather than being the logical end point of the federal policy, was taken in the context of the increasingly limited options, growing recognition of the unviability of the federal experiment, deteriorating security, and the personal and professional desperation of the federation's staunchest advocates. Beyond increased attention given to countersubversion in Yemen, cross-border raids and security, the lack of an initiative from the Douglas-Home government to address the dilemmas at the heart of British policy prior to the offer of independence left a policy vacuum filled by the federal idea and set a difficult inheritance for the incoming Labour government elected in October 1964.

Chapter 5 assesses the Wilson government's response to the federal idea and its continued influence during the final years of the British presence in South Arabia. Acutely conscious of the controversies of the federal policy, the new government sought to reconfigure British policy to establish an alternative constitutional settlement to that primarily based on the Federation. However, such efforts were laden with their own inherent tensions that became increasingly ill-suited to an already deteriorating situation. The 1966 Defence Review's announcement of unilateral withdrawal without a defence treaty contributed to the final unravelling of the Federation which had, since its inception, been so dependent on British support. In response to the Labour government's efforts, and with the closure of conventional policy-making channels, the federal idea's advocates took to informal networks of like-minded figures to continue to advance their preferred policy of backing the Federation. This informal official resistance sought to challenge and reverse the government's policy but also contributed to the lack of progress towards establishing an alternative settlement. Though causally overshadowed by the intractability of the situation, this official resistance illustrates the federal idea's potent and persistent influence over those tasked with implementing British policy at the end of empire.

British federal imaginaries of South Arabia's future during the 1950s and 1960s stressed the contingency of the moment as a way of reasserting the place of imperialism into and beyond the mid-twentieth century. But the contortions of the attempted reinvention of Britain's imperial role through federation made it a moment that was geared for failure. Nevertheless, the federal idea exerted a powerful hold over official thinking that had considerable, causal influence. In this sense, the pursuit of federation constituted a distinct moment during the final years of the British Empire in South Arabia.

Chapter 1 'Bending minds and neutralising enemies': The creation and development of the 'federal panacea', 1952-56

Beyond expressions of intent, attempts as early as the 1920s to breathe life into the federal idea had failed to make it a fixture of British policy in South Arabia. In part this was because of the lack of material means or strategic necessity. With no mineral wealth, underdeveloped agriculture, and an ultimately fruitless hope that oil might be discovered in commercial quantities, there was little to suggest that the Aden Protectorates' status as a backwater of the British Empire would change. Simultaneously, the lack of intellectual investment in the federal idea as a desirable goal of British policy made devoting the necessary resources even more unpalatable. Given the Protectorates primarily served as a *cordon sanitaire* to the colony of Aden, and the principle of 'divide and rule' had been the mainstay of British policy for over one hundred years, coercing the Western Aden Protectorate (WAP) states into developing greater 'practical cooperation' was unthinkable.[1] But Britain's post-war desire to maintain its global strategic capabilities presented the opportunity for a revaluation of its South Arabian policy. Britain's departure from Palestine and the prelude to the evacuation of the Suez Base drew attention to Aden's potential as part of a regional and global defence chain running from Gibraltar to Singapore, guarding Britain's communication, trade, and oil interests. Furthermore, growing sentiment towards developing Britain's imperial territories and thus fulfilling benevolent imperial obligations, particularly expressed by colonial officials on the spot pursing a 'forward policy' in the Protectorates, gave further stimulus to revaluating British policy.

Yet these forces do not provide sufficient explanation as to how the federal idea grew in prominence as a feature of Britain's South Arabian policy discourse through the 1950s. This chapter will argue that though the economic, strategic, and obligatory situation was an important backdrop, the most significant element behind the federal idea's development was efforts by British officials stationed in South Arabia to curate it into a self-evident panacea. Such efforts were part of a contest for intellectual and policy solutions for Britain's late-imperial ills. Even as policy priorities and circumstances changed, this chapter will

[1] Simon C. Smith, 'Rulers and residents: British relations with the Aden protectorate, 1937–59', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31:3 (1995), p. 515

show that the idea retained a suppleness and ambiguity to remain a panacea that could make sense of and respond to the pressures of the post-war world, giving the idea significant and persistent purchase. This was also true when conflicts between Britain's three main policy priorities - financial burden, benevolent obligation, and strategic interest - were discovered. But British officials in South Arabia and the Colonial Office navigated these by developing a broader federal logic to mask contradictions in policy and shield the proposals for a South Arabian federation from criticism and change in circumstance. This was especially the case as Arab nationalism grew as an increasingly dynamic force in the region, but it was also the case against competing models of imperialism proposed by rival British figures. Though there were limits to what these officials could achieve and their efforts to retain control over policy discourse failed when the federal idea was dropped as an initiative under the weight of its inherent tensions, the personal dynamics of the policy-making process were crucial in sustaining the logic of the federal idea as a persistent feature of British officials' thinking about South Arabian policy that would go on to shape the course of the end of empire.

The British position

After Captain Stafford Haines' occupation of Aden in 1839, its importance to Britain lay chiefly in relation to its broader imperial designs. Despite Haines' grander ambitions for its natural deep-water harbour, Aden primarily served as a base for anti-piracy missions in the region and a coaling station to supply steamships trading the route between India and Suez. Though the importance and size of Aden grew in the wake of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the lack interest in the affairs of the surrounding hinterland from Bombay (from which Aden was initially governed) and London meant the development of British influence there was limited. However, the expansion of the Ottoman Empire's presence in the region in the early 1870s highlighted the vulnerability of Aden to rival imperial ambitions and, in response, tentative steps were taken to develop British influence. From the late 1880s to the First World War, Britain sought to establish a protective buffer around Aden and signed protection treaties with tribal Rulers of the hinterland, who in turn sought British support against Ottoman incursions. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, the Yemeni Imam Yahya's desire to unify south-west Arabia under his rule necessitated the continuation of British involvement in the Protectorate. The repulsion of Yemeni incursions by British air power resulted in the 1934 Anglo-Yemeni treaty that agreed the maintenance of a status quo along the frontier between Yemen and

the Protectorates. Anglo-Yemeni relations, however, remained tense and suspicions of both sides' intentions ran high.[2]

With British interest in Aden's hinterland largely determined by threats from rival powers, strategic considerations rather than direct political involvement or economic development were central fixtures of British policy. Nevertheless, the somewhat unclear direction of policy, encouraged by overlapping administrative responsibility, created space for British officials on the spot to gradually shift the basis and extent of British influence through the 1930s and 1940s.[3] The British Resident, Sir Bernard Reilly, grew concerned that conflict between rival tribes was disrupting trade routes into Aden and risked the Yemeni Imam gaining influence in Protectorates. Such concerns led to the development of a forward policy in the Protectorate and the gradual establishment of a system of indirect rule reminiscent of that in Malaya. The intention of the forward policy was to develop relations with the hinterland Rulers who would act as a conduit for the expansion of British influence and governance over the tribes. Though their authority varied considerably and was sometimes non-existent over parts of the Protectorate, the Rulers were backed up by British air power, money, weapons, and the Aden Protectorate Levies (a small security force formed in 1927) to try and secure their positions. Advisory treaties were sought with the Rulers to cement British influence, whereby compulsory 'advice' could be issued on all matters bar religion, whilst clauses in the treaties allowed for their removal and replacement should that 'advice' not be followed. Many of the Rulers were reluctant to sign, but the goal of having all Protectorate Rulers sign advisory treaties nevertheless became the central objective of British officials in South Arabia and the first was signed by the Eastern Aden Protectorate states of Qu'aiti and Kathiri in 1937 and 1939 respectively. Yet it was not until 1944 that the first states of the Western Aden Protectorate, some being increasingly concerned about Yemeni ambitions and some through pressure and persuasion from

---

[2] For the nineteenth and early twentieth century British presence in South Arabia see Gordon Waterfield, *Sultans of Aden,* (London: John Murry, 1968); A. J. Gavin, *Aden Under British Rule*, (London: Hurst, 1975); Robin Bidwell, *The Two Yemens,* (Harlow: Longman Westview Press, 1983), pp. 16-65; Glen Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's Relinquishment of Power in Her Last Three Arab Dependencies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 49-63; Calum Macleod, *The End of British Rule in South Arabia, 1959-1967,* (PhD thesis: University of Edinburgh, 2001), pp. 7-36; Spencer Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67: Last outpost of a Middle East Empire*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 12-27

[3] Spencer Mawby, 'A Crisis of Empire: The Anglo-Ottoman Dispute over the Aden frontier, 1901-1905', *Diplomacy & Statecraft,* 18:1 (2007), pp. 27-52

British officials, signed advisory treaties and the forward policy there continued well into the 1950s.[4]

Concurrent initiatives for greater unity of the Protectorate were, by contrast, less developed. To an extent this was because of the apparent reluctance of the Protectorate Rulers who potentially feared that such initiatives could threaten their position against potential rivals and overbearing British control, but there was also a comparable reluctance on the part of the British to pursue such a policy. When the priority was to reinforce the Rulers' position and foster closer relations, pushing a policy of unity risked antagonising the Rulers.[5] Furthermore, the lack of British material interests in the Protectorate and the perceived success of divide and rule through the protection and advisory treaties as a means of keeping out rival powers meant that many decision and policy makers in London believed that any British investment to encourage unity there was unlikely to see a favourable return.

Crafting a panacea

The move towards federation as a fixture of British policy through the 1950s was driven by the development by officials on the spot of an underlying rationale, or logic, of the idea of a South Arabian federation. One aspect of the British federal logic was the belief that federation would ease the financial burden of the Aden Protectorates. Scepticism from officials in Aden and London did little to dampen the optimistic financial forecasts produced as part of proposals for federation, which predicted minimal or no risk of increased expenditure, whilst the Colonial Office's Financial Department and the Treasury recognised the merits of the broader arguments for federation but deferred engagement with its cost-saving premise. The principled acceptance of the financial benefits of federation did not mean, however, that it served as a significant justification for federation; neither was it central to proposals for a federation. British receptivity to the federal idea as a means of cost-saving is best explained by examining wider assumptions about administrative efficiency in the context of Britain's perceived imperial decline. Cost-saving arguments for federation were paired with the view of financial and administrative efficiency as synonymous (and, at times, interchangeable) to entertain the prospect that

[4] Christian Tripodi, ''A Bed of Procrustes': The Aden Protectorate and the Forward Policy 1934–44', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 44:1 (2016), pp. 95-120; Smith, 'Rulers and residents', pp. 509-523

[5] Smith, 'Rulers and residents', pp. 514-516

Britain could increase its control over the political initiative in South Arabia. It was the coupling of these arguments that made the logic of federation compelling.

In February 1952, the newly appointed WAP Deputy British Agent Kennedy Trevaskis reviewed British administrative policy in the WAP, initiating proposals for federation. His father, a District Commissioner in the Punjab, might well have influenced Trevaskis' decision to pursue a career in the Colonial Service, starting in 1938 as an administrative cadet in Northern Rhodesia before enlisting in the Northern Rhodesian Regiment during the war. Briefly captured by the Italians, after the war Trevaskis joined the British administration of Eritrea and worked with the United Nations Commission that would decide the future of Italy's former colonies. Keenly aware that the fate of Eritrea was being decided by those 'who had no knowledge of the country or its peoples', he arrived in Aden with a firm sense that retaining the political initiative over the future of Britain's dependent territories, which faced emerging challenges in the post-war world, was paramount.[6] His review understood the purpose behind British policy as being to make the Protectorate 'firmly linked by ties of friendship with the Government of Aden and the United Kingdom.' This policy, he argued, faced a number of 'limiting factors', especially the existence of 'petty and economically unviable States' whose 'political, administrative and financial instability' was further marred by 'the incompetence and factiousness of their Rulers'. There was a risk that because of the lack of clear policy direction a 'haphazard structural development and the emergence of administrative incongruities … may later prejudice the fulfilment of His Majesty's Government's policy.' Taking the 'stillborn Indian Federation as a model', Trevaskis believed it was 'beyond dispute that … the States of the Protectorate may only acquire stability … through their federation.'[7] This could be achieved with 'no apparent difficulty' according to a 'reasonably simple and economical design' of adapting the existing British Agency and Protectorate departments along federal lines.[8] The plan was bold and assertive, and a similar attitude on the part of the British was necessary to ensure that the Protectorate developed along lines favourable to British interests. Trevaskis argued that Britain needed to pre-empt the 'dynamism of political development' and 'plan the

[6] The best substantial biographical overview of Trevaskis' career is provided by Wm. Roger Louis in the foreword to Trevaskis' posthumous memoir. See, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, *The Deluge: A Personal View of the End of Empire in the Middle East,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. xiii-xxvi
[7] The British Library (hereafter BL), India Office Records (hereafter IOR)/R/20/B/2122, A note on administrative policy in the Western Aden Protectorate by Trevaskis, [February 1952], pp. 1-2; Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* p. 213
[8] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Draft Memorandum: A proposal to establish a Federation of the states of the Western Aden Protectorate, [October 1952], p. 18

pattern of political development ahead of actual development'. To 'place any reliance on laisser [sic] faire methods as a suitable conveyance to a vaguely defined destination' would be, in his eyes, 'imprudent'.[9] Britain, he argued, should not be passive to the forces of local or international anti-colonial sentiment or obstructed by financial cost, but instead take the initiative to direct South Arabia's future.

The plan to finance this embryonic federation was, however, not quite as straightforward and attracted criticism from Trevaskis' colleagues. The Abyan agricultural scheme's expanding profits, Trevaskis argued, could be dispersed within the federation to finance development schemes that would create a viable source of income for the new state. But each state also had to reform 'their fiscal systems so as to lessen their dependence on customs as a principal source of revenue.' This measure, he argued, could not be achieved by the states' own initiative. 'It must be accepted,' he went on to claim, 'that if the Protectorate is to survive without His Majesty's Government's assistance it must derive benefit from some form of partnership with the Colony.'[10] For Trevaskis the imperative for federation was not based on the assumption that federation would reduce the overall cost of administering the WAP but instead lay in the need to consolidate the administration which would allow the British, with reduced means, to maintain its influence in the region. If the WAP federation and the Aden colony were not to be merged, for the time being at least, then the British government would need to increase its financial support to ensure the federation's success.

Though the plans were presented by Trevaskis' superiors as being based on Central African and Eritrean plans for federation, William Goode, the Chief Secretary of Aden, considered the proposals not 'as wise in practice as it is attractive in theory.'[11] He considered the 'unconvincing and impracticable' plan of financing the federation 'complicated and will … be quite unacceptable to HM Treasury'. Yet more pressingly for Goode, he believed a federation manned by the 'present British administrative staff by another name' would likely face the 'objection that this will be direct rule in fact, if not in theory.' Changing the

[9] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, A note on administrative policy in the Western Aden Protectorate by Trevaskis, [February 1952], pp. 2, 12-13, 21
[10] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, A note on administrative policy in the Western Aden Protectorate by Trevaskis, [February 1952], p. 31
[11] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Allan & Seager to Goode, 3 February 1952. The reference to Central Africa and Eritrea was not one that Trevaskis made himself. Indeed, the reference to the 1935 Government of India Act's plans for an Indian Federation is one of the few, if only, times he declares his influences. If Trevaskis was also influenced by these by way of his experience in Northern Rhodesia and Eritrea, he does not say so in his diaries or memoirs. See note 6.

nature of the Abyan development scheme from a local to a federal source of revenue would increase the 'danger of a breach of faith … and of increasing the appearance of British exploitation of Arab land.'[12] Goode's concerns were reinforced by Aden's Financial Secretary Patrick Robertson, who argued that whilst the creation of the planned oil refinery in Aden might change the situation, Aden could not provide support to the WAP and, rather than streamline the administration, federation would see duplication that would 'entail increased expenditure which the inhabitants of the Colony would be unwilling to meet.' Furthermore, relying on profits from development schemes, coupled with the federation's inability to raise taxation, 'would be financially irregular and economically dangerous'.[13] Despite some expressions of concern about the financial practicalities of federation, the argument for federation still found greater favour amongst officials in Aden than those arguments against, and Goode conceded that the idea of federation was still an attractive one. His concerns regarding the objections of 'colonial' rule could be resolved by changing the title of Governor to the more appropriate 'High Commissioner' and the British administration should in the meantime 'concentrate on establishing administrations in an advisory relationship in the more promising States … with a view to preparing them for Federation later on.'[14] Robertson, despite his misgivings, viewed the 'undesirable' use of development projects as a source of revenue as nevertheless legitimate.

How the serious obstacles presented by Goode and Robertson could be overcome by relatively minor changes can be explained in two ways. Firstly, Trevaskis was a recent arrival and his extensive review made a significant first impression. As one official put it; 'I feel that Mr Trevaskis is to be congratulated, especially on the way he has managed to apply his administrative experience to what is locally practicable after a mere two months in the territory.'[15] Though Goode was sceptical of the analysis from such a fresh recruit, believing 'he may wish to modify his appreciation a good deal after a further 6 months', such scepticism was mitigated by an awareness of the changing circumstances facing post-war British imperialism.[16] The key concern for longstanding officials was that Britain's position

[12] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Memorandum by W.A.C. Goode, Comments on proposals for introducing a Federal Scheme into the Western Aden Protectorate, 29th February 1952, pp. 3-5
[13] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Summary of a meeting held at Government House on the 4th March, 1952 to consider federation within the Western and Eastern Protectorates and as between the Colony and the Protectorates, p. 2
[14] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Memorandum by W.A.C. Goode, Comments on proposals for introducing a Federal Scheme into the Western Aden Protectorate, 29 February 1952, p. 7
[15] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Minute by [C.H.D.], 7 February 1952
[16] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Minute by Goode, 12 February 1952

could be undermined should nationalism gain traction in South Arabia. Anything that might pre-empt this outcome was welcome, as one Colonial Office official put it,

> when we have got used to handing over power in various parts of the world, it is quite a novel experience to read proposals which involve our assuming a good deal of executive responsibility …. This proposed move towards something more like the normal "Colonial" form of administration can no doubt be defended as an essential transitional process in approaching a longer-term objective of bringing the area to the point where it … is capable of taking its place in the modern world.[17]

The federation's appeal as a way of sustaining British imperialism was more important than dismissing the proposals over details yet to be worked out. The proposals were 'convincing enough in theory', Goode conceded, and federation still retained its ambiguous appeal.[18] Relatively significant reservations could thus be overcome though recourse to the generalised principles of British imperialism.

The specifics needed to be finalised, but Trevaskis successfully argued in favour of federation and a meeting of officials in Aden on 4 March 1952 agreed that British 'policy should be directed to this end.'[19] The record of the meeting does not spell out the intensity of debate, but Trevaskis's own force of personality is likely to have been the second contributory factor for the initiation of the federal proposals. A 'convinced imperialist' Trevaskis was committed to the relationships he cultivated with the various Rulers within 'his patch' of the WAP and believed that the future of British involvement lay with them through federation.[20] This 'singleness of purpose' and 'natural capacity for command' earned him respect from his colleagues, but others 'found him domineering and bullying [and] was a difficult subordinate.'[21] 'An excellent British Agent', one contemporary recalls, who was 'charming and a persuasive, powerful personality.'[22] Within the relatively small colonial administration, the weight of personality helped convince enough of his colleagues

[17] TNA, CO 1015/166, Minute by Gorell Barnes to Marnham, 9 February 1953
[18] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Minute by Goode, 12th February 1952
[19] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Summary of a meeting held at Government House on the 4th March, 1952 to consider federation within the Western and Eastern Protectorates and as between the Colony and the Protectorates, p. 1
[20] Peter Hinchcliffe, John T. Ducker, and Maria Holt, *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat from Aden*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 89
[21] Mawby, *British Policy*, p. 43
[22] John Harding, written response to author's questions, 27 November 2016

as to the logic of the federal idea; the most important of which being the Governor, Tom Hickinbotham, who wanted 'immediate action' to federate.[23]

Selling the plan

After persuading his colleagues of the desirability of federation, Trevaskis drafted more detailed proposals to consolidate the interdependency of financial and administrative reform. Administrative reform remained the priority but, recognising the risk the plan may be rejected on the basis of cost, the proposals sought to highlight federation's negligible rise in cost and long-term efficiencies to flavour the argument in a way more palatable to financially-minded officials in Whitehall who could be, Trevaskis believed, 'easily deceived.'[24] Writing to the Colonial Secretary Oliver Lyttleton, Hickinbotham outlined his and Trevaskis' vision for federation, and the cost-saving incentive was at the heart of the covering letter. The Protectorate states, he argued, were 'fundamentally unsound' as they could never be 'economically independent.' The effective, 'obvious' solution was to pool together their limited resources to facilitate closer association between Aden and the Protectorates, train local people to 'take an ever larger part in the management of their own affairs', and crucially to 'relieve the financial burden which has for long fallen on Her Majesty's Government in respect to Protectorate … as the *automatic* result of integration by the simplification of administrative and social services.'[25] Though the cost-saving incentive was at the heart of Hickinbotham's letter, its prominence was not replicated in the detail of the seventy-five-page proposal; its financial benefits forming a small part of the proposal and the details placed in an appendix. Trevaskis argued that the 'tidier arrangement' of a federation should be modelled on the existing colonial administration to allow 'a smooth transition to the federal system' aligned with the Colony administration 'so as to facilitate an eventual integration as between the two.'[26] Through efficiency savings and expansion of the WAP's revenue collecting capabilities the grant-in-aid from Britain was forecast to see a reduction from £219,000 for the 1952/53 year to £175,000 by 1958/59 with minimal impact

---

[23] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* p. 214
[24] Oxford Bodleian Libraries (hereafter OBL), MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/1, 28 June 1956
[25] Sir Tom Hickinbotham, *Aden,* (London: Constable and Company, 1958), p. 166; BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Hickinbotham to Lyttleton, 25 October 1952, pp. 1-2, [emphasis added]
[26] Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, interviewed by Karl Pieragostini, 29 November 1979; BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Draft Memorandum: A proposal to establish a Federation of the states of the Western Aden Protectorate, [October 1952], p. 18; TNA, CO 1015/166, Appendix C: A comparative statement of the 'Federated States' financial position before and after Federation in terms of 1952/53 estimates

on the States, with only one bearing a net revenue loss of £5.[27] This analysis served its purpose as an additional supporting element in favour of federation rather than the idea's defining feature. It was not a central pillar of Trevaskis' original proposal, and its inclusion in subsequent proposals was necessary to improve the palatability of the federal idea to a more financially conscious metropole, adapting the argument away from presenting the states' administrative and financial capabilities and competencies as minimal to non-existent to presenting their resourcefulness as an unexploited potential. The presentation of the benefits of federation as self-evident was, however, nearly always assumed rather than reasoned. Even when details of this assumption appeared to suggest otherwise, such as the need for capital investment for development, the pervasiveness and strength of this assumption never diminished. The prominence of the cost-saving argument demonstrates how British officials on the spot sought to influence the perception that London had of federation, a perception that pandered to more general concerns regarding Britain's seemingly precarious financial position.

The Conservative government elected in 1951 faced a number of economic crises over sterling, balance of payments and rearmament that necessitated 'Spartan economics' to ensure that a strong domestic economy would be the basis of Britain's continued global economic importance.[28] Yet such economic turbulence was seen by Lyttleton as 'a great opportunity for making a reality of the policy of Colonial development to which his Majesty's Government is pledged without additional cost to the Exchequer' and, in light of this, Colonial Office officials were for the most part taken by the logic of the federal proposals in providing a means of bridging Britain's colonial ambitions with the need to find economies.[29] John Marnham, Head of the Central Africa and Aden Department, considered 'the aim … laudable and the scheme ingenious, well thought-out and substantially probably the right one', whilst Lyttleton considered it 'a sensible plan'.[30] Sir Bernard Reilly, now working in the Colonial Office, claimed it was 'undeniable' that the 'Protectorate States can never be economically independent as long as they remain separate

[27] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Draft Memorandum: A proposal to establish a Federation of the states of the Western Aden Protectorate, [October 1952], p. 30
[28] John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830-1970,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 560-565, 580-583; TNA, CAB 129/48/1, C(51)1, The Economic Position: Analysis and Remedies, Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 31 October 1951
[29] TNA, CAB 129/48/22, C(51)22, Balance of payments of the colonial territories, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 November 1951
[30] TNA, CO 1015/166, Minute by Marnham, 1 December 1952; Minute by Thomas, 4 February 1953; Minute by Lyttleton, 28 June 1953

entities' and that the federal proposals were 'no doubt a solution to this difficulty.' The proposals would reduce administrative expenditure and Britain's grant-in-aid and thus, he believed, would be 'welcome to the Treasury'. As 'encouraging' as the forecast was, Reilly had to concede that it was 'based largely on speculation' and that the Treasury would likely be unfavourable towards fixing the annual grant for five years as Trevaskis proposed.[31] The Financial Department of the Colonial Office outlined similar concerns. Because 'the main political reason for federation [was] to bring on the inhabitants to a higher standard of living and governmental organisation' the demands for higher government expenditure to achieve this 'would be impossible to refuse', but the department had not 'yet got to the point of contemplating a greater grant-in-aid as a means of demonstrating beyond doubt our intention to make federation a greater success than the present system'. The assumption that there would be a self-evident reduction in expenditure was not shared by the Colonial Office, which claimed that 'no assumptions can be made about the course of expenditure within the federation, other than that it is bound to increase.' Nor could the stability of the federation's finances be forecast as 'the pattern of expenditure in any under-developed territory to fluctuate very considerably' because of the prospect of famine. Furthermore, the complexity of the relationship between federal and state governments required 'a standard of accounting which we are not likely to get in the area'.[32] The assumption that federation would lead to a lessening of financial burden had encountered a stumbling block.

The federal idea, however, maintained momentum within official thinking. This was in large part because of the ways officials in the Colonial Office recast the idea independently of the details of the proposals. Reilly navigated the concerns of financially minded officials by reemphasising generic imperial obligations. Reilly argued to the Treasury that British policy had always been not to leave financing development in the region 'entirely to local resources' due to 'the lack of resources and rather primitive financial systems of some of the states involved'. He forcefully claimed that 'we cannot accept that HMG can refuse to assist financially where … necessary [in] areas which are becoming ready to move from a mere treaty relationship to an acceptance of "good government" and its consequential developments.' The status quo was neither politically nor financially sustainable, and federation would 'prove a considerable economy'. Federation represented the solution to the variety of imperial objectives Britain pursued, and cost should not get in the way of this opportunity as in the long run, Reilly argued, 'it will assure a more successful, prosperous

[31] TNA, CO 1015/166, Minute by Reilly, 19 November 1952
[32] TNA, CO 1015/166, Note by Thomas, 6 March 1953

and efficient way of life and government'.[33] The difficulty with achieving this aim, the Colonial Office recognised, was that it confined its endorsement 'to the broad principles of the scheme' rather than becoming 'involved in detailed comment or criticism'.[34] Doing so meant emphasising Britain's imperial ends in order to overshadow apparent difficulties with the means.

Treasury officials nevertheless identified problems with the proposals. The Colonial Office's lack of agreement over the strategic implications of the plan made it apparent that they 'would have to do some more homework', were 'clearly at sea' on the issue of financing the federation, and the Treasury was 'not prepared' to go 'running riot' with taxpayers' money on a radical departure of policy that lacked sufficient assurances that it would protect British interests. Yet, despite these misgivings, Reilly's appeal to ambiguous imperial ideals mitigated the difficulties Treasury officials outlined. Though one believed 'it was impossible to say whether Federation would mean a saving to HMG on present cost', it was nevertheless an ideal that should be striven for. The ideals the proposals advanced were appealing, but the details of how these were to be achieved, and by whom, would need to be refined. 'I could not help feeling after reading the proposals', one Treasury official commented, 'that there was all the stage properties for a good play, but what of the actors?'[35] A decision on increasing expenditure in light of future proposals would be deferred to 'a later stage'.[36] The federal idea remained an attractive proposition for Treasury officials just as the Central African Federation was inaugurated, and they were willing to give the idea the benefit of the doubt should it prove a viable means to achieving Britain's imperial goals in South Arabia.

Just as Trevaskis' force of personality and combination of assumptions regarding administrative and financial efficiency gave the proposals purchase and momentum in Aden, once they reached Whitehall the opinions of those such as Reilly and Hickinbotham, with their perceived 'man on the spot' experience and advocacy of Britain's wider imperial obligations, enhanced the proposal's credibility and allowed for the conflict between certain officials' financial concerns and Britain's imperial obligations to be overlooked. Where these elements did not combine, officials were typically more dismissive. For instance, Harold

[33] TNA, CO 1015/166, Reilly to W. Russell Edmunds, 19 March 1953
[34] TNA, T 220/256, Note on the Proposal for the Federation of the Western Aden Protectorate by Central African and Aden Department, Colonial Office, 4 March 1953
[35] TNA, T 220/256, Minute by Russell Edmunds: Aden Protectorate: Federation Proposals for the Western Aden Protectorate, 12 May 1953
[36] TNA, CO 1015/166, Russell Edmunds to Reilly, 4 August 1953

Ingrams, who had served in South Arabia between 1934 and 1945 and had since retired, confided to Colonial Office officials his concerns about federation.[37] Respected though he was for his apparent expertise, he had been largely marginalised by the Colonial Office and lay outside of the 'inner circle' of the Colonial Office policy-making discourse, a division later cemented when his criticisms became public.[38] As a result, Marnham was less receptive towards Ingrams' concerns about going 'too fast and too far in the direction of direct British intervention in the State's affairs' than he was towards Hickinbotham's, Reilly's, and other Aden officials' 'weighty opinion' in favour of federation.[39] The personal weight of key individuals' support gave impetus to the federal proposals and contributed to their passage through Whitehall channels, with Lyttleton giving his 'agreement in principle' to federating the WAP, and issues of detail would be examined in time.[40] The federal idea was further aided by the Colonial Office's receptivity towards measures that would pacify concerns about the precariousness of Britain's imperial position and the ambiguous logic of the proposals, whilst serious concerns about the financial aspects of the federal proposals were not sufficient to curtail general acceptance of the broader merits of the idea.

The federal idea under siege

The apparent robustness of the logic of the federal idea, however, waned as the proposals reached wider circulation. Key officials were initially able to build on known concerns of their colleagues and superiors to develop momentum behind the proposals through force of personality and argument. This could not, however, bind the federal logic together once the debate incorporated a larger pool of officials and ministers and the parameters of debate moved away from the guidance of a select few officials. Crucially, the ideological context the federal idea had to navigate became ever more challenging for a British-initiated and inspired project. The rapid growth of Arab nationalism, the lukewarm response towards the federal proposals from the WAP Rulers, Yemeni, Saudi and Egyptian agitation, and wider concerns about British prestige in the Middle East gradually increased concerns about the stability of British rule in Aden and the logic of pursuing a new state-building

[37] Christian Tripodi, ''A Bed of Procrustes': The Aden Protectorate and the Forward Policy 1934–44', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 44:1 (2016), p. 97
[38] Karl Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia: Abandoning Empire*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 12-14; BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, 'A policy for South-West Arabia' by Harold Ingrams
[39] TNA, CO 1015/166, Minute by Marnham to Gorell Barnes, 17 June 1953
[40] TNA, CO 1015/166, Lyttleton to Hickinbotham, 20 August 1953

initiative in the region. Furthermore, alternative forms of imperialism posed by former officials threatened the policy-making status and function of British officials in Aden. In response, federation's advocates struggled to rearticulate the federal idea and sought to maintain control over the parameters of policy discourse in a way that better reflected the smaller networks in which the federal proposals had initially prevailed, becoming increasingly entrenched in their belief that the federal idea remained a panacea.

On 7 January 1954, Hickinbotham outlined the federal proposals in a speech to the WAP Rulers. He reassured them that Britain's present policy of providing external defence, internal security, and financial help would continue, but warned that disunity was a 'terrible obstacle' to the Protectorate's 'future advancement'. It was essential that the WAP states should unite to 'take your place in [the] modern world', and that 'there would be no financial loss … by joining the federation'. Though mostly seeking to reassure, Hickinbotham ended his speech with a stark warning

> that there may be people who for their own selfish ends, or through ignorance, would rather see you single and disunited and if there are, be quite sure that they will do all they can to mislead you and to sow jealously among you in order to prevent your union, preventing thereby the vast strengthening of your position.[41]

This warning was symptomatic of the dismissive responses of officials to criticism of the federal idea, regarding such criticism as beyond what they considered rational or legitimate engagement about South Arabia's future.

This was especially true with regards to initial responses to the growth of Arab nationalism. Within Aden, the development of about a dozen literary and cultural clubs formed through the 1920s and 1930s centred on promoting an Arab renaissance across south-west Arabia. Into the 1940s an increasingly influential Free Yemeni Movement in Aden, consisting of Yemenis who had fled the Imamate and the growing Yemeni population in Aden attracted to employment opportunities in the expanding port, sought the removal of the Imam and political unity between Yemen and South Arabia. Newspapers and pamphlets began circulating these ideas in Aden, such as *an-Nahda* (*Renaissance*) and *al-Fajr* (*Dawn*), and called for unity of south-west Arabia under a single, republican state, ending the separation of Aden from the hinterland, and ending the rule of the Protectorate Rulers. The growing political literature in Aden and the introduction of elections to four seats in Aden's

[41] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, [Speech by Hickinbotham, Government House, Aden, 7th January 1954]

Legislative Council in 1947 (expanded to twelve in 1959) helped prompt the development of political parties such as the United National Front (UNF), the South Arabian League (SAL) and Aden Association.[42] Yet in the early 1950s the cohesiveness of an anti-imperial movement in Aden calling for unity in south-west Arabia was somewhat limited given contrasting aims and interests of competing political groupings and British clampdowns. The *an-Nahda* newspaper was banned in 1953 and the SAL leadership excluded from Aden in 1956, whilst the extremely restricted franchise in Aden disenfranchised a significant majority of the local and Yemeni population and thus denied more radical parties a platform in the Legislative Council and reinforcing the position of pro-British moderates. Whereas the United National Front and South Arabian League drew its support from Yemenis in Aden and 'whole-headedly adopted nationalist slogans', parties the British regarded as moderates, such as the Aden Association, in many respects represented the interests of established families in Aden.[43] As such, their political ambitions centred on cooperating with Britain to expand economic growth in Aden and achieve gradual political reforms towards independence as part of the Commonwealth. Yet even amongst those whom the British regarded as moderate, internal divisions over policy and personality split the Aden Association in 1957 into the United National Party led by Hassan Bayoomi and the Constitutional Party of People's Congress led by the Luqman family.

If the cogency of an anti-imperial movement in Aden was initially limited, the ideological potency of Egyptian-inspired Arab nationalism proved a more challenging problem to British-led federal plans. After a coup by the Free Officers Movement overthrew the Egyptian monarchy, the new leadership in Egypt, headed by its charismatic leader Gamal Abdel Nasser, began shifting its focus towards spreading a revolutionary, nationalist ideology disseminating a powerful evocation of a shared history and destiny of Arab peoples that could challenge the dominance of Western imperial power across the Middle East.[44] Radio Cairo's *Sawt al-Arab* (Voice of the Arabs), which began broadcasting in July 1953, was central to the spread of these ideas into South Arabia. An influx of cheap radios into the region after the Second World War meant that, as a former head of the Public Relations Department in Aden put it, 'just about everyone' owned one and innumerable

---

[42] Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans,* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp. 178-180; A. S. Bujra, 'Urban elites and colonialism: the national elites of Aden and South Arabia', Middle Eastern Studies, 6:2 (1970), pp. 189-211; Vitaly Naumkin*, Red Wolves of Yemen,* (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 2004), pp. 26-31

[43] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 18, 47-48

[44] Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 138-150; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 29-34

contemporary British accounts record an enthusiastic and receptive audience to *Sawt al-Arab* in Aden and the Protectorates.[45] One British official recalled 'walking down the main street of Zinjibar and … all the shopkeepers turned their radios up high volume so that as I walked down the street I could hear all this sound, all this abuse telling them to get rid of the British'.[46] Despite this, the early development of Arab nationalism in South Arabia was perceived by British officials through 'Orientalist cliché[s]' that enabled easier dismissal, indicating the initial lack of serious consideration and 'lack of imagination' as to the implications of a new ideological challenge to the federal idea.[47] Objections expressed, for example, by a group of Yafa'is in Saudi Arabia demanding a general election under the supervision of the Arab League, and an Arabic magazine which derided the Federation as a 'new imperialist conspiracy', were of little concern to Trevaskis who commented that such views were 'to be expected' and that '[t]hey merely echoe [sic] the propagandists of the 'Sout al Arab' and Egyptian press: the only commentators in this matter who have access to their minds.'[48] Though the logic of federation was not impeded by such criticism, there was significant cause for concern over its impact on the Protectorate Rulers, given the developmental merits of federation necessitated their involvement in some form. A 'calculated campaign of intimidation' by the Yemeni government and the spread of nationalism, the British believed, had aroused the belief that the Rulers were 'selling their independence and that Federation [was] a mere cloak for the establishment of direct British control'. Trevaskis noted the Rulers 'now seem anxious to prove that they are not, as their critics have described them, accomplice[s] in a plot to enable the British to "colonise" the Protectorate.' The resulting climate therefore made it unlikely that the Rulers 'will become any more malleable' to British designs and Trevaskis suggested that parts of the constitution which caused the biggest controversy, such as the British Governor becoming the federation's Head of State, should be amended.[49] Yet such an uncharacteristic suggestion created a backlash. Paul Fletcher, the new Chief Secretary in Aden, exclaimed

---

[45] John Harding, *Roads to Nowhere: A South Arabian Odyssey 1960-1965,* (London: Arabian Publishing, 2009), p. 22; Kennedy Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber: A South Arabian Episode*, (Hutchinson & Co, London, 1968), p. 80; David Holden, *Farewell to Arabia*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp. 24-25; Bidwell, *The Two Yemens,* p. 82; Hinchcliffe et al, *Without Glory,* pp. 90-91, 157

[46] Stephen Day, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 29 March 2017

[47] Spencer Mawby, 'Orientalism and the Failure of British Policy in the Middle East: The Case of Aden', *History: the Journal of the Historical Association*, 95:3 (2010), pp. 332-353; Hinchcliffe *et al, Without Glory*, p. 15

[48] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2122, Telegram from The Yafais at Saudi Arabia (Mohamed Saleih Alyafai *et al*) to Governor (Aden), 22nd January 1954; Summary translation of "Saba" No. 18 dated 15 Jumad Awal 1373 = January 24, 1954; Trevaskis to Fletcher, 17 February 1954

[49] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Trevaskis to Fletcher, 9 February 1954; Mohamed Farid Al Aulaqi, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 2 August 2017, 11 August 2017

'that on no account should our procedure in this matter be stampeded by nonsense from Cairo or the Yemen into altering the existing draft proposals.'[50] Arab objection to the federal idea, as conceived by officials in South Arabia, was thus inherently illegitimate, having neither the right nor the knowledge to engage in the discussion over federation. Access to this discussion depended, in large part, on the prior acceptance of Britain's continued involvement in the region. As critique of the federal proposals came from or was seemingly inspired by Egyptian propaganda, the strength of the federal logic as understood by officials, confident in the relative isolation of South Arabia from the wider region, therefore remained undisturbed.

Yet the task for early 1954, of persuading the Rulers to accept the federal proposals in principle and detail, proved frustrating. In a late-February meeting with Sultan Aidrus of Lower Yafa' Trevaskis sought to 'ascertain any items with which he might disagree', only to be confronted by the Sultan's immediate refusal 'to discuss the matter on the ground that His Excellency the Governor had addressed the Rulers collectively and that any reply should be given collectively rather than individually.' Over the course of three hours, Trevaskis sought to tease out the Sultan's personal views on the proposals, only for the Sultan to apparently remain 'adamant in his refusal to listen to reason' and Trevaskis to end the 'singularly exasperating meeting by expressing regret that the Sultan had not seen fit to discuss a matter of such importance to the future of his state with the sense of responsibility which it clearly merited.' He was further frustrated by a meeting with the Fadhli Sultan, Abdulla bin Othman, in which although he 'attempted to convey the impression that he had not studied the proposals he commented that his first impression was that they would place all power in the hands of the Governor and leave the Rulers with nothing.'[51] Yet by late March both Trevaskis and Hickinbotham were far from discouraged by the lack of progress. '[A]nyone who imagined that the federation plan would be accepted without any comment or difficulty', Hickinbotham commented, 'either knew nothing of the Protectorate Rulers and the effect of outside clamour, or did not think about it at all.' Such optimism stemmed from the British belief that control over the debate over federation and the Rulers, despite their reluctance, remained subject to the direction of policy that officials wished to take. The Lower Aulaqi could, Hickinbotham believed, 'be brought into line when desired.'[52]

---

[50] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Fletcher to Trevaskis, 12 February 1954
[51] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Trevaskis to Fletcher, 4 March 1954
[52] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Fletcher to Trevaskis, 27 March 1954

Hickinbotham therefore directed efforts towards 'bend[ing] our minds to popularising federation and neutralising the enemies to federation' by countering anti-federation literature that circulated around the Protectorate with pro-federation propaganda to 'get the correct facts across in a balanced way as quickly as possible' consistent with the logic of the federal idea.[53] The British administration in South Arabia sought to act as a gatekeeper of information relating to federation to amplify its benefits, mitigate its pitfalls and cement its position within public discourse. On the issue of avoiding drawing attention to the power of formal advice invested in the proposed office of High Commissioner, the priority was 'not to deny the High Commissioner the power of offering formal advice but to conceal the existence of that power in the terms of the draft … so long as the legal interpretation … is free from any ambiguity.'[54] Two other seemingly mundane instances highlight British officials' sensitivity over their desire to control discourse over federation. In the first, a directory of government publications included the federal proposals and thus prompted a copy request from the university libraries at Kiel and the London School of Economics. The clerical accident prompted direct intervention by Hickinbotham who advised the libraries that the Aden Government had 'not issued any such publication' and the apparent embarrassment prompted a request by Hickinbotham for Lyttleton to 'elucidate the position.'[55] In the second, a request from the British Legation in Yemen for a copy of Hickinbotham's 7 January address to the WAP Rulers was rejected on the grounds that, should the address make it into the hands of the Yemeni government, they could 'twist any information they can obtain on the subject of federation for their own propaganda purposes.'[56] The desire to maintain control of information about the federal proposals and the parameters of and participants in its discussion at this early stage was especially sensitive, entrenching certain officials' desire to maintain an intellectual hold over policy.

British officials in South Arabia also sought to cultivate the federal idea as it transitioned from the smaller pool of officials to the wider network which included decision-makers in London. However, criticism from British sources ran the risk of scuttling the entire federal project. In response to critical remarks made in the magazine *New Commonwealth*, which stated that Hickinbotham was 'trying to hurry through a form of federation', Hickinbotham

[53] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Minute by Hickinbotham, 7 April 1954; Trevaskis to Fletcher, 3 April 1954; T.Z. Irany to Fletcher, 23 October 1954; R/20/B/963, Information Note on Aden Broadcasting Service, [undated]
[54] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Trevaskis to Fletcher, Appendix B, 16 March 1954
[55] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Hickinbotham to Lyttelton, 8 March 1954
[56] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Fletcher to Chancery (Taiz), 10 September 1954

requested Reilly ask the editor 'what his authority is for this highly inaccurate and somewhat damaging statement.'[57] Annoyance with the British press was common as they produced counter-narratives that challenged federation's logic, but they could still be countered by pushing pro-federation editorials. This method of reinforcing the federal logic was only effective, however, when dealing with opinions that were not considered important enough to influence key policy makers. Thus, when Ingrams wrote a highly critical article a crisis erupted. Ingrams argued that federation could lead to 'greater social and economic development', but the proposals 'plainly envisaged Europeans having executive authority and the Rulers surrendering [their] sovereign rights'. Rather than providing a benevolent framework that encouraged development, the federation could not be seen as 'anything but a disguised colony in a world which no longer likes colonialism'. The article went on to argue that

> the obligation to preserve [the Rulers'] independence outweighs that to improve their conditions at the risk of losing a friendship which had been maintained for so long after Anglo-Arab relations in other regions have deteriorated…. If one were to regard the original British interests as the sole objective it would be best not to encourage any federation. If the Arabs could ever make an effective federation on their own that would be a greater threat to the preservation of these interests than the continuance of small states.[58]

The logic of federation was undermined as Ingrams offered the same outcome of preserving Britain's interests by maintaining the status quo of maintaining divide and rule in the Protectorate. Marnham sought to calm the situation by stating the Colonial Office 'displayed no enthusiasm' for the article, but that the 'likely circle of readers' did not justify an 'official attempt to dissuade him from publishing what is after all a restrained version of his known strong views'.[59] Such reassurance did little to satisfy Hickinbotham's fury. Ingrams' article, he claimed, 'was not prepared with that regard to accuracy which the public are entitled to expect from an author of standing.' Though the magazine itself might not have a wide circulation, he wrote, 'I can assure you that it has been widely studied here and I have no doubt at all [that it] has found its way into the Yemen.' For Hickinbotham, Ingrams' known expertise of the region added a dynamic to his argument that could not be easily dismissed:

---

[57] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Hickinbotham to Reilly, 30 August 1954
[58] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Hickinbotham to Lennox-Boyd, 28 September 1954, Harold Ingrams, 'A policy for South-West Arabia', *New Commonwealth*, 2 September 1954
[59] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Marnham to Hickinbotham, undated telegram No. 408

> Since a retired Colonial Service officer on pension is free to write what he likes and thus is free to attack the approved policy of Her Majesty's Government in the Press, then I hope that in future if the author consults the Colonial Office, an effort will be made to see that the facts are not inaccurate, misrepresented or distorted. Many of us have strong views, but most of us are restrained by decency and loyalty, if nothing else, from publishing them when we know they are likely to be harmful or embarrassing to Her Majesty's Government and one's late colleagues in the Service.[60]

The ferocity of Hickinbotham's defence prevailed in this instance. The logic of federation was reliant on Hickinbotham's status that overshadowed Ingram's status as a 'former-insider', translating into influence within the Colonial Office over the federal discourse. Whilst a single critical article might temporarily temper the logic of federation, the ability for officials to persistently argue the case from within explains the tenacity of the federal idea within British policy making networks. Additionally, his appeals to decency and loyalty to the colonial cause resonated with many, whereas Ingrams' less interventionist role in South Arabia's future did not resonate with the desired fulfilment of Britain's imperial obligations. Though there were disagreements over the nature of Britain's imperial mission, the belief that there was still the opportunity for Britain to play an active role as a benevolent imperial power in South Arabia by guiding the Protectorate to federate was a far more palatable proposition when the empire was felt to be in retreat.

Contradictions emerge

An opportunity for the federal proposals to demonstrate their ability to fulfil Britain's imperial mission arose in a request by the Treasury to 'stocktake' the issue of 'where we are going in the Aden Protectorate'. Disturbed by the apparent ten-fold increase in the cost of development to kickstart the federation, a Treasury official posed the question of what important interests or foreign policy requirements could justify such an increase.[61] The Foreign Office emphasised the desired interest of developing, administering and defending the region as to 'command the respect and support of foreign countries' to secure its wider geo-political and strategic position.[62] Echoing his response to Ingram's criticisms, Hickinbotham attached the federation to Britain's desired imperial ends. '[W]e shall be going nowhere', he argued,

[60] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2603, Hickinbotham to Marnham, 4 October 1954
[61] TNA, CO 1015/1211, A.E. Drake to Marnham, 14 June 1954
[62] TNA, CO 1015/1211, A.C.I. Samuel to Marnham, 12 October 1954

> except possibly through a door marked "Exit", unless we can apply a forward and vigorous policy of development in the Protectorate.… [I]f it is our policy to stay here, it simply will not do to sit back with folded hands, relying on the purity of our intentions and the rectitude of our policy of allowing the States to continue in their own backward and unenlightened ways.[63]

Reinforcing the point, Marnham believed 'there can… be no doubt of the importance to HMG of maintaining a friendly and benevolent control over the destiny of this large tract of southern Arabia, without which our position in the increasingly valuable outpost and port of Aden might be endangered.'[64] It was on this latter issue, however, that contradictions within the federal logic began to emerge.

Aspirations for developing the WAP conflicted with the growing geo-strategic importance of Aden and the resultant need to maintain British control. A culmination of 'setbacks' to Britain's imperial strategic interests in the Middle East, notably the loss of the Suez Base after the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement in October 1954, highlighted Aden's potential as the 'main window on the Indian Ocean' and a military base for maintaining British influence in the Gulf and facilitating Britain's commitment to the Baghdad Pact.[65] The new oil refinery in Aden, especially after the loss of the Abadan refinery, further reinforced Aden's importance and it became evident that the Colonial Office would need to revaluate its policy in the Protectorate. Whereas the federal proposals had emphasised the need to develop the Protectorate to maintain British influence with the Rulers, the federation's potential links to Aden had been largely left to conjecture. Fears that accelerated development would encourage calls for independence had been expressed since the proposal's inception, but had not proved sufficient to challenge the idea's momentum. But the increasing strategic importance of Aden, the perceived fragility of British influence in the Protectorate, and growing concerns within the Conservative government as to the potential effects of international criticism of and accountability over colonial affairs confronted the proposal's ambiguous logic that became difficult to sustain.[66]

After his visit to Aden and the Protectorates in January 1955, the assessment of British policy by Henry Hopkinson, Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, highlighted the impact

---

[63] TNA, CO 1015/1211, Hickinbotham to Marnham, 7 August 1954
[64] TNA, CO 1015/1211, Marnham to A.E. Drake, 15 October 1954
[65] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 367, 5/1, J. Amery to Trevaskis, 3 August 1954
[66] David Goldsworthy, 'Britain and the International Critics of British Colonialism, 1951-56', *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,* 29:1 (1991), pp. 1-24

local disturbances, seemingly caused by the prospect of federation, had on British prestige. 377 security incidents in the Protectorate in the space of two months, seemingly facilitated by Yemen and encouraged by Britain's 'failure to react strongly' against it in the context of Britain's withdrawal from India, Palestine, Eritrea, Somalia, the Canal Zone and Sudan, led 'our most loyal friends' to doubt Britain's 'intentions to stay in the Protectorate'. The 'faint stirrings' of Arab nationalism, the 'real discontent arising out of the stress and strains of the economic and social development', and suspicions that the federal proposals were an attempt to bring the Protectorate 'under direct Colonial rule', Hopkinson concluded, had weakened Britain's control over the Protectorate. Because of Aden's increasingly important strategic facilities, British control there would have to remain 'indefinitely' and thus British influence in the Protectorate would need to be maintained 'permanently, or at any rate for the foreseeable future.' Hopkinson's suggestions as to how this was to be achieved were imprecise. Britain could either amalgamate or federate the Protectorate with Aden or build up the Protectorate as 'a separate and increasingly independent Arab state' along the lines of Britain's relations with Jordan. Doubting the feasibility of these options, Hopkinson nevertheless favoured 'treating the Colony as a sort of Gibraltar with a federated Protectorate ultimately bound to us by treaty as an independent Arab State.' A decision on which line to take was in his view, however, not immediately necessary.[67]

Such indecision did not sit well with the Colonial Office. Further tribal insurrections and disturbances in the Protectorate through 1955 and the growing importance attached to Aden had shaken many into revaluating Britain's policy priorities, and the ambiguity of the federal idea as a policy option thus needed to be addressed.[68] Reilly, previously a firm advocate, highlighted the federal idea's contradictory policy priorities. Citing an earlier dispatch from Hickinbotham, which argued that Britain's 'ultimate object should be to [establish] a Federation … consisting of the Aden Protectorate and the Colony of Aden', Reilly did not, he wrote, 'often find myself in disagreement with the Governor of Aden but I do so in this case.' Disruption in the Protectorate and lack of the Rulers' firm commitment to federation made taking a more assertive and 'colonial' approach 'difficult logically to justify', whereas the eventual goal of the proposals for self-government within the Commonwealth and then self-determination could not be conferred because of Aden's strategic importance and thus 'no prospect of eventual complete independence should be

[67] TNA, CO 1015/1211, Memorandum by the Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, January 1955
[68] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 40-41

held out to the people of Aden.'[69] Britain's wider strategic concerns and the desire to maintain its global influence stood opposed to its developmental aspirations in South Arabia, and federation was increasingly side-lined as an active policy by Colonial Office officials.

Hickinbotham's reaction to growing scepticism in Whitehall was firm and fierce. Colonial Office officials sought to claim that such views were only being discussed 'at official level', had not reached 'any final conclusion on the matter', and wanted to 'keep an open mind until it had been examined further between you and us.'[70] Hickinbotham nevertheless found the Colonial Office's apparent 'lack of realism… disquieting for it indicated that my communications … have not been as clear and convincing as they should have been.' Highlighting his position as Britain's man on the spot, his federal policy was supported by 'the experience that I have gained since they were written' and he saw 'no reason to make any fundamental change in the views I then expressed.' He sought to ostracise what he regarded as uninformed and irrational criticism. 'Fear is really the dominating factor' in Whitehall thinking, he argued, leading to the belief that development would threaten Britain's position.

> Why indeed should we answer at all and why must we be for ever wondering, nay fearing, what the United Nations may think. The Arab League should surely not trouble us so long as we are honest in our management of our affairs…. The more I examine the memorandum the more does it seem that fear plays too large a part, if it is not fear of the reactions of the Yemen, a small quite uncivilised undeveloped country under the despotic control of a lunatic, it seems to be fear of the dominions of India and Pakistan.

He lampooned Whitehall's recent realisation as to the strategic importance of Aden, commenting that '[i]t is the first time that I can recall that I have ever seen that in writing' and claimed, disingenuously, that the incorporation of Aden into the WAP federation had been suggested at 'no time' and was 'dependent on the successful implementation of the intervening stages of [political] development'. Finally, he chastised the view that administrative proposals should 'evolve on Arab lines'; 'What are Arab lines? … We have got to guide the states with even greater care than the Colony for they are far less able at

[69] TNA, CO 1015/1211, Note on long-term policy for the Colony of Aden and the Aden Protectorate by Reilly, 14 April 1955
[70] TNA, CO 1015/1211, Morgan to Hickinbotham, 28 July 1955; Gorell Barnes to Hickinbotham, 9 August 1955

this stage to think for themselves. I am not a believer in letting children do as they please'.[71] His argument weighed heavily on his perceived expertise of the region to chastise Whitehall for not drawing the same conclusions, tarring his Colonial Office colleagues with the same brush as he had Yemen and Egypt as outsiders with no legitimate contribution to the discussion of South Arabia's future. The entrenchment of the federal idea within the thinking of British officials in Aden ran the risk of ostracising key policy and decision makers in London over the issue of balancing Britain's imperial obligations, which Hickinbotham argued should be at the core of British policy, with its imperial interests.

The federal idea on the ropes

Ultimately, Hickinbotham's strategy did not pay off. In the subsequent discussions of British policy in South Arabia, the appetite to consider the federal proposals as an active policy weakened considerably. In September 1955, Ministers agreed that the 'implementation of this policy should be "soft-pedalled"'. Whether the policy should be 'openly and frankly abandoned' was left to be decided, but there was nevertheless 'sufficient doubt that no pressure should for the time being be brought to bear upon the Rulers to agree' to the proposals. Britain's obligations in the Protectorate were of 'greater weight' than their interests and were it not for Aden 'a policy of disengagement from the Protectorates might be considered'. Nevertheless, assumptions about the Protectorate, its Rulers, and its people had not dissipated. The general merit of the federal idea was still accepted, even if the federal policy was not actively pursued, and the ambiguity of what federation meant to London helped maintain its purchase. It was 'not necessary', a Colonial Office memorandum claimed, 'for HMG to insist on any particular constitutional form of Federation' so long as it was not of a 'Colonial nature' and was 'suited to [the Rulers'] own ideas'. Hickinbotham should therefore aim to 'gradually and quietly to elicit these ideas, and to bring the Rulers into voluntary association through channels of mutual consultation.' Colonial Office officials navigated the conflicted priorities of the federal policy by leaving the proposals in suspended animation and did not actively engage with the dilemmas maintaining the British presence inherently posed.

Restoring the federal proposals to a state of ambiguity did little, however, to relieve Britain of the tension between its imperial interests and obligations, specifically over the issue of the relative importance of Aden over the Protectorates. Maintaining Britain's position in

[71] TNA, CO 1015/1211, Hickinbotham to Morgan, 6 August 1955

both required careful management of British prestige, and if Britain was to 'soft-pedal' the federal proposals Britain could not to be seen to have bowed to pressure from Yemen, Egypt, or from local agitation. Officials in Aden believed a public statement of Britain's continued commitment to staying would 'refute criticisms of lack of interest or … effective direction' and provide a 'welcome reassurance' to the WAP Rulers. However, Colonial Office officials wanted to avoid giving the impression that there might be an 'early grant of some form of independence' or self-determination that would undermine British control of Aden.[72] It was on this issue that views between Aden and London came into conflict, specifically over what the definitions self-determination, independence, and development were, and the ensuing contest exacerbated tensions between figures in London and Aden. Harold Macmillan, then Foreign Secretary, outlined his concern that developing the Protectorate 'as to advance the date on which they will be fit for self-government and self-determination' would undermine Britain's 'vital' position in Aden and thought it better to 'leave the local Sheikhs and Rulers in a state of simple rivalty and separateness' so that they could, 'where necessary, be played off each other, rather than to mould them into a single unit, which is most likely (and indeed seems expressly designed) to create a demand for independence and "self-determination"'.[73] Alan Lennox-Boyd, who replaced Lyttleton as Colonial Secretary in 1954, was pointed in his disagreement with Macmillan. The 'intense criticism' the WAP Rulers had received 'for putting up with the subordinate relationship to us' and that the individual states were too weak to 'hold out' against Yemeni intrusion made the need to either federate the Protectorate or increase Britain's 'military and financial commitment' more pressing. Yet Lennox-Boyd had to concede that, whilst he still believed the federal policy was the 'right one', he did not want to be seen to 'be chasing self-government', and therefore undermining Britain's interests, '"pour les beaux yeux de Fenner Brockway"'.[74] Though Ministers might have had 'only the haziest idea of what the implications' of federation were, they nevertheless recognised that the logical end point of the federal idea contradicted British interests in Aden.[75] Despite the wider trend of decolonisation elsewhere, Aden would remain an exception to the rule. Many of Lennox-Boyd's colleagues, despite his attempts to argue otherwise, were unconvinced that pursuing the federation would result in 'undermining the authority of the Rulers',

[72] TNA, CO 1015/1211, Colonial Office Memorandum: Her Majesty's Government's long range policy in the Aden Protectorate and Aden Colony, 22 September 1955
[73] TNA, CO 1015/1212, Macmillan to Lennox-Boyd, 14 October 1955
[74] TNA, CO 1015/1212, Lennox-Boyd to Macmillan, 1 November 1955
[75] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 43-44

encourage nationalist aspirations, and 'throw off our influence'.[76] Furthermore, London recognised that assessments of British policy in the Protectorate had been overly dependent on Hickinbotham. The Colonial Office had 'for some time been', as one official put it, 'hanging on the coat-tails of the Governor.'[77] The contrast in views, highlighted in Hickinbotham's attack on Colonial Office thinking, demonstrated the dangers of policy being determined on the periphery. Whitehall's patience had worn thin, and Hickinbotham's status within the policy making process became relegated to an irksome nuisance.

Disturbed by London's views, Hickinbotham again outlined his reasons for advocating for the federal proposals and sought to align the policy of federation as consistent with maintaining control of Aden. His careful, non-threatening language sought to match the tentative mood in London. 'Great care and sympathy', he argued, must be given to treating developing nationalist aspirations 'for any attempt to oppose [these] can only build up a mounting resistance which in the end will face us with the very situation which the Ministers wish to avoid.' Rather than referring to self-determination or independence that triggered London's concerns, Hickinbotham claimed British policy should encourage 'setting-up a more modern and advanced form of Government' in order to provide 'for the national aspiration of the peoples under our protection', altering the debate's terminology to a level of ambiguity that could more easily align to London's understanding of what this constituted.[78] Convinced by the arguments outlined on these terms, Lennox-Boyd authorised Hickinbotham to 'cautious[ly] advance' discussion of the federal proposals with the Rulers in order 'elicit their ideas' and 'not force the pace unduly.'[79] Such cautious authorisation, intended to navigate the conflict between Britain's interests and obligations, was received enthusiastically by British officials in South Arabia. Rather than interpret the authorisation as an order to 'soft pedal' the federation, it was received as 'a complete vindication' of 'the correctness of the federation policy' advocated by Hickinbotham.[80] Whilst London felt they had directed policy along the lines of reinforcing British interests in Aden, British officials in South Arabia interpreted the instruction to match their own intellectual and policy outlook and thus continued to advance the policy of federation.

---

[76] TNA, CO 1015/1212, Lennox-Boyd to Hickinbotham, 5 December 1955
[77] TNA, CO 1015/1212, Minute by Gorell Barnes to Johnston, 28 October 1955
[78] TNA, CO 1015/1212, Hickinbotham to Lennox-Boyd, 15 December 1955
[79] TNA, CO 1015/1212, Lennox Boyd to Hickinbotham, 11 January 1956
[80] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2611, Minute by Fletcher, 23 January 1956; Extract from note of a meeting at Government House on the 25 January 1956 at 9am

Such a position was not sustainable. Following a meeting with the Sultan of Lahej, Ali Abdul Karim, who claimed that the Protectorate wanted independence not self-government, the issue of policy terminology emerged. Officials in Aden were drawn to pressing for a forward policy that would tackle this issue publicly and decisively. Trevaskis believed that '[w]e will achieve nothing and get no thanks if we make slow niggling concessions. It seems fantastic to me that we do not know [the] difference between indep[endence] and self [government].'[81] Yet Hickinbotham's calls for a public statement advocating 'effective self-government' in time for a meeting with the Protectorate Rulers on 28-29 February 1956 were received with dismay in the Colonial Office.[82] Having eased concerns as to whether federation was in Britain's interest on the grounds that no concerted demand for self-government or independence be made, even sympathetic Colonial Office officials were disgruntled by this forcing of their hand. One recommended that Hickinbotham either postpone the meeting with the Rulers or stay with the 'original programme of completing your discussions with Rulers before making proposals for a public statement' given that the Colonial Office would be 'extremely surprised … if … Ministers were at all willing to give a precise definition to the meaning of "self-government"'.[83] The debate had taken a 'tiresome turn' over the appropriate language of a public statement, providing a 'further example of Hick[inbotham] trying to force the pace' and Lennox-Boyd, conscious of 'recent developments in the Middle East which may have given the impression that we are on the run', would not be drawn into providing any definition of self-government.[84] The final draft of the public statement and the private statement made to the Rulers referred only to 'guide and assist all dependent territories towards maximum political and economic development which the circumstances of each may warrant', leaving the Rulers 'entirely free to negotiate among themselves' as to formulating a plan for closer association.[85] Hickinbotham, by pushing the limits of his status as Britain's 'man on the spot', had gone too far in his advocacy for federation. One last 'disturbing fresh initiative' by Hickinbotham, on the eve of his departure as Governor in July 1956, was dismissed by Lennox-Boyd on the grounds that any modification to policy

[81] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/1, 9 February 1956
[82] TNA, CO 1015/1212, Annex II: Outline of Statement to be made privately by the Governor to Protectorate Rulers
[83] TNA, CO 1015/1212, Morgan to Hickinbotham, 17 February 1956
[84] TNA, CO 1015/1212, Morgan to Gorell Barnes, 21 February 1956; Lennox-Boyd to Hickinbotham, 6 March 1956
[85] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Public Statement, 1 April 1956

should await his successor Sir William Luce.[86] Britain was to avoid any action in relation to the federal proposals that might expose its seemingly precarious position in South Arabia in the midst of the growing sense of crisis in the Middle East after Glubb Pasha's dismissal as commander of the Arab Legion in Jordan. As far as Prime Minister Anthony Eden was concerned, the proposals risked Britain's position in the Protectorate and in Aden and that the best course of action was to 'let the matter drop and to leave it to the Rulers to advance towards Federation, if they wish to do so, at their own pace'.[87] As the Colonial Office Under-Secretary Lord Lloyd confirmed in May 1956, Aden could never progress beyond 'a considerable degree of internal self-government' and thus, given the apparent risks involved, the British position on federation would be held in suspended animation.[88]

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the federal idea had gained purchase within officials' thinking through its ambiguity. Its advocates in Aden and the Colonial Office curated the idea as a measure to improve financial and administrative efficiency into a means of fulfilling Britain's benevolent imperial obligations and securing Britain's regional and global interests in Aden. Individually these ideas proved a persuasive means of advancing the proposals. Criticism which highlighted the contradictions of policy objectives in South Arabia was mitigated by either avoiding pinning down the idea's specific policy implications, force of personality, or delegitimising the sources of these criticisms. But once discussion of the federal idea had reached a higher level, the growing fear of a loss of British control and influence necessitated a more concrete definition of how the idea would be actualised, stalling the proposals as the underlying contradictions between Britain's imperial priorities became exposed. There was nothing within the federal idea itself that made it inherently viable. The Colonial Office grew frustrated with officials in Aden as they tried to push the federal policy and, in response, closed deliberations that seemingly undermined Britain's position in the Protectorate and Britain's interests in Aden. Putting plans for federation on hold, however, did little to either mitigate the circumstantial problems that had troubled British officials through the early 1950s or to temper the idea's appeal. This was especially true for Trevaskis, the idea's staunchest advocate and original architect. London's stance towards federation had cemented his view that decisive action

[86] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Lennox-Boyd to Hickinbotham, 3 July 1956; Lennox-Boyd to Eden, 6 July 1956
[87] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Eden to Lennox-Boyd, 21 June 1956; 29 June 1956
[88] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 44

was needed more than ever. The intellectual battle for the future of South Arabia against Arab nationalism was intensifying and the statis of Britain's long-term policy, he believed, would prove unsustainable. In his frustration, Trevaskis aimed to persuade the new Governor, as he had done in 1952, that federation was the right and only course of policy that could be taken.[89] In time, as chapter two will show, the federal idea would see a revival.

[89] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/1, 2 May 1956; 8 June 1956; 16 June 1956; 20 July 1956

Chapter 2 'Backing the right horse': The creation of the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South, 1956-1959

The fortunes of the federal idea took a sudden turn on 21 February 1958 when, after two days of meetings with Trevaskis, the Amir of Beihan, the Audhali Sultan and the Fadhli Naib submitted proposals for federation and, less than a year later, six of the WAP states joined to form the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South. Modern explanations of such a dramatic change have focused on the February 1958 union of Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic (UAR), its subsequent confederation with Yemen in March 1958 as the United Arab States (UAS), tribal dissent in the Protectorate, and Yemeni subversion as the catalyst.[1] Yet such an explanation needs to be supplemented by an assessment of the intellectual turn required to go from a position in 1956 where federation apparently threatened Britain's interests to seemingly being the best and last hope of maintaining them. This chapter demonstrates that officials in South Arabia offered post-facto explanations of the initial failure of the federal proposals that allowed the underlying logic of the federal idea to persist and be suddenly revived. In the process, this chapter argues that central to the establishment of the Federation was an intellectually proactive development to overcome conflicted policy priorities and incorporate local collaboration into British policy, guided by the personal and inter-personal dynamics of policy formation in South Arabia. Though the threat of the UAR concentrated British efforts, those officials rationalised federal collaboration with local elites that were amenable to Britain's interests and the Protectorate Rulers, or at least British conceptions of them, were the missing link in the federal logic. Furthermore, the change in policy was supported by the use by British figures on the periphery of formal and informal channels to assert a control over policy discourse that had been lost to the metropole in 1955-56. But placing the Rulers at the centre of the federal idea, this chapter will argue, created its own problems. As a set of collaborative elites, the British considered them far from ideal and British efforts were therefore focused

[1] Glen Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's relinquishment of power in her last three Arab dependencies,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 71-72; Karl Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia: Abandoning Empire*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 26-27; The British and American reaction to the formation of the UAR is examined in Robert McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952-1967,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), pp. 115-123

on casting the Rulers into moulds that befitted British interests, British Orientalist prejudices towards of South Arabian society, and British visions for South Arabia's future. In the process, alternative potential collaborators were forcefully rejected because they did not conform to these moulds and thus posed a threat to British ambitions. In the broader sense, this chapter argues that these rationalisations of the federal idea and tensions inherent within them created the fractious foundation upon which the course of the end of empire in South Arabia would be based.

Luce takes stock

At the centre of deliberations about the future of the federal idea was the new Governor in Aden, William Luce. Luce arrived in Aden in August 1956 an experienced colonial administrator, earning his knighthood whilst serving in the Sudan Political Service. As his biographer notes, his experience informed his governing and managerial approach, and led to his acquiring a taste for executive action and a hostility to institutional inertia, most of all that he judged to exist in Whitehall. As Private Secretary to Hubert Huddleston in Khartoum, he complained that there was 'practically no executive side to it. … I seldom *do* anything, or have to make decisions or accept any direct responsibility.' In seeking London's support for action he found the Treasury were 'characteristically unhelpful' and regarded Winston Churchill's interference as 'really being more of a headache to us than the Egyptians', whom he saw as bent on doing 'everything she can to bundle us out of the Sudan as precipitately and ignominiously as possible.' His ability to grasp the 'big picture' and conviction that British 'power and the ideas behind it are the greatest forces in the world for peace and the advance of civilization, and it is our first duty to ensure as far as possible that that power is not weakened' stood him out.[2] These attributes, and being a more congenial figure than Hickinbotham, made him a welcome appointment in Aden. For Trevaskis, Luce was 'a gem… the best of the best from that cradle of excellence, the Sudan Political Service. He spoke the same language as we did, he saw things as we saw them and his mind ticked over in the same way as ours. He never barked, he never bullied. He did not domineer – he led.'[3] These personal and inter-personal dynamics would prove crucial to subsequent deliberations about the future utility of the federal idea as a fixture of British policy.

---

[2] M.W. Daly, *The Last of the Great Proconsuls: The Biography of Sir William Luce*, (San Diego: Nathan Berg, 2014), pp. 65-126

[3] Kennedy Trevaskis, *The Deluge: A Personal View of the End of Empire,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), p. 246

As Luce took stock of his position as Governor, his first few months in Aden coincided with the Suez Crisis, though the extent it influenced his policy deliberations was limited. His calculations as to its impact largely focused upon economic issues, as Aden depended almost entirely on traffic passing through the Canal, whilst political assessments were framed on the pre-existing local threat of the South Arabian League (SAL), a nationalist party founded in 1950, and Yemen.[4] The crisis, though dramatic, added nothing to the paradigm through which British officials understood their position in South Arabia. After returning from leave, Trevaskis 'could see very little change. Our Arab friends were disappointed but not dismayed by our failure to finish the job and polish off Nasser. Our enemies were damning and denouncing us as usual.'[5] Luce kept a close eye on the risk of local labour becoming politicised but found that by mid-1957 Aden had 'weathered the past six months with much less difficulty' than feared, and as long as 'no new political complications arose' to hinder the use of the Canal, the economic situation around Aden's port also looked promising.[6]

The framing of Luce's views on policy was instead largely influenced by local conditions and his subordinates.[7] Luce's initial assessment of the situation in South Arabia conveyed to his Aden colleagues in October 1956 confirmed much of Lord Lloyd's May 1956 policy statement, which he 'based on the assumption that British policy is primarily concerned with our interests in Aden … and that the importance of the Protectorate … lies chiefly in its relationship to the Colony.' Aden could not 'aspire beyond that of a considerable degree of internal self-government' and would be 'an exception to the general pattern of political and constitutional development' seen elsewhere in the empire. The federal proposals, Luce believed, would 'inevitably result in an early and strong demand from the Protectorate for "independence"' that 'would greatly stimulate nationalist feeling' in Aden and thus risk British control. The federal idea, he believed, should be quietly set aside.[8] As a newcomer, alongside his general tendency to note the bigger picture, Luce's recognition of Britain appearing to be on the back foot against Egyptian and Yemeni subversion is not surprising. But he was, as he described to London, 'conscious of the inadequacy of my knowledge and

[4] Spencer Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates, 1955-67,* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 34-35; BL, IOR/R/20/B/2495; Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1968), p. 127
[5] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* p. 244
[6] Daly, *The Last of the Great Proconsuls*, p. 138
[7] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 35
[8] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Note on policy in Aden Colony and Protectorate by Luce, 5 October 1956

experience' of South Arabia.[9] Be this a statement of modesty or diplomacy, he was nevertheless reliant upon the relative expertise of his subordinates during the first few months of his governorship, and this presented fresh opportunities for them to influence his recommendations to London. This influence is reflected in the subtle shift in stance towards federation between his October 1956 assessment to his colleagues in Aden and his subsequent recommendations sent to the Colonial Office in December 1956, whilst also indicating the federal idea's continued purchase within official thinking.

British officials in South Arabia had leverage by way of their knowledge of the local situation that stressed the impact that dropping federation would have on British prestige locally. '[W]e must be extremely careful in the way in which we apply the new line of action', one official commented in response to Luce's October assessment, as

> we have by our past policy, actions and statements pledged ourselves to the principle of federation and if a ruler or individual asks us whether this still remains an aim of our policy, I think there can be only one answer – "Yes" … [T]o soft-pedal federation would be a negative and sterile policy and would be most likely to undermine our position in this part of the world where we would become discredited...[10]

Trevaskis noted that, though the Protectorate tribes were vigorously opposed to federation and had 'acquired effectiveness with material aid from Yemen', the main issue was that the tribes' resistance 'derived valuable comfort and strength both from the decline of British power and prestige in the Middle East and the persistent hostility of Egyptian propaganda.'[11] The importance of prestige within British thinking about the Protectorate prevented the wholesale abandonment of the federal idea. But officials went further by arguing that if Britain were to abandon the idea of federation it risked alienating a potentially important partner in the fight against nationalism. Alistair McIntosh noted the growing importance of the 'more educated younger generation [tended] towards unification and democratisation' and, given Egyptian propaganda efforts to court this growing demographic, Britain 'should try not to alienate this element, with its not ungenerous opinions'.[12]

---

[9] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 11 December 1956
[10] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Minute by Hone to Luce, 24 October 1956
[11] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Memorandum: Future policy in Western Aden Protectorate by Trevaskis, 14 November 1956, p. 4
[12] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, McIntosh to C[hief] S[ecretary], 22 October 1956

Such views found their way into Luce's recommendations to London. Though Luce initially noted that 'any early realisation of general federation of the Protectorate States would not be in the interests of [Britain's] policy for Aden Colony', he was aware of the difficulties such a position created. Luce's predisposition towards proactive policies made soft-pedalling the federation 'a conflict between one's inclinations as an administrator and one's obligations to the requirements of policy' and 'a negative conclusion' that offered 'no solution to the problem of retaining British influence in the Protectorate. For we shall certainly not retain our influence by sitting back and hoping for the best.' Britain's adversaries in the region were, on the other hand, actively and imaginatively undermining British influence in the region through subversion, propaganda and the common causes of nationalism and Islam.[13] He emphasised the growing 'desire for change from autocracy and feudalism … among the educated younger generation' that could not realistically be guided 'into channels of political and constitutional thought which will lead it towards sympathy and co-operation with British interests and away from Arab nationalism'. To soft-pedal federation, therefore, might 'give the cue' to Yemen or the SAL 'to champion the cause of federation and enlist the support of the more progressively minded Protectorate Arabs'.[14] If Britain were to regain the initiative it would need to offer a viable alternative, and to drop the proposals would undermine relations with the Rulers and ostracize more 'progressive' circles that might play a key role in the future. As such, the federal idea could not be publicly dropped, Luce and his subordinates believed, because doing so would make British involvement in South Arabian affairs, the raison d'être of British colonial officials, defunct.

Additionally, the federal idea retained its ambiguous appeal amongst officials who offered post-facto explanations that deflected blame for the failure of the federal policy away from the federal idea itself and onto Orientalist shortcomings of the Arab character. 'Those who are in the field', one Protectorate official commented,

> recognise much more clearly than those who sit in Aden that while federation may be a desirable ideal its realisation will be so beset by jealousies, doubts and hesitations that the position of any officer who attempts to lead the people and Rulers towards this goal will be most difficult.[15]

[13] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Note on policy in Aden Colony and Protectorate by Luce, 5 October 1956
[14] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 11 December 1956
[15] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Minute by Hone to Luce, 24 October 1956

The issue was less about the merits of the idea itself, and more about how such an idea might be applied to an apparently juvenile population. Opposition to federation was not a reasoned political position but an emotional, irrational response. As Trevaskis noted,

> [i]n a society where chiefs, tribes, clans and even small family groups are imbued with an exaggerated desire to retain the maximum of independence there was always likely to be strong opposition to any federal arrangement … In the event, however, these inherent prejudices which, it had been hoped, would be overcome by persuasion and reasoning proved to be insurmountable.[16]

This same deflection found its way into Luce's dispatches to London, writing that as 'an administrator I am compelled to agree with my predecessor that the objects of federation … were in the best interests of the people of the Protectorate', but this 'intrinsically admirable conception … ran into certain practical difficulties arising from the feuds, jealousies and suspicions which are typical of most Arabs and from the innate desire of the Protectorate tribes and their chiefs to retain their independence vis-à-vis one another.'[17] These views gained traction in London and Bernard Reilly commented that the 'trend in Arab minds is always in favour of freedom and independence, and the present wave of nationalism has accentuated this sentiment.'[18] The failure to secure agreement for federation was seemingly because, whilst the 'more intelligent Rulers and some of their people can … see the practical advantages of combination', the 'old centrifugal instincts of Arabs' and 'natural disinclination to agree with one another or for that matter with H.M.G. about anything' thwarted the likelihood of closer association.[19] The society 'we are dealing with', one Foreign Office official described, '[has] an involved structure of tribal Arabs whose motives and actions, though normally self-interested and base, can also be influenced – to the outsider unpredictably – by history, tribal feuds, religion and external pressure.'[20] British explanations as to the collapse of the federal proposals regularly and widely leant upon these 'Orientalist cliches' in an attempt to rationalise the federal proposals' difficulties as more due to the deficiencies of the subject population rather than upon the deficiencies of

[16] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Memorandum: Future policy in Western Aden Protectorate by Trevaskis, 14 November 1956, p 7
[17] TNA, CO 1015/1132, Luce to Macpherson, 11 December 1956; CO 1015/1213, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 11 December 1956
[18] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Minute by Reilly, 1 January 1957
[19] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Minute Morgan to Vile, Marnham, Gorell Barnes, 11 February 1957; CO 1015/2066, Minute by Reilly, 12 June 1957
[20] TNA, CO 1015/1931, Foreign Office Note: The Yemen by Riches, 26 March 1957

the British-initiated federal idea.[21] In this sense, the idea's allure could persist, negating the need to reassess the British position in the region after Suez.

Because of the efforts of subordinate officials, Luce softened his position towards federation. In October 1956 he set out his view to his Aden colleagues that

> While I do not suggest that we should actively discourage federation for this would have its own danger, I do suggest … that it will assist our policy for the Colony if we allow full rein to the forces which militate against any early realisation of federation. If the idea will die a natural death then we should let it die.[22]

Whereas in December 1956 Luce recommended to London that

> I would recommend that in future we should say no more about federation, in the hope that if the idea will not die at least it will hibernate; we should not say or do anything in an attempt to kill it, for that would have its own dangers. But if it shows signs of active life we should make the best of it by showing sympathy and endeavouring, whatever the difficulties, to guide it in a direction which will not be unduly inimical to British interest.[23]

This subtle but important shift is demonstrative of the continued traction of the federal idea within colonial officials' thinking in South Arabia. Trevaskis was especially keen to persuade Luce of the continued merits of federation, and though he was not successful in securing it as an active policy, Luce's subordinates were collectively successful in stopping the idea from dying altogether.

The forward policy

Despite the sidelining of the federal proposals in 1956, British officials in the Colonial Office and in Aden recognised that the policy status quo in the Protectorate could not guarantee British influence and interests, and there was therefore an active effort to pursue a policy that would protect against encroachment from Yemen into the Protectorate. But the search for a policy was also conducted to satisfy officials' 'inclinations as administrators' and fulfil their part in their understanding of Britain's imperial mission. Since authority over Aden and the Protectorates was transferred from Bombay to the Colonial Office in 1937, the over-

[21] Spencer Mawby, 'Orientalism and the Failure of British Policy in the Middle East: The Case of Aden', *History: the Journal of the Historical Association*, (95:3, 2010), p. 353
[22] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Note on policy in Aden Colony and Protectorate by Luce, 5 October 1956, p. 3
[23] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 11 December 1956

arching focus of British initiatives on the spot was to sustain a 'forward policy' in the Protectorates of increased engagement in the affairs of the Protectorate states, establishing treaty relations, and through cooperation or pacification bring about, as Hickinbotham and others saw it, the 'imposition of order upon anarchy.'[24] This reasoning resonated with Luce, who believed the expansion of British engagement with the Protectorate states could demonstrate 'that there is a solid advantage in the British connection for each of them.' This was to be achieved through, firstly, 'the provision of military protection from internal and external threat' by 'bring[ing] those unadministered tribes and areas which have strong dissident elements … under some control and so improve security and reduce the Yemen's opportunities of making trouble' and make it 'increasingly clear … that interference in the Protectorate does not pay'. Secondly, he proposed a 'policy of extensive development' to the sum of an additional £1.75 million annually.[25] The British colonial administration would deliver this development 'to ensure that such funds as are allocated were effectively used … until such time as they could safely be handed over to the State authorities.' Should London be deterred by the high cost of retaining Britain's influence in the Protectorate 'they will in my opinion assuredly lose it and … Aden Colony will be gravely jeopardised.' Whatever the risks, Luce was 'convinced that a policy of active development is more likely to prolong British influence in the Protectorate generally than a policy of laissez-faire. … If, for political reasons, it cannot be a policy of integration, then it must be policy of effective development on the basis of individual States'.[26] The Protectorate Secretary, Horace Phillips, further echoed these views when he rejected a Colonial Office claim that Luce's proposals represented '"a major change in the whole of our policy" – as if it were something new for HMG to spend money on the Protectorate, or as if, in shelving federation, we were suddenly putting a brake on an active process.'[27] The British administration in Aden remained firmly and decisively committed to some form of forward policy in the Protectorate. The end of the active pursuit of the federal proposals did not mean the end to a core component of the federal idea, that of retaining Britain's initiative and control over South Arabia's future.

Luce's development plan, however, highlighted the difficulty of how development would be administered without relinquishing British control. For Trevaskis, any policy that would

---

[24] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 34-42; Christian Tripodi, ''A Bed of Procrustes': The Aden Protectorate and the Forward Policy 1934–44', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 44:1 (2016), pp. 95-120

[25] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 11 December 1956; TNA, CO 1015/1930, Luce to Morgan, 24 April 1957

[26] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 11 December 1956

[27] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Minute by Phillips, 7 March 1957

cement the Protectorate Rulers as intermediaries could maintain British influence, arguing that increased development funds and administration provided 'the opportunity of bringing these states into a condition [of] willing dependence.'[28] Britain, Luce argued, would continue to 'rely on the Rulers as the principal instrument of British influence', albeit with a close eye on the tribesmen and 'the views and ambitions of the growing educated class … neither [of which] we nor the Rulers can afford to ignore.'[29] Though officials might have hoped to foster relations with a growing intelligentsia, the Colonial Office regarded the Rulers as the primary vehicle of British policy in the meantime. But involving the Rulers in the development plan created new dilemmas given previous post-facto rationalisations about the Arab character. London recognised that Luce's development plan would require British supervision, but that the difficulties of recruiting staff and finding 'the type of person who will fit in to conditions in the Protectorate' reinforced 'the argument for the expenditure of money in direct subsidies to the Rulers.'[30] To navigate this problem, Hugh Boustead, Resident Adviser in the Eastern Aden Protectorate, recommended angling the proposals as a means of combatting Communism because it would 'appeal to even the toughest minded Treasury official', whilst one Colonial Office official sought to downplay the Rulers' role and make clear 'that *douceurs* to the Rulers and others have only a small place in [Luce's] plans'.[31] Yet these inherent tensions hampered Luce's development proposals as the Treasury sought reassurances as to how the funds would be administered, whilst, frustratingly for officials in the Colonial Office and Aden, also being 'bothered' by the proposals' emphasis on social and administrative expenditure as opposed to spending on economic projects.[32] As much as the wrangling in Whitehall seemed to amount to a zero-sum game, it is nevertheless demonstrative of the shared belief that any political and economic development in South Arabia had to be amenable to and a vehicle for British influence and control. This is particularly true for the eventual compromise that was reached between the Treasury and the Colonial Office in late 1957, that a British mission would be sent to South Arabia to make recommendations for future development.[33] As such, the principles behind the British-led forward policy were more commonly held, by

[28] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Memorandum: Future policy in Western Aden Protectorate by Trevaskis, 14 November 1956
[29] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 11 December 1956
[30] TNA, T 220/1080, Morgan to Luce, 4 April 1957
[31] TNA, CO 1015/1930, Boustead to Gorell Barnes, 23 May 1957; CO 1015/2066, Morgan to Vile, 3 June 1957
[32] TNA, T 220/1080, Makins to Macpherson, 8 July 1957; T 220/1345, Johnston to Poynton, 11 November 1957
[33] TNA, CO 1015/2067, Morgan to Luce, 5 February 1958

both the metropole and periphery, than might otherwise appear at first glance. This created space for the revival of the federal idea, a project originally intended to cement British influence and control.

The nature of the political structure that would facilitate the forward policy was less important and this aided the continued traction of the federal idea within British thinking.[34] Lennox-Boyd believed, as officials in Aden did, that to drop the federal proposals in their entirety would undermine the confidence of the Rulers and thus undermine Britain's influence in the Protectorate. The idea to federate could not be dismissed entirely but was left with an important caveat that any future proposals would need to be advanced by the Rulers themselves, thereby establishing a framework for local collaboration that legitimised British engagement in the Protectorate. Doing so would give the 'assurance [that] safeguards the position of the Rulers as a whole', Lennox-Boyd argued, 'and should make it clear that federation will not come into being without their willing consent.'[35] Luce affirmed this view, arguing that imposing federation on the Rulers would 'only bedevil our relations with most of them, and so weaken our influence with them'; should Britain be 'confronted with a general and early demand from the Rulers for federation', Luce continued, 'then we have no choice but to assist in its formation in the admittedly slender hope that we can guide it into a policy which is not inimical to British interests.'[36] Leaving any federal initiative to the Rulers and pursuing a forward policy was a compromise between the dangers of imposing a political structure without local collaboration and the unsavoury view of a laissez faire approach in the Protectorate. It was a convenient stopgap between maintaining British prestige and downplayed any perceived change of policy, but also provided the mechanism through which the federal idea could return to the forefront of British policy discourse.

The federal revival

Whilst the immediate impact of the Suez Crisis on British policy in South Arabia was limited, Britain's continued struggles with Egypt in its wake posed a more significant problem. The Suez Crisis provided Nasser with a significant propaganda victory, but in

[34] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Eden to Lennox-Boyd, 29 June 1956
[35] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Lennox-Boyd to Eden, 28 June 1956; Lennox-Boyd to Eden, 6 July 1956; Minute by Reilly, 1 January 1957
[36] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Note on policy in Aden Colony and Protectorate by Luce, 5 October 1956, p. 4; TNA, CO 1015/1213, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 11 December 1956

early 1957 he was less successful in solidifying his influence across the Middle East. This was especially evident in Jordan. Though the pro-Nasser government headed by Prime Minister Suleiman Nabulsi entered the Arab Solitary Pact - a mutual defence agreement, with Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia in January 1957 - it was a short-lived venture and King Hussein ousted Nabulsi in April 1957 whilst Saudi Arabia quickly broke away and sought to build a counterweight to Nasserite and Soviet influence. After the collapse of the Arab Solidarity Pact, fears of a communist take-over in Syria raised the prospect of military intervention by the United States or its Middle East allies. With Turkey amassing troops on its border, Nasser's deployment of Egyptian forces into Syria established his dominance over the Syrian government and elevated his prestige. Whilst the Americans came to believe that Nasser was the only Arab leader who could stop communism there and were thus more open to rapprochement, the outcome of the Syrian Crisis did little to dispel British suspicions of Nasser and the post-Suez contest between British imperialism and Arab nationalism remained in a state of flux throughout 1957.[37] Into 1958, the formation of the UAR had a significant impact on the ideological and strategic balance in the Middle East. News of the UAR's founding was greeted with 'popular euphoria' across the Middle East and seemingly actualised pan-Arab aspirations for unity against reactionary and imperial influence.[38] In response Britain sought 'to foster closer co-operation between Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia in order to provide an alternative focal point for the political aspirations of the people of Syria… concerned at the prospect of Egyptian domination.'[39] The resultant federation of Iraq and Jordan, albeit an ultimately short-lived initiative, was as much an effort to reinforce Britain's strategic allies as it was an effort to arrest Nasser's ideological monopoly over Arab unity.

The incorporation of Yemen into the Egyptian-Syrian union as the UAS also had a major impact on Anglo-Yemeni relations and on British South Arabian policy. Through the 1950s Yemeni ambitions in the region were central to British policy deliberations as attempts to establish a federation were seen by the Yemeni Imam, Ahmad bin Yahya, as a breach of the 1934 Anglo-Yemeni Treaty's conditions about maintaining a 'status quo' on the porous

---

[37] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East,* pp. 97-111; Elie Podeh, 'The Struggle over Arab Hegemony after the Suez Crisis', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 29:1 (1993), pp. 91-110
[38] Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 186-207; Dina Rezk, 'Egypt's Revolutionary Year: Regime Consolidation at Home, Pragmatism Abroad and Neutralism in the Cold War', in Jeffry G. Karam (ed), *The Middle East in 1958: Reimagining a Revolutionary Year,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2021), pp. 92-105; James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic,* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2001), pp. 101-159
[39] TNA, CAB 128/32, CC(58), 14th Conclusions, 4 February 1958

border. An emboldened Yemen sought to appeal to the UN over cross-border raids, pursued greater subversion in the Protectorate and increasingly asserted its long-standing claims over South Arabia. Though attempts were made to achieve a diplomatic solution, British officials in South Arabia nevertheless remained suspicious of Yemeni intentions and Trevaskis believed that '[i]t will take a good deal more than this to convince most of us that an exhibition of amiability … indicates the slightest change of heart or that … the Imam and his henchmen wouldn't be up to their old game in a trice.'[40] The notion that Britain was engaged in a geo-political tug of war over the future of the region was potent. Coinciding with a spike in cross-border incidents, British officials regarded the balance of Anglo-Yemeni relations and the broader struggle against Nasser's influence as having markedly shifted with the formation of the UAR and UAS.

The resulting urgency triggered the revival of the federal idea by the Protectorate Rulers and British officials in South Arabia. For the former, an emboldened Yemen threatened their positions and, though we attempt to discern their individual motivations via British sources, they saw federation as an opportunity to secure their states against Yemeni ambitions through greater British financial and security assistance and, to varying degrees, provide a passage to independence. It also provided a means by which Nasser's ideological monopoly over Arab unity might be challenged. One Ruler saw it as the Rulers' 'duty to start federating'.[41] British officials nevertheless proved crucial to federation's eventual realisation and according to Mohamed Farid, the Federation's Finance and then Foreign Minister who had previously trained as a political officer at Oxford, Trevaskis was 'behind it all', spearheading and framing the development of the subsequent proposals.[42] The revival of the federal idea reignited Trevaskis' ambitions and he wasted no time getting 'federation out of the dust sheets'.[43] After two days of discussion between Trevaskis and representatives of Beihan, Audhali and Fadhli came the submission of formal proposals to Luce on 21 February 1958. Though Luce was 'v[ery] sceptical about whether it will work' the persistence of the federal idea within official thinking meant that it could forcefully be placed back at the centre of British policy deliberations. Luce immediately recognised the need to support this new initiative beyond encouraging words.[44]

---

[40] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3189, Trevaskis to Assistant Advisers, 14 December 1959
[41] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* p. 133
[42] Mohamed Farid Al Aulaqi, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 2 August 2017
[43] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* pp. 129, 133; OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/2, 2 February 1958
[44] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/2, 26 February 1958; BL, IOR, 20/B/3259, Amir Saleh bin Hussein (Amir of Beihan), Sultan Saleh bin Hussein (Audhali Sultan), Sultan Ahmed bin Abdulla (Fadhli Naib) to Luce, 21 February 1958

Given that the federal idea had previously exposed conflicting policy priorities, and that Luce's development proposals floundered in the face of institutional inertia, Luce remoulded the federal logic to circumvent the difficulties he had outlined only 15 months earlier. Though Luce and others recognised the desirability of working with 'moderate' nationalists or 'educated' classes in South Arabia, the officials felt the Rulers would remain the vehicle through which British influence was maintained as they best fitted the mould of ideal postcolonial partner. In this sense, the influence of Trevaskis' thinking is clear. Britain, Luce argued, had 'inherited a somewhat precarious position' in the Protectorate without 'any effective control over the conduct of [the] internal affairs' of the 'primitive tribal autocracies riven by rivalries, feuds and jealousies'. Any influence that Britain had was dependent upon the states' 'extreme indigence …, dire need for financial assistance and upon their fear of being subjected to the tyrannical rule of the Zeidi Imam of the Yemen'. Luce also stressed the urgency he believed the situation warranted, but the way he contextualised this was unique. Because of Luce's experience of London's inertia over his development plans he thus argued that Aden faced a 'new situation' and was 'in the grip of four powerful currents in the tide of world affairs'; decolonisation, Arab nationalism, the decline of British power, and Russian expansionism; and that to 'swim against one would be hard enough, to swim against all four is, I firmly believe, beyond our strength.'[45] Though there was a significant American concern about communist influence in the Middle East, South Arabia was regarded as peripheral to regional Cold War pressures and there was limited American interest in the British position there.[46] Concurrently, the perceived isolation of South Arabia from the currents of regional and global affairs also meant that British officials there rarely, if ever, sincerely factored in the threat of communism into the development of policy. Yet officials believed that stressing the significance of localised problems within these broader contexts was one of the few ways in which institutional inertia in London could be overcome. By emphasising south-west Arabia's place within these four 'powerful currents' Luce deliberately sought to play into London's heightened concerns over cooperation between Moscow, Cairo, and Sana'a in an effort to force an immediate response to the federal proposals. The supply of Soviet and Czech arms to Yemen, which Luce noted as starting from May 1957, demonstrated their 'strong interest' which Luce framed less in line with the preoccupations of local officials, namely cross-

[45] TNA, CO 1015/1911, Luce to Gorell Barnes, 27 March 1958
[46] McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East,* pp. 68-70; W. Taylor Fain, *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region,* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 62, 93-94

border subversions, and more in line with geopolitical manoeuvring on a continental scale. The combined wishes of Egypt and Russia 'to destroy the Western position in the Middle East and … penetrate Africa' formed part of the rationale, he argued, of Yemen's incorporation in the UAR which could facilitate the 'Russian/Egyptian drive to the South.' Whereas the threat from Yemen had been previously understood as localised, Britain now faced 'a double threat of great magnitude' that threatened the Cold War balance of power across two continents and the danger was imminent; 'the sands are running out and in the absence so far of any decision on my proposals, I am assuming for present purposes that Russia and Egypt will be able within the next few months to consolidate their hold on the Yemen'.[47] With this blunt warning Luce wanted London to take immediate action to support the new federal initiative, and framing the situation along Cold War lines was used to make the sudden change in policy urgently necessary.

Yet the implications of the Soviet Union supplying arms to Yemen appears to have been exaggerated by Luce. Though he stressed the urgency of the situation, his wife, Margaret Luce, recorded the arrival of weaponry five months earlier than he reported to London.[48] Furthermore, contemporaries did not regard the shipment as capable of presenting a threat beyond familiar cross-border incursions. Lionel Folkard, a war-time RAF pilot stationed in Aden as Acting Wing Commander, noted the arrival of tanks, guns, armoured cars and Yak 10 aircraft 'caused much excitement in Aden' and 'increased the Yemen's theoretical military potential by many hundred per cent', Folkard was

> never much concerned that these new weapons posed a serious threat to Aden. Even when the Yemenis had learnt to maintain and use them, which was likely to take many months, the worst that they would be able to do with the tanks and guns was to lob a few shells across the frontier, and the [Hawker] Hunters would make short work of them if they tried that.[49]

The supply of arms to Yemen was undoubtedly a cause of concern in Aden, but largely as part of the perpetual border dispute and cross-border intrigue. Indeed, at the same time as the federal proposals were presented, plans to remove the Imam through a British-backed coup, later formalised as Operation INVICTA, circulated Aden in early January 1958 at the

---

[47] TNA, CO 1015/1911, Luce to Gorell Barnes, 27 March 1958
[48] Margaret Luce, *From Aden to the Gulf: Personal Diaries, 1956-1966*, (Salisbury: Michael Russel, 1987), p. 31
[49] Lionel Folkard, *The Sky and the Desert,* (Penzance: United Writers, 1985), pp. 127-8

instigation of Trevaskis.[50] But the implications of increased Yemeni subversion and the scale of the conflict were undoubtedly inflated by Luce who, along with some of his colleagues in Aden, was frustrated by London's inertia and aloofness to the difficulties to which colonial officials in South Arabia were alive.

Similarly, Luce sought to integrate South Arabia into Britain's recent strategic and ideological tussles with Nasser. The creation of the UAR was presented by Luce as being part of an 'almost bewildering series of changes' in the Middle East that demonstrated 'the gathering momentum of Arab nationalism towards the goal of reuniting the Arab world'. Whether British observers considered the UAR an 'unrealistic and unstable' federation was irrelevant, as such a union of Arab states had 'caught the imagination of Arabs generally and … enhanced Nasser's prestige as the embodiment of a vague longing for Arab unity.' However, Luce was keen to stress that the initiative was not completely lost. Because the appeal of Arab nationalism rested upon the 'deep-seated emotional urge' of the Arab population, to which 'emotion was the strongest of all motives', Luce believed Britain had an opportunity to guide the force of Arab nationalism down avenues congenial to British interests. Arab nationalism could still be 'enlisted' against 'the dangers of Russian imperialism', but only at the cost of removing 'the main source of antagonism between ourselves and the Arabs, namely the remains of British political power in the Middle East.'[51] The struggle over south-west Arabia was, Luce argued, one in which the destiny of the region rested either with Nasser and the Soviet Union, or with Britain and its allies in the Protectorate. Some new arrangement, namely the proposed federation, could provide Britain the opportunity to retain the 'goodwill' of the Arab peoples and a monopoly over strategic and ideological influence in the region.

Luce set out three options Britain could take. To maintain control indefinitely, to 'dig in and defend our position, come what may', would ultimately require a build-up of British forces and the willingness to use them against an increasingly unsettled population. Though aware of his December 1956 recommendations, Luce pointed out that it would now lead to spiralling financial and human costs, and to pursue such a policy was now 'utterly bankrupt.' Alternatively, to withdraw might, in the context of Britain's economic difficulties, be 'superficially attractive', but it was an 'unthinkable' path to take, citing Britain's imperial 'responsibilities and … solemn engagements'. To withdraw would 'be

[50] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/2, p. 9; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 55-57
[51] TNA, CO 1015/1911, Luce to Gorell Barnes, 27 March 1958

breaking faith, not to mention treaties, with our friends in the Protectorate by leaving them pray to the wolves at the door', whilst leaving Aden would be 'an act of ingratitude' for the 'immense advantages' Britain had obtained through its possession. Furthermore, Britain's prestige in the Gulf would be lost in an instant. 'I cannot conceive', Luce lamented, 'that HMG would ever countenance such an act of despair.' The only option, as Luce intended, was to

> embark on a policy of gradual disengagement from our position in south-west Arabia, with the object of strengthening our friends in both Colony and Protectorate during the period of disengagement and of replacing thereafter our political power by a new relationship more in keeping with modern trends and with the realities of the situation.

Such a policy would be achieved over ten years and necessitated the creation of new political institutions. In the Protectorate such an institution was emerging, and for Luce revival of federation seemed 'to afford an opportunity which we should and must take to offer to the Rulers and peoples of the Protectorate a goal of unity and eventual independence'. Through federation Britain would achieve its seemingly benevolent development objectives, whilst simultaneously winning over 'greater sympathy in the world at large' for a fledgling independent state struggling against Yemeni subversion. As such, Luce argued that Britain 'cannot possibly afford not to support and encourage' the federal proposals for it 'offers the best hope of retaining our influence in the Protectorate for a number of years to come'.[52] The change in Luce's thinking was dramatic, and it resurrected many of the features of the federal logic developed since 1952. The difference for Luce was that because the Rulers instigated the federal proposals there was little Britain could do other than facilitate the creation of a federation should it wish to continue to have control and influence in South Arabia. The context of the Cold War was utilised by Luce to highlight the urgency of the situation, though its importance as part of the federal logic was supplementary rather than integral. The creation of the UAS allowed Luce to align the goals of Arab nationalism and Soviet expansionism, bridge the gaps between Britain's local, regional, and global imperial policy priorities, and offer federation as a panacea to Britain's imperial ills.

In the wake of the UAR's establishment, Luce's carefully crafted argument struck a chord with key figures in London. Luce's dispatches coincided with reports that Nasser was preparing to visit Moscow and, haunted by pre-war appeasement and the fallout from the

[52] TNA, CO 1015/1911, Luce to Gorell Barnes, 28 March 1958

Suez Crisis, many felt Britain had to proactively curb Nasser's influence and, as McNamara argues, 'in no way can it be claimed that the new [Macmillan] government was different in attitude to the previous one on the subject of Nasser.'[53] Harold Macmillan, now Prime Minister, had recently reflected upon the lessons of Suez after a meeting with Anthony Eden and concluded in his diary that 'however tactically wrong we were, strategically we were right. … Now, I fear, Nasser, (like Mussolini) will achieve his Arab empire & it may take a war to dislodge him.'[54] One Colonial Office official, commenting on Luce's letters, was 'extremely impressed by [his] proposals and … supporting arguments. … I hate Nasser and all his works, but I think we should be deluding ourselves if we fail to recognise him as a very real force in the Arab world.'[55] Furthermore, the positioning of the Soviet threat to Britain's position in the Middle East and Africa resonated with the concerns of backbench Conservatives and members of the Cabinet, facilitated in part by press commentary and contacts with officials in Aden.[56] Trevaskis became acquainted and found common ideological ground with Randolph Churchill, then working as a journalist, and later claimed to have taken on writing articles for 'the elderly Correspondent of the *Sunday Times',* potentially John Slade-Baker, when they visited Aden through 1958 as he realised that 'if the Press influenced public opinion, the sensible thing to do was to try to influence the Press.'[57] The broader nature of informal contacts with journalists and MPs with officials in South Arabia is unclear, but Bernard Braine, a Conservative MP, wrote to Macmillan to highlight the concerns raised by '[o]ur people on the spot' that 'if Aden goes the Trucial Coast and Bahrein would quickly fall under the influence of other powers. If Somaliland goes as well we lose our over-flying rights and open the back door into Africa to the Egyptians and their Soviet masters.'[58] Lennox-Boyd also sought to magnify the significance of the Protectorate as a Cold War battle ground that, if not arrested, had implications for Somalia and Ethiopia as a barrier to Egyptian and Soviet interest that could pose 'a very real threat to Kenya.'[59] The pervasive sense of Britain's position of relative weakness extended to the very nature of British imperialism, as illustrated by an unusually forthright

---

[53] 'President Nasser's Visit to Moscow', *The Times,* 31 March 1958, p. 8; McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East,* p. 67

[54] Peter Catterall (ed), *The MacMillan Diaries: Vol II: Prime Minister and After, 1957-1966,* (London: Macmillan, 2011), 15 March 1958, p. 103; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 47

[55] TNA, CO 1015/1911, Minute by Bourdillon, 1 April 1958

[56] Czeslaw Jesman, 'Nasser's Ambition Turns South', *The Daily Telegraph,* 20 February 1958, p. 8

[57] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* p. 260. Proving Trevaskis' claim is of course difficult, but one article written in Aden bears many of the hallmarks of Trevaskis' thinking and writing style. See, J.B. Slade-Baker 'Aden Lesson For Britain', *The Sunday Times,* 4 May 1958

[58] TNA, CO 1015/1930, Bernie Braine MP to Macmillan, 26 March 1958

[59] TNA, CO 1015/1930, Lennox-Boyd to Macmillan, 3 April 1958

assessment of Britain's position by a Colonial Office official. The British were the 'only "Franks" with physical foothold in Arabia' besides 'the Jews in Palestine'. The protection and advisory treaties were 'unsatisfactory' to the extent that if they were 'ever submitted to the scrutiny of the United Nations or the International Court [they would] be considered, in some sense, invalid' and that the historical and recent 'fact' was that 'some of these treaties were imposed on the Rulers by either force or trickery.' Indeed, the 'whole conception of such Protectorate treaties is entirely out-dated and "colonialist". … The only possible answers to criticisms of this kind are either, as we do at present, to brave out the situation on the basis of our juridical rights, and the alleged wishes and loyalty of the Rulers themselves (which must be admitted in many cases to be very weak), or to give up the whole business'.[60] Luce, it seemed, offered a lifeline. Federation presented a fresh prospect of maintaining the initiative against Arab nationalism despite Britain's apparent weakness.

Though Luce sought to cater to London's understanding of the situation in the Middle East, there was still a degree of reluctance to admit that the laissez faire, divide and rule policy was lacking. This is not surprising given Luce's previous views towards federation. The Colonial Office initially believed that South Arabia's future was 'rather less certain than anyone attempting to prophesy is bound to appear to think it is'. Because of British rule's apparent material benefits to the local population, 'if we play our cards right', one official put it, Britain could 'stay as long as we can' without setting a timeframe for Britain's departure.[61] The Colonial Office had, inadvertently, confirmed Aden's suspicions that it was aloof to the reality of the situation in the Protectorate. 'I think there is a great danger,' Luce replied, 'of our drifting along in the hope that something better will turn up tomorrow or the next day. I hope we shall not just go on being uncertain about the "likely trend of developments" when there seem to me to be certain basic facts in the situation which can be clearly distinguished.'[62] As Hickinbotham and others had done before, Luce sought to assert peripheral control over the direction of policy as the new dangers Britain faced in South Arabia would require a level of expertise only he and his colleagues could seemingly provide.[63] Though the Colonial Office had yet to form a concrete response to the new

[60] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Minute: Morgan to Vile, Marnham, Gorell Barnes, 11 February 1957
[61] TNA, CO 1015/1911, Gorell Barnes to Luce, 14 April 1958
[62] TNA, CO 1015/1911, Luce to Gorell Barnes, 28 April 1958
[63] 'How to control political development, how to improve the economy of the Protectorate as a whole and the individual states, how to advance education of the right type and how to weld together the component states which make up this large area of mountain and desert, some 25% greater than England, Scotland and Wales, and how to do it with as little disturbance as possible the traditional ties which exist between ourselves and the Rulers and their people? This was the

proposals, and there were still serious concerns regarding the implication that Aden would someday join the federation, there was little that could be done other than accept the Ruler's proposals because, as one official put it, 'this initiative … provides us for the first time with an opportunity to develop a policy there which has a good chance of defeating the specious appeal of Arab nationalism a la Nasser, and that it is an opportunity which we ought to seize with both hands.'[64] As far as Cabinet Secretary Burke Trend saw it, Britain did not have 'any real alternative' to the federal policy, and thus the initiative lay with Luce who was better placed to channel the revived federal idea into lines accommodating to British interests.[65]

Alternative partners

In the context of the formation in February 1958 of the Hashemite Arab Federation of Iraq and Jordan, the British believed the federal initiative could prove viable as it highlighted the possibility that reinforcing traditional leaders could protect British interests and provide an equally evocative alternative to Nasser. The fact that the federal proposals emerged from the Protectorate Rulers was the most important driver for the revival of the federal idea but satisfying concerns that British influence and control could be maintained through them required a transformation of British conceptions of the Rulers, a task undertaken by officials in Aden and London. What this constituted was not the product of negotiations with local elites. For the British, an acceptable postcolonial partnership was one most compatible with the pursuit of Britain's interests and control, and this became the pivot around which the revived federal logic depended. In early 1958 the form that the future federal state and postcolonial partnership would take was not certain. But what was certain to British figures was that it should be configured to remain closely bound to Britain after independence to not be subject to Nasser's influence nor assert itself as part of the growing group of newly independent Afro-Asian states that took an anti-colonial stance or joined the post-Bandung Conference non-aligned movement.

Out of all the Protectorate Rulers, the one individual who most embodied British hopes of a potential postcolonial partner, and their worst fears, was Sultan Ali Abdul Karim of Lahej.

---

problem which had to be solved, a problem that seemed most complex to us in close touch with the situation but possibly not so difficult of solution to those far removed from the realities in the peace and quiet of their studies or wherever people do write articles to the papers.' TNA, CO 1015/1131, Hickinbotham to Lennox-Boyd, 19 June 1956; Tripodi, ''A Bed of Procrustes', pp. 111-2

[64] TNA, T 220/1346, Macpherson to Markin, 28 May 1958

[65] TNA, CAB 21/4357, Trend to Prime Minister, 25 June 1958

Considered by the British to be the most important state because of its economic capacity, proximity to Aden, and long border with Yemen, Britain had had a close interest in Lahej since taking control of Aden in 1839. In 1952, this interest had taken the form of direct action against Ali's predecessor, who had been reluctant to agree an advisory treaty and was consequently deposed.[66] Ali, having established his position on the promise of signing an advisory treaty with Britain, made a lasting impression on British contemporaries who regarded him as a new kind of Ruler, someone who challenged the British perception that the Rulers were a gaggle of archaic anachronisms. One contemporary described him in 1958 as 'a pleasant young man … more westernised than his colleagues … certainly more alive to the problems of the world outside his state … [and] a complete misfit within his community of sheikhly feudalism'.[67] The *Daily Express* journalist June Knox-Mawer compared Ali to another ruler, Sultan Saleh of Audhali, and noted the 'striking' contrast

> between the old and the new type of ruler, between the would-be modern and the necessarily feudal … Both Sultans had about them the air of inner emotions suppressed by the habit of training and by the necessity for a ruler to keep private thoughts safely concealed. Ali had learned to hide this constant tension beneath the veneer of Europeanised social chit-chat which Saleh would probably scorn anyway.[68]

Trevaskis fondly recalled his relations with Ali:

> Nowhere in Southern Arabia would you have found anyone quite like him. Looking as if he had just stepped out of Savile Row and Bond Street, he was spectacularly elegant and, being well travelled, intelligent and perceptive and having an ability to speak pure Oxford English, he was an attractive and stimulating companion. A chat with him was a tonic which I enjoyed as often as I could.

His appeal was also grounded by his efforts to 'zeal for domestic reform' to develop and modernise Lahej, being 'full of plans and blue prints for the greater good of Lahej'. All of which made him an 'obvious candidate for a leading position' when the federal idea was first mooted and he, Farid believed, 'would have been the right President' of a future federal state.[69] As a westernised figure, Ali matched the archetypal postcolonial partner with

---

[66] Simon C. Smith, 'Rulers and residents: British relations with the Aden Protectorate, 1937-59, *Middle Eastern Studies,* 31:3 (1995), pp. 516-7

[67] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3264, Extract from *Listener*, London, 'Britain and the Sultan of Lahej' by Lord Birdwood, 17 July 1958

[68] June Knox-Mawer, *The Sultans Came to Tea,* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1961), p. 79

[69] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* pp. 192, 233; A. J. Gavin, *Aden Under British Rule*, (London: Hurst, 1975), p. 339; Mohamed Farid Al Aulaqi, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 11 August 2017

whom Britain 'had been forced to compromise elsewhere in the empire'.[70] Ali presented himself to the British as a mediator between Britain and the Arab world in a future postcolonial arrangement to remedy the rise of Arab nationalism; 'please remember that', Trevaskis reported him to have said, 'as an Arab, I am better placed to do it for you'.[71]

Yet despite these glowing impressions, Ali would ultimately be deposed as Sultan in July 1958.Though officials admired Ali they were acutely suspicious of him, and at the direction of officials on the spot these suspicions turned to outright hostility. A few interconnected factors contributed to this; local, personal, and ideological. Officials in Aden believed that he sought to assert the Abdali family's dominance over the region at the expense of the other Protectorate states and, as Trevaskis recalled him saying, all Britain 'had to do to decolonise was to hand Aden back to him and then leave him to do the rest.'[72] The revival of the federal idea by three other Protectorate Rulers was, in part, a response to this perceived threat. Furthermore, the British took the essentialist view that he possessed an 'illicit craftiness' that was a key feature of the Arab character, and that there were thus limits as to how far he could be trusted to serve British interests rather than his own.[73] Though his exact intentions are difficult to pin down from British sources, British officials feared that Ali would see his best chance of facilitating his desire to move South Arabia towards independence without British support and would thus not be subject to British influence and control post-independence. As one official put it,

> Ali was no fool. Why should he blot his copybook with us when the chances were that we would be here for a good long time to come? But supposing he thought what the Afro-Asians at [Bandung] and many others thought: that our days might be numbered?... in such an event he would probably keep his options open.[74]

Such suspicions were seemingly confirmed when Ali's desire to modernise Lahej invoked nationalistic overtures and 'the latest trends in the Arab world' through an alliance with the SAL. In the lead up to the Suez Crisis, British intelligence noted its heightened activity 'exploiting' the situation and Muhammad al-Jifri, one of its leaders, was excluded from Aden in August 1956 for 'trafficking with Colonel Nasser in Cairo'.[75] In his December 1956

---

[70] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 38
[71] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* p. 203
[72] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* p. 215
[73] Mawby, 'Orientalism', p. 349
[74] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* p. 234
[75] TNA, CO 1015/1213, Extract from Secret Aden Intelligence Summary, No. 6 for June 1956; PREM 11/1461, Lennox-Boyd to Prime Minister, 16 August 1956; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 38-39

assessment Luce was concerned that dropping the federation altogether would allow for the SAL's conception of unity in south-west Arabia to flourish and attract support away from British-led efforts to frame a federal future for the region. The SAL, on the other hand, regarded British fears as 'very much exaggerated'. Their stated intentions were to achieve self-determination, one national independent government with full rights of sovereignty based on a democratic constitution, development, and negotiations over the use of Aden as a British base.[76] Such aims were interpreted by the British as a threat, regarding them as a means to remove the Protectorate Rulers and create a South Arabian state that would facilitate unification with Yemen.[77] Such fears were also reinforced by British views of the SAL leadership that incorporated existing prejudices of the Arab character. Trevaskis initially viewed them as 'modern and fashionable, but not Westernised', but later noted that they were set on a sinister path and he 'now knew the Jifri for what he was. He was in Nasser's service and he was out to destroy us.'[78] Abdullah al-Jifri was, according to one official, 'a shift[y] looking, unconvincing persona, and … an inveterate but inexpert liar.'[79] After the SAL's banishment from Aden, Ali's decision to form a closer relationship with the al-Jifris and allow them to operate from Lahej meant that they could continue to rival Britain's vision for South Arabia's future. British views of the SAL and its leadership, like those of Ali, meant that there was a barrier to considering it as a postcolonial or collaborative partner, in addition to the broader fear, brought closer to reality by the creation of the UAR and UAS, that the SAL conspired with Yemen and Egypt to force Britain out of Aden.[80]

Through early 1958, with a fresh initiative to federate at hand, British attitudes toward Ali shifted from suspicion to outright hostility and officials in Aden moved to meet the perceived threat in Lahej and, as Luce put it, clean up 'this nest of vipers'.[81] Luce was particularly concerned that the supply of Egyptian teachers, at the behest of the SAL, would instil anti-British sentiment amongst the Lahej populace and blunt the federal initiative.[82] In a dispatch to London, Luce argued that the al-Jifris had managed to 'gain almost complete control of the administration of the State and a dominating influence over the

[76] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3264, Abdullah Al-Gifri to Reilly, 31 October 1958
[77] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2612, Trevaskis to Chief Secretary, 10 December 1956
[78] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* pp. 202, 240
[79] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3262, Note: Interview of 'Abdullah 'Ali al Jifri on 21st April 1958
[80] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/2, 7 February 1958
[81] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3262, Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 April 1958
[82] TNA, T 220/1090, Notes on the Aden Protectorate, unsigned, 8 July 1957; BL, IOR/R/20/B/3262, Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 April 1958

Sultan who is as wax in their hands.' Luce was convinced as to the 'obvious' danger that Ali could declare himself for the UAR, and thus believed that 'immediate and effective measure[s] to restore [the] situation' were required lest Britain wished to 'relinquish our responsibilities and abandon our friends to what awaits them before we had enabled them to stand on their own feet in the Arab world'.[83] But there was little that could be pinned on Ali to justify his removal as Sultan, especially one who was considered close to the ideal postcolonial partner. Trevaskis retrospectively noted that he had only 'flimsy and circumstantial' evidence and 'rumours' that Ali would declare Lahej for the UAR, whilst the Cabinet was especially concerned as to the 'difficult and important' implications such direct action would have on world opinion and thus 'very much hope[d]' it would 'not prove necessary to depose him'.[84] But Luce lobbied hard to persuade Lennox-Boyd that Ali's modern outlook was a façade, ruling Lahej as 'a private estate for the benefit of the immediate ruling family', he was unable or unwilling to curtail the SAL, and he had 'little faith in his loyalty'.[85] In part because Luce had reasserted peripheral control over the direction of policy through early 1958, the Cabinet took Luce's lead and concurred that should Ali declare Lahej for the UAR such 'a *coup d'état* would serious impair' Britain's position in the Protectorate and wider efforts to contain Nasser's influence and construct a viable alternative form of Arab unity that coincided with British interests. Given some other Rulers were prepared to cooperate 'in a manner favourable to the West' through federation, the British believed action should be taken against the al-Jifris to either cow Ali into toeing the British line or provoke him into declaring Lahej for the UAR that would justify his removal.[86]

Operation POUCH, the plan to arrest and deport the al-Jifris, was launched on 18 April 1958, only for Muhammad and Alawi to escape in advance of the raid. The failure to arrest all the al-Jifris posed the dual difficulty of having failed to eliminate nationalist influence in Lahej and what to do with Ali. In the event, Ali had not fallen for the trap. 'The Sultan', Luce reported to London, took the news of the raid 'remarkably quietly … despite the shock and resultant weight of emotion which he was obviously and naturally labouring.' The idea

---

[83] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3262, Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 April 1958
[84] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* pp. 250, 258; BL, IOR/R/20/B/3262, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor, Emergency Telegram 228; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor, Emergency Telegram 239
[85] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3262, Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 April 1958; TNA, PREM 11/2401, Luce to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 April 1958
[86] TNA, CAB 128/32, CC(58) 30th Conclusions, 14 April 1958; CAB 21/4357, Brook to Prime Minister, 14 April 1958

of returning Ali to the fold under close British supervision was, however, not seriously considered. Regarded by Luce as a shrewd and wily operative, 'his reaction was sufficiently out of keeping with what is known of his personality and temperament as to make it seem likely that he was well prepared for a difficult and distasteful meeting.' Ali appeared concerned only for his own loss of personal prestige; 'a selfish personal approach which was to be expected from a person of his poor moral fibre.' As much as this conception of Ali's personality was emphasised, Luce could not fail to note that Ali's decision to withdraw from active engagement in state affairs and his promise to instruct the head of the Lahej state administration to cooperate with the WAP Office was 'an intelligent and controlled reaction'.[87] Ultimately, however, the belief that Ali held a vision for a future that precluded British control was enough to destroy whatever vestiges there were of Ali as a potential postcolonial partner, especially as discussions with the other Rulers over federation progressed. Luce believed that there was 'no hope of arriving at any satisfactory relationship or political understanding with him … sooner or later we shall find it necessary to get rid of him.'[88] Britain continued to provoke Ali into making a rash decision that might engender either his resignation or justify his removal. Ali protested to Luce over the behaviour of troops in Lahej during and immediately after operation POUCH, whilst Luce advised the Colonial Office that during a visit of Protectorate Rulers to London to discuss federation Ali's treatment was to be 'courteous but cool'.[89] Such a reception was clearly noted by Ali, who complained to Trevaskis that he was received without 'proper regard' and with an air of 'Victorian condescension'.[90] After Luce banned the flying of Egyptian flags and stopped Egyptian teachers returning to Lahej, Ali delayed his return from London, stopping over in Milan from where he was believed to be directing officials to defect to Yemen and was rumoured to be planning his own defection to Egypt.[91] On the 25 June the commander of the Lahej State Armed Forces, Yahya Hersi, deserted to Yemen with the bulk of Lahej Regular Army and funds from the State Treasury. The desertion, the British suspected, 'could not have happened without [Ali's] agreement'.[92] Confronted by Luce with orders to return to London, Ali flew to Egypt and on 10 July Britain withdrew its

[87] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3262, Record of meeting at Government House on Friday, 18th April 1958, at 4pm between His Excellency the Governor & His Highness the Sultan of Lahej, 25 April 1958
[88] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3262, Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 April 1958
[89] TNA, CO 1015/2124, Minute: Gorell Barnes to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 June 1958
[90] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* pp. 69-70
[91] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3263, Trevaskis to Chief Secretary, 3 July 1958; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 40
[92] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3263, Acting Governor to Protectorate Secretary, 8 July 1958

recognition of Ali and replaced him as Sultan with his brother Fadhl bin Ali al-Abdali, who oversaw Lahej's entry into the Federation.

The deposing of Ali was the key moment in the future course of British policy in South Arabia. The immediate context of the changing situation in the Middle East exacerbated the situation, but the fact that Ali represented a potent alternative vision for South Arabia's future that did not conform to Britain's plans to retain its influence in the Protectorate and control its interests in Aden cemented British hostility. Luce perceived a danger that had as much to do with Ali's and the al-Jifris' nationalistic overtures as it did with Britain's inability to guide him away from seemingly dangerous influences, and officials' preoccupation with his seemingly defective character, based on wider prejudices, drove Luce to undermine and depose him. The revival of the federal proposals provided a potentially more pliable basis of collaboration and to allow any single collaborative partner to dominate a future postcolonial state at the expense of the other Rulers risked British influence and control post-independence.

Crafting federal collaboration

Immediately after Ali's deposing, the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq following the 14 July Revolution was another shock that indicated that the geo-political and ideological tide remained firmly against Britain and its regional Arab allies. Speaking in a meeting with the WAP Rulers, Lennox-Boyd was nevertheless at pains to reassure them that the British were 'not frightened by the events in Iraq' as, though Britain and South Arabia would inevitably have 'ups and downs in history', he knew that 'in the long run traditional forces were very strong. The Rulers represented traditional forces in their country and he represented them in his.'[93] The construction of the perceived strength of tradition against the force of nationalism became the focal point of British justifications to back the Federation, whilst also being the basis of the Federation's inherent weaknesses. In the process of rejecting alternative future visions, British officials in South Arabia rationalised a way of framing and justifying the Rulers' part in South Arabia's federal future.

To ensure the Rulers could weather the storm of Arab nationalism and be the vehicle by which British interests could be protected, federation was understood to be the mechanism

[93] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3259, Note of a meeting with certain Rulers from the Western Aden Protectorate at the Colonial Office at 4:30pm on the 15th July 1958

by which Britain could better manage and influence the Rulers and craft them into an ideal postcolonial partner, 'de-Arabising' and 'tempering' the apparent excesses of the Arab character to conform to the standard required to form a viable federal state. Trevaskis recalled that, because of the Federation's 'dependence on British finance and persistence of British sovereignty in Aden', even with

> the best of intentions, the Federation had been force-fed with British principles and procedures and made to comply with British practices. In British eyes it was more efficient and respectable for being so, but, in the process, it had become un-Arab and grotesque. It was almost as if the federal ministers had been issued with bowler hats and umbrellas.[94]

Though Trevaskis' memoirs paint this rationalisation in critical terms, casting the Rulers into familiar historical moulds befitting British ideals was prolific across the colonial administration as a means to 'gain a degree of intellectual control over the confused politics of the present', rationalise federation, and imagine a British-constructed future.[95] Hickinbotham, for instance, described the Protectorate as 'an area where social conditions today are equivalent to those existing in the Highlands of Scotland in the mid-eighteenth century.'[96] Sir Charles Johnston, Governor between 1960 and 1963, described a ceremony of a group of mountain tribes that 'would not have been out of place at a Highland ball.' One Ruler was 'the Arab equivalent of an eccentric peer from a play by William Douglas-Home' and he notes political officers privately calling others; the '"Etonian" … with beautiful manners', the 'Wykehamist … [with] a degree of principle, honesty and straightforwardness rarely encountered among Arabs – or, indeed, among Wykehamists', the 'Choirboy', and 'an eighteenth century Duke of Argyll'.[97] Trevaskis noted how the 'charmingly anglicised' Farid had been 'processed', unlike Ali, by his time at Oxford 'into a thoroughgoing anglophile.'[98] James Lunt, commander of the Federal Regular Army, noted how 'it wasn't difficult to picture [one ruler] as a Highland chieftain rallying his clan to "Bonnie Prince Charlie's" standard in the '45.'[99] Such comparisons were not lost on local figures. Farid fondly recalled the 'Scottish tribesman' Alistair McIntosh as 'a very

---

[94] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* p. 212
[95] T.G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 17
[96] Sir Tom Hickinbotham, *Aden,* (London: Constable and Co., 1958), p. 100
[97] King's College London Liddell Kart Military Archives [hereafter LHMA], Charles Johnston Papers, 2/29, Visit to Audhali Sultanate and Dathina, 5-6 December 1960; Charles Johnston, *The View from Steamer Point: Being an Account of Three Years in Aden*, (London: Collins, 1964), pp. 42-51
[98] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* p. 263
[99] James Lunt, *The Barren Rocks of Aden*, (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1966), p. 112

outstanding officer who got on well with the tribes' by way of drawing on his own clan background.[100] Such imaginary notions helped colonial officials place South Arabia within a familiar Whig historical narrative that progressed towards the desired end point of modernity, the Federation taking its 'rightful place in the comity of nations', its entry into the Commonwealth, and the fulfilment of Britain's imperial mission.[101] Inter-clan rivalries, conflict and poverty would give way to peace, prosperity and 'good government'.[102] Seemingly like the 1707 Act of Union, the union of the Protectorate states through federation was constructed to be the beginning of South Arabia's journey into modernity.

Yet the metaphorical positioning of South Arabia two centuries behind the times rationalised change to occur only within bounds and pace set by the British and whiggish aspirations were circumvented by what Britain saw as the realities of the situation in South Arabia. British officials were concerned about the immediate context of the regional fight against Arab nationalism and how existing political structures in the Protectorate could meet this threat. Establishing modern or democratic structures within the Protectorate could not be entertained because of the threat of Arab nationalism. As the Foreign Office noted, the

> British predilection for democratic institutions is only exploited to destroy the British position and elements supporting it. The Arabs themselves see virtue in this and perhaps in the novelty of free institutions but fundamentally see no intrinsic virtue in the institutions themselves. It would therefore seem desirable to promote the advance to independence by establishing local authoritarian regimes headed and run by local people friendly to us.[103]

Should the federal constitution be developed along 'liberal' lines, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies Julian Amery argued, the institutions it created would eventually become the 'instrument' of Arab nationalists. Whereas if 'the Federation were encouraged to develop along more traditional Arab lines into an autocracy or tribal oligarchy similar to the monarchies of Muscat and the Gulf, the trend might well be' amenable to British interests.[104] The federation would, therefore, be constructed as the formalisation of the Rulers' perceived traditional position in South Arabian society. In this position, dependent

---

[100] Mohamed Farid Al Aulaqi, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 2 August 2017; 11 August 2017
[101] TNA, CO 1015/1911, Luce to Gorell-Barnes, 28 March 1958
[102] Vernon Hewitt, 'Empire, International Development & the Concept of Good Government', in Mark Duffield and Vernon Hewitt, *Empire, Development and Colonialism: The Past and the Present,* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), pp. 30-44
[103] TNA, CO 1015/1910, Foreign Office note by Riches: Aden, 21 December 1958
[104] TNA, CO 1015/1910, Amery to Gorell Barnes, 8 December 1958

upon British support, the Rulers would be amenable to British influence and, as 'head' of the *dawla,* well placed intermediaries for Britain's relations with their 'subject' tribes.[105] The structure of the federation and the role that the Rulers would play in it, Luce commented, ensured that it 'retained its ancient way of life, basically feudal, under its traditional Rulers with a thin veneer of British influence and advice … There is no question of pushing the Federation into democracy or liberalism, but it is likely that as time goes on the Rulers will be compelled by circumstances to relinquish some of their personal power.'[106] Goals of achieving political development in the WAP along the lines of Whig imaginaries were relegated to an aspiration achievable only at some ambiguous point in the future.

The Federation's constitution was thus the product of British officials negotiating the contradictions between Britain's desires to create a modern state, whose leaders would challenge the allure of Arab nationalism, and its conception of a state that seemingly and authentically reflected South Arabian society in stasis. The difficulties in merging these two visions into an 'unattractive hybrid' became apparent early in Trevaskis' negotiations with the Rulers and he was taken aback by 'how far apart our concepts of a federation were.' The Rulers, on the one hand, 'had in mind … something in the nature of the Arab League and based on the principle of absolute equality of all states in everything'. Trevaskis, on the other, was thinking of a federation 'in the accepted sense of the term.'[107] His thinking had developed little since 1952, and much of the rationale of the federal constitution remained unchanged. It would, he argued, provide 'the Federation with a simple, workable and acceptable basis at the time of its establishment.' Similarly, the Federation would remain a British-inspired project that would be a vehicle for British interests, but the role of the Rulers was more defined.

Whereas earlier proposals placed executive authority in the British Governor, the new federal constitution placed the Rulers at the centre of the federal structure in what would become the Federation's Supreme Council. The Supreme Council would comprise of one representative from each of the states, with that representative being either the head or

---

[105] For more on British perceptions of the Rulers within South Arabian society, see Tripodi, '"A Bed of Procrustes"', pp. 95-120; J. B. Kelly, *Arabia, the Gulf and the West* (London: George Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980), p. 11; Balfour-Paul, *The End of Empire in the Middle East*, p. 55; Smith, 'Rulers and residents', pp. 509-523; Spencer Mawby, 'Britain's last imperial frontier: The Aden protectorates, 1952–59', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29:2 (2001), pp. 75-100

[106] TNA, CO 1015/1912, Memorandum: Comments by Governor of Aden on Mr. Amery's Note on Long Term Policy in Aden, [14 April 1959]

[107] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* p. 144. Trevaskis does not elaborate on exactly what the 'accepted sense of the term' was.

high-ranking member of the state's *dawla.* In addition to its 'general executive authority', the Supreme Council also had legislative authority. The Supreme Council was responsible for initiating and drafting all legislation, which had to be compatible with the 'peace, order and good government of the Federation' and the protection and advisory treaties signed with the British. Legislation was passed into law with the 'advice and consent' of the Federal Council – a body summoned by the Supreme Council, with a maximum of six representatives for each of the states who, though selected according to 'whatever constitutional means are appropriate' to each state, had to receive an Instrument of Appointment signed by the Ruler of that state. Crucially, the Supreme Council could declare a state of emergency and issue decrees 'necessary for securing public safety and internal security' and the defence of the Federation against external threats. The division between federal and state jurisdiction was ill-defined, as the Rulers were intended to serve at the heart of the federal government whilst simultaneously manage the affairs of their respective states.[108] The vagueness of the seventeen-page constitution did not go unnoticed by some British officials in Aden, but for others this was not of fundamental concern. British advisory powers in the individual states remained in force in addition to a new advisory treaty to cover the whole Federation. Such powers could still 'be used to fill up what at first sight are large unexplained gaps in the Constitution', and should any state not 'meet its obligations' as part of the Federation the Supreme Council could order direct enforcement into that state, or 'advice could be tendered to the States concerned to toe the line.'[109] British advice would be the crutch that would support the constitutional framework that placed the Rulers at the Federation's core.[110]

Yet the Supreme Council would have no single figure of authority because doing so would seemingly provoke the 'jealousies', 'suspicions' and 'highly developed individualism of the tribal leaders of the Amirates'.[111] Instead, the chair of the Supreme Council would serve a month term (initially proposed as a one year term), necessitated in order 'to satisfy local eccentricities at the present time' and 'overcome the awkward problem implied in elevating any one of the Rulers to a position of paramountcy.'[112] Yet this constitutional device was

[108] Only a small number of states did not have the state Ruler sit on the Supreme Council. The Upper Aulaqi Sheikhdom, for instance, chose Sheikh Muhsin's nephew, Mohamed Farid, to sit on the Supreme Council.
[109] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3259, Minute by Richard Holmes, 24 September 1958
[110] BL, IOR/R/20/G/116-117, Constitution of the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South
[111] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3260, 'The Case for a Federation in Southern Arabia' by the Protectorate Secretary
[112] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3260, Draft intel: Aden Protectorate Federation, [undated]

not intended to equalise the status of all the states of the Protectorate, nor provide a platform from which a single, dominant Ruler might emerge to challenge British influence. The chair rotation would be determined by a majority vote of the Council which meant that in practice, Trevaskis proposed,

> there should be a gentlemen's agreement amongst the Rulers of the major states that they should each assume office as [chair] in turn. The provision for the election of the [chair] is the polite cover for the exclusion of the Rulers of the petty Sheikhdoms from the office. The term … is admittedly too short to allow any [chair] time in which to acquire sufficient experience to serve the Government usefully. It is, however, thought that the term could only be increased at the risk of arousing jealousies between the Rulers.[113]

This was, as far as Trevaskis was concerned, practical South Arabian politics. The Federation did not need to be 'saddled' with 'perfect constitutions' as the tried and tested 'empirical methods which have served us so well' in the WAP were adequate to ensure that British influence was maintained.[114] The Federation would not be a vehicle for modernisation, at least in the immediate future. Instead, it cemented the position of the Rulers to enhance British influence in the Protectorate.

The conflicting rationales for Federation were also reflected in how Britain intended to reinforce and extend its authority. As Yemen sought to undermine the 'authority of the Rulers' and the 'reliability of … native levies' through the distribution of arms and money to Protectorate tribes, officials were convinced that the best way to combat Yemeni subversion would be for Britain to reciprocate. Trevaskis believed the 'problem should be viewed realistically' as 'Orthodox and correct' methods of countering subversion through use of the Aden Protectorate Levies and Government Guards had failed. Thus, the 'reprehensible Yemeni tactics' of supplying arms to tribes might prove useful and Britain was 'in no position to regard [such measures] with complete contempt.' Assistant Adviser George Henderson pointed out that arming tribes in the Audhali Plateau to 'purchase' their 'co-operation' had proven effective.[115] Such action was endorsed by other Protectorate officials, whilst Aden's Chief Secretary did not think 'that it is entirely realistic to argue that

[113] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3259, Memorandum by Trevaskis: A proposal for the Federation of certain states with the Western Aden Protectorate, [undated]; R/20/B/3259, Memorandum by Trevaskis: A proposal for the Federation of certain states with the Western Aden Protectorate, [undated]
[114] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 1/6, 6 December 1958; 12 January 1959; 13 January 1959
[115] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2219, Minutes of a meeting held at Government House on 25th May 1954 to review the political situation in the Western Aden Protectorate

such arms should not be issued.'[116] Luce believed that the level of dissident activity would only increase with the supply of Soviet arms to Yemen as 'loyal tribesmen will be attracted by Yemeni rifles for self-defence and then find themselves obliged to earn the rifles by using them against the security forces'. The balance of power between the tribes, and British influence over them, would therefore be undermined. Luce pressed upon London

> that we must without delay reward loyal tribesmen, and win over waverers, by distributing rifles and ammunition of our own. This policy is distasteful to me as an administrator but I see no alternative at short term. … But in the meantime there must be some quick action to stop the rot.[117]

The Colonial Office was quickly 'convinced' that suppling arms, 'distasteful as it is, is the most practical and indeed essential immediate step which can be taken to counteract Yemeni subversion activities.'[118] British officials often lamented this 'distasteful' need to use arms and ammunition as a means of maintaining British influence. Luce had, for instance, been '*forced* to hand out large numbers of rifles' to the Rulers.[119] Trevaskis noted that on the day the Rulers signed the federal constitution and defence treaty, '[n]o soon[er] is [the] ink dry than Salah asks for arms and ammo on behalf of them all. [Luce] looks a bit put out but gives them 50,000 rounds each saying he is sorry that on eve of getting money they should ask for arms and ammo.'[120] Yet however much British officials paid lip service to their distaste, they nevertheless rationalised arms distribution as a viable means of expanding British and the Federation's influence that, in the context of limited financial resources, could be justifiably utilised. Luce claimed that any distribution would have 'safeguards' attached, such as the requirement for tribes to 'co-operate in the maintenance of peace and security' or to 'submit hostages in [a] token of good faith', and maintained by 'political officers in consultation with the Rulers and after satisfactory negotiations with the tribes concerned.'[121] It was further rationalised as an authentic means of securing influence in an archaic, violent society. Protectorate tribesman would sell their 'grandmothers' and their 'souls' for rifles, and possession of a rifle in the WAP was a 'symbol of manhood' of such importance to tribal life that 'you didn't even take someone's rifle if you killed him'.[122] One

---

[116] BL, IOR/R/20/B/2219, Hone to Hickinbotham, 17 June 1954
[117] TNA, CO 1015/1930, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 16 March 1957
[118] TNA, CO 1015/1930, Morgan to Russell Edmunds, 21 March 1957
[119] TNA, CO 1015/1911, Luce to Gorell Barnes, 27 March 1958, [emphasis added]
[120] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 1/6, 30 January 1959
[121] TNA, CO 1015/1930, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 16 March 1957
[122] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* p. 221; TNA, CO 1015/1931, Note by Riches: The Yemen, 26 March 1957; James Nash, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 18 October 2016

Aden official noted that a Political Officer 'was very proud of the fact that, whereas [the army] had been issued with … self-loading rifles, SLRs, his bodyguard didn't have an SLR. He had a Kalashnikov, and that was good for his status.' The social and political capital of arms led the British administration, in London as well as Aden, to believe that the distribution of arms was a legitimate political action, utilised so much that it became something of a 'tradition' within the WAP.[123] The delay in London considering Luce's 1956 development plan necessitated the immediate distribution of 700 rifles, with a total of 2000 to be distributed on top of the estimated requirements for 1957-58.[124] The cost of making the Uyeiba family 'toe the line' and secure Sultan Fadhl of Lahej after Ali's deposing was 50 rifles.[125] A gift of 300 rifles, to replace those lost when parts of the Lahej state forces decamped to Yemen was advocated by Trevaskis as a means of showing 'our sympathy with the new regime.'[126] For officials in the WAP, raising money for local projects often came from the sale of rifles, or rather a chit to allow for the import of arms from a supplier in Aden, as it was 'the cheapest way we could actually do it'.[127] One recalled that, 'if I needed some quick development, for example if we were going to build a road and we were going to do it ourselves, then I'd just flog him a chit and get the cash and spend it.'[128] Such transactions were listed under 'Miscellaneous Political Expenses' so long as they were 'politically unavoidable' and listed with 'adequate justification … in the Assistant Advisers memorandum book.'[129] The definition of 'politically unavoidable', as understood across the colonial administration, was a broad one.

The logic of supplying arms was that it provided a convenient means by which the Federation would be supported. To entrust the course of future policy to a locally instigated federation was, from the British perspective, a distasteful proposition as the British did not consider the Rulers to be the ideal postcolonial partners. To allow the Rulers' involvement in and responsibility over any future federal state Britain needed to be sure of their future loyalty and proving this depended largely upon how closely they cooperated in resisting Yemeni or Egyptian subversion. It was through this prism that the Rulers of Audhali, Beihan and Fadhli were singled out by Luce as being most cooperative, whilst the Amir of

---

[123] Oliver Miles, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 3 August 2017; Stephen Day, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 29 March 2017
[124] TNA, CO 1015/1930, Luce to Lennox-Boyd, 16 March 1957
[125] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 1/6, 8 December 1958
[126] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3264, Trevaskis to Phillips, 13 April 1959; Trevaskis to Phillips, 20 May 1959
[127] James Nash, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 18 October 2016
[128] Stephen Day, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 29 March 2017
[129] Aaron Edwards, *Mad Mitch's Tribal Law: Aden and the End of Empire*, (London: Transworld Publishers, 2014), p. 29

Dhala was 'a somewhat broken reed though his heart is probably in the right place.' The Upper Aulaqi Sheikh presented problems at times, but because his state had 'in no small degree suffered from Yemeni subversion', there was no reason to doubt his loyalty.[130] The more any state suffered from subversion and dissent the more arms Britain would provide to procure loyalty. Not only would a federal state be able to institutionalise the Protectorate's structure of tribal loyalties, but it would allow for dissent to be quelled much more easily. For Luce and Trevaskis '[a] federal government would be politically placed in a better position to deal with rebels in the Protectorate than the Aden Government. Rebels could not be persuaded to fight a federal Arab government as easily as they were induced to fight an alien non-Arab government.'[131] Arming and empowering the Rulers through federation would secure its future along authentic and therefore legitimate lines, seemingly reflecting South Arabian society's archaic, violent nature. This could be backed up by the 'disciplinary intent' of British air and ground operations to pacify tribal dissent in the Protectorate and assert the Federation's authority.[132] Through federation Britain aimed to establish, with the Rulers as intermediaries, a monopoly over violence in the Protectorate.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the revival of the federal idea in February 1958 and the subsequent creation of the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South as the decisive moment in framing the end of empire in South Arabia. The rush to combat Arab nationalism led officials to overlook the inherent tensions evident within the federal idea that subsequently became institutionalised, compounded by rationalisations of the Rulers being the best means of securing British control. In British eyes the Rulers were backward, petty, and unreliable but nevertheless an authentic and therefore legitimate set of elites who could be 'tamed' towards loyalty to a British future vision. The Federation itself was an entity that would allow South Arabia to take its place in the 'comity of nations', fulfilling Britain's imperial mission. Yet it would be an entity that institutionalised the petty suspicions Britain felt were part of the Rulers' nature, and it would formalise and utilise the anarchic, violent nature of South Arabian society into controllable, pacified channels to secure Britain's interests in Aden, whilst modern or democratic government was aspired to at an intangible,

---

[130] TNA, CO 1015/2109, Luce to Morgan, 6 March 1958
[131] BL, IOR/R/20/B/3259, Trevaskis to Chief Secretary, 4 March 1958; TNA, CO 1015/1911, Luce to Gorell-Barnes, 28 March 1958
[132] Mawby, 'Orientalism', p. 345; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 40-42, 81-85; Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in Yemen 1962-67,* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2005)

distant point in the future. The Federation, and the federal logic that underpinned it, stood on this restless foundation. The simultaneous rejection of engagement with South Arabian nationalism was based as much on the wider context of Britain's struggle against Nasserite Arab nationalism as it was rooted in multi-faceted hostility towards those who rivalled Britain's intellectual monopoly over the destiny of the region that federation promised to secure. For 'a host of critics', backing the Rulers through federation meant Britain was 'backing the wrong horses'.[133] Yet, as chapter 3 will demonstrate, for the British colonial administration the federal logic and the logic of all future policy depended on them. The die was cast.

[133] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* p. 229; MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/5, 11th January 1961

Chapter 3 'Aden for the Adenis': The Aden merger and the politics of collaboration, 1959-1963

Explanations of the 1967 collapse of the Federation often highlight Aden's incorporation into the Federation just as the Yemeni civil war began in September 1962 as the 'watershed' moment of the end of empire in South Arabia.[1] With the Federation still in its infancy, some historians argue, the Yemeni revolution denied it the opportunity to become established, leading to its eventual collapse.[2] The ensuing civil war brought an influx of arms into the Protectorate that tipped tribal allegiances away from the Federation, provided a 'boost' to local nationalists in South Arabia as it made the prospect of unity with a republican Yemen more likely, initiated 'the unfolding of armed national-liberation struggle in the South', and placed South Arabia at the centre of the conflict between Arab nationalism and British imperialism.[3] These forces undoubtedly contributed to the increasingly precarious course of the end of empire, but this chapter seeks to highlight the issue of the inherent stability and viability of the Federation and the British position. Though some assessments are more explicit than others, there is a reliance in the historiography on the counter-factual that the Federation could have survived in the wake of the controversy surrounding Aden's merger into the Federation had it not been for the unfortunate timing of the revolution and civil war. Given more time to establish itself, the counter-factual supposes, the Federation could have withstood the resultant pressures and the end of empire in the region might have been drastically different.[4] The problem with such assessments, and the general explanatory attention given to the 1960s, is that it understates or overlooks the inherent instability of the Federation as a factor in its own right.

---

[1] Spencer Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67: Last outpost of a Middle East Empire*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p. 65

[2] Craig A. Harrington, 'The Colonial Office the Retreat from Aden: Great Britain in South Arabia, 1957-1967', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 25:3 (2014), pp. 5-26; Simon C. Smith, 'Revolution and reaction: South Arabia in the aftermath of the Yemeni revolution', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28:3 (2000), pp. 193-208; Robert McNamara, 'The Nasser factor: Anglo-Egyptian relations and Yemen/Aden crisis 1962-65', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 53:1 (2017), pp. 51-68

[3] Vitaly Naumkin, *Red Wolves of Yemen* (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 2004), p. 77; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 85; Charles Johnston, *The View from Steamer Point: Being an account of three years in Aden,* (London: Collins, 1964), p. 125; Kennedy Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber: A South Arabian Episode,* (London: Hutchindon & Co, 1968), p. 183

[4] Calum Macleod, *The End of British Rule in South Arabia, 1959-1967* (PhD thesis: University of Edinburgh, 2001), p. 2

This chapter will argue the development of the federal idea after the Federation's establishment had a distinct destabilising influence on the British position. The cementing of the Federation as the basis of British policy in the region, bringing with it the built-in tensions already discussed, was aided by the continuity of key personnel promoting the cause of Federation, Trevaskis being the most important. His more assertive stance conflicted with the new Governor, Sir Charles Johnston, and the ensuing power struggle directly influenced the direction of British policy towards the Aden merger. But efforts to achieve a merger compatible with British interests, the preferential position of the Federation, and Adeni consent produced contortions in the evolving federal logic that grew increasingly fraught and threatened to undermine the federal project. The eventual solution was to use elastic definitions of consent to absolve Britain of the need to develop a viable, locally acceptable solution to the merger dilemma. Under growing scrutiny from local nationalists, Parliament, press, and international attention, British officials became entrenched their support of the federal idea and invoked imperialist and Orientalist ideas to justify what was becoming an increasingly precarious course of policy. After merger was approved by Aden's Legislative Council and the Yemeni civil war began, what is of significance is that the British response to the ensuing pressures became increasingly entrenched rather than adaptive to the escalating situation. It was the fixation on and inflexibility of the federal idea as the cornerstone of British policy that destabilised Britain's position, preconfiguring the course of the end of empire through the rest of the 1960s.

Asserting federal thinking

Mawby's broader assessment of the merger controversy emphasises the degree to which there was agreement across London and Aden as to the ends of British policy, protecting Britain's strategic interests in Aden, and that British participants to this controversy 'only really disputed the means by which Britain could retain predominant influence.'[5] It is, however, important to emphasise that the depth of feeling over policy means was a crucial feature of policymaking over Aden's future. The dynamics of these disagreements were fuelled by an intersection of personal and institutional rivalries that shaped policy discourse on the spot that thereby impacted the nature of the Aden merger and the end of empire in South Arabia.

[5] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 65

Since the federal proposal's inception, the issue of Aden's relations to the Protectorate had been fudged. Most British officials in Aden had considered the eventual integration of the Protectorate and Aden as a given, but pressure from London, startled by the prospect of losing Aden's base facilities, demurred on the issue.[6] Towards the end of his tenure Luce had raised the issue but, despite Lennox-Boyd's initial efforts, the idea received a lukewarm reception from Cabinet and military figures.[7] Pressure from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff Francis Festing, the Secretary for Air Julian Amery, and the Defence Minister Duncan Sandys emphasised Aden's importance to Britain's regional position and prestige, to the point where by September 1959 the Cabinet agreed that Britain would make no statement in favour of merger nor take any initiative to achieve it.[8] Despite the wider trend of decolonisation elsewhere, Aden would be an exception to the rule and there was a 'bureaucratic stalemate' in considering the future of Aden for the next two years. The policy inertia was a blow to Luce, who saw merger as fundamental to the prospects of a viable South Arabian state friendly to British interests. Yet the response of officials in South Arabia was characteristic of their efforts to frame, guide and determine future policy and Luce set about 'surreptitiously building a local coalition' in support of merger to ensure it would remain the desired end point of future policy.[9] In this context, the continuity of ideas and personnel in South Arabia beyond Luce's tenure is vital in explaining the development of the merger policy.

The most important of these continuities was Trevaskis. As architect of the Federation, his influence within the South Arabian colonial administration had enhanced considerably after its establishment. Central to his vision was the prominence given to the Rulers. Whereas Amery was concerned that the Rulers, emboldened by their newfound status, might 'rat on us', Trevaskis considered such a position 'illusory' and that Britain's 'last hopes' of securing 'what we want' would be to back them in the Federation over local figures in Aden.[10] For officials in Aden and London, the continued control of Aden to maintain British interests against the grain of decolonisation remained the central

---

[6] TNA, PREM 11/2616, Bishop to Prime Minister, 8 September 1959
[7] TNA, CO 1015/1910, Note: Aden [November 1958]; Luce to Gorell Barnes, 30 November 1958; CO 1015/1912, Comments of Governor of Aden on Mr. Amery's Note on Long Term Policy in Aden, [14 April 1959]; CAB 128/32, CC(58) 30th Conclusions, 14 April 1958
[8] TNA, CO 1015/1910, Minute: Long term policy in Aden by Julian Amery to Secretary of State, 10 March 1959; CO 1015/1912, Lennox-Boyd to Luce, 18 September 1959; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 66-68
[9] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 68-70
[10] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/3, 25 March 1959

objective.[11] Yet, more importantly for Trevaskis, the means to which this was to be achieved were at odds, fuelling his sense of urgency to secure Aden into the Federation on terms favourable to the Rulers compared to London's preference to maintain British sovereignty in Aden separated from the Protectorate, a preference confirmed by Lord Lloyd in May 1956. To Trevaskis, the establishment of the Federation was a vindication of his views and he increasingly considered any deviation from his policy position as a personal affront.

After its inauguration in January 1959, the Federation gradually sought to establish itself. From September 1959 work began on constructing a new capital, al-Ittihad, just outside of Aden and by January 1960 three more states, Dathina, Lower Aulqai and Aqrabi, had joined the Federation. Federal departments were formed, and each Ruler was assigned a ministerial role and seat on the Supreme Council. Economic development was slowly expanded and by 1962 around 55,000 acres of land were devoted to cotton production, 70,000 acres to sorghum, and 8,500 acres to corn, whilst fishing yields increased to between 60,000 and 70,000 tons. By 1963, educational provision was expanded across the Federation with 161 primary, 34 preparatory, and 15 secondary schools catering for around 43,000 pupils, including 7,500 girls.[12] Yet as the Federation expanded and development began, several difficulties borne out of the underlying tensions of the federal policy reinforced the Federation's functional dependence on Britain. With the main source of state revenue, inter-state customs, being gradually removed to integrate and promote trade between federal states, the Federation was left with almost no revenue sources of its own. Officials in Aden regularly called for more funds to compensate for this loss and help the accession of states into the Federation – expenditure officials in London, by contrast, were 'naturally anxious to keep… down as far as possible'.[13] Nevertheless, the survival of the Federation necessitated Britain providing around 85% of the Federation's £1.4 million budget through grants, and the cost of maintaining the Federation's security, around £4 million in 1962, was entirely borne by the British.[14]

The Federation developed its own security force, the Federal National Guard, and elements of the Aden Protectorate Levies were brought under federal control in November 1961 to

[11] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 65
[12] Joseph Kostiner, *The Struggle for South Yemen,* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 12-13
[13] TNA, CO 1015/2307, Macleod to Luce, 4 February 1960; 10 February 1960; Watt to Simmonds, 17 October 1961
[14] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Aden Department Memorandum: Future Policy in Aden Colony and Protectorate, 20 October 1961; Robin Bidwell, *The Two Yemens,* (Longman Westview Press, Harlow, 1983), p. 134

form the Federal Regular Army.[15] Yet the ability of the Federation to exercise its authority, even with British support, proved more challenging. As part of the continuation of the forward policy, the pacification of the tribes throughout the Protectorate was considered essential to securing the Federation, but without the military capacity to achieve this the suppression of revolt in the Protectorate relied heavily on aerial bombardment. This was especially the case in Upper Yafa. Mohammad Aidrus, the son of the Sultan of Lower Yafa, had been leading a force of around 2,000 tribesmen against British and Federal forces in the mountains of Upper Yafa since December 1957, but repeated bombings and rocket attacks through 1961 and 1962 failed to totally quell the dissent and instead increased opposition to Britain and the Federation, creating a threat Trevaskis recognised was 'much more formidable than anything we have had to deal with in the past.' Comparable difficulties establishing the Federation's authority over and pacifying the tribes in the Upper Aulaqi Sultanate led to repeated uprisings into 1963, spurring resentment and opposition to the Federation.[16]

Furthermore, as Protectorate states joined the Federation new departments and ministerial positions had to be created, often leading to overlapping and clashing responsibilities. The Federation's economic policy, for instance, balanced between departments for Agriculture and Economic Development, Commerce and Industry, and Finance, whilst security was covered by ministries for the Interior, Defence, and Internal Security, and the demarcation between federal and state jurisdictions remained ambiguous. Such inefficiencies and deficiencies quickly became apparent to Trevaskis, who stressed 'that Ministers should fully understand what their functions are', 'learn to think of their responsibilities in the context of the Federation as a whole', and to 'toe the federal line'. The future of the Federation would 'depend almost entirely on the character of the Supreme Council and the ability and willingness of its members to carry out its functions properly' and thus British officials had to similarly orientate themselves to 'view things federally', but he reminded them that 'our job is not to run the show ourselves, however admirably we might do so.'[17] Such difficulties, however, were crucial to facilitating the Federation as a vehicle of British control. Trevaskis regularly reminded his subordinates that the single purpose to which

---

[15] Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in Yemen 1962-67,* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2005), p. 26

[16] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 81-85

[17] BL, IOR/R/20/C/2224, Note on guidance for the Supreme Council, 19 May 1960; IOR/R/20/C/2098, BA to AAs, 14 December 1959; 16 February 1960; 16 April 1960; 5 February 1961

British policy now worked towards was 'to make the Federation a reality', and he thus sought to reinforce a possessive responsibility over the Rulers. They were 'our Ministers', 'our treaty chiefs', 'our friends'; a personal connection that Trevaskis fostered to elevate the Federation's centrality within the logic of the British presence.[18] It was also on this basis that Trevaskis moved to become integral to the development of British policy by consolidating his position within the WAP administration. Startled by Luce's looming departure and having been promoted to WAP British Agent, he began writing monthly letters to his subordinate officials to bridge the fragmentary British presence in the Protectorate and consolidate his influence to ensure intellectual uniformity. By 1961, having invested in the indispensability of the Federation to British policy, Trevaskis increasingly understood his own position as equally indispensable.[19]

The role that Trevaskis envisaged for himself came into conflict with the new Governor, Sir Charles Johnston. At one level, rivalry between the Colonial and Foreign Services framed Trevaskis' dismay that Johnston, 'Ambassador to Jordan', was to be the new Governor. It was 'a blow to the Colonial Service' and that

> one might as well put a General in charge of a battleship as make an Ambassador a governor. Ambassadors liaise and occupy themselves with writing reports. Governors rule and spend a large part of their time making decisions. Temperamentally, too, Johnston was not the man for the job. … His painful inadequacy did not go unnoticed. Coming away after meeting him for the first time, Sherif Hussein [of Beihan] released a villainous laugh … [and] announced that 'Mr Johnston' was just the man we needed. He knew nothing and he knew that he knew nothing. He would do just what he was told.[20]

This animosity was widespread. The Foreign Office was the butt of 'a most brilliantly witty speech' by Luce at his parting dinner in Aden, whilst Johnston was known to one loyal Trevaskis subordinate as 'Charlie Chatterbox, because he never said a damn thing', recalling that

> in the Colonial Service if you had a problem you took your coat off and you dived in to see what you could do about it. In the Foreign Office, they treat it much more intellectually. They discuss it at great length and they write beautiful reports, in impeccable English, and

[18] BL, IOR/R/20/C/2098, BA to AAs, 9 July 1960
[19] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/5, 5 January 1961
[20] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/4, 30 May 1960; Kennedy Trevaskis, *The Deluge: A Personal View of the End of Empire,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), p. 280

> that is the end of their responsibility … the Foreign Office were a little too airy-fairy … They were not responsible for administering anything apart from their own embassy.[21]

Institutional rivalry was not unique to South Arabia, but its prevalence within the British administration is of particular importance given that it sharply contrasted the Colonial Secretary Iain Macleod's rationale for Johnston's appointment. Macleod believed that Johnston's 'eminently desirable' experience in Jordan gave him the ability to 'handle Arabs' and to 'deal with the native Rulers and local personalities' in the Protectorate. So too was his diplomatic experience necessary in Aden as 'our advice, guidance and, in the last degree, our wishes must be conveyed as far as possible with tact and persuasiveness.'[22] Johnston was thus, from the outset, facing suspicious and potentially hostile subordinates eager to advance their policy preferences.

Debates about the means of British policy helped spur a growing conflict between Trevaskis and Johnston, exacerbated by the contrasting personalities and cultures of the colonial administrations in Aden and the Protectorate. Macleod had given Johnston considerable leeway to develop his own policy recommendations, and Trevaskis recognised an opportunity to influence Johnston and 'teach him to form.'[23] However, Johnston took stock of the situation on his own terms and tried to avoid being unduly influenced by a single assertive subordinate. Soon after Johnston's arrival, Trevaskis felt authoritative enough to issue notes of guidance to the federal ministers without Johnston's approval, and the 'slightly peevish tick off' he received from Johnston came as a considerable shock.[24] Unlike the WAP administration, Trevaskis also had difficulty in gaining influence within the Aden Secretariat. On the one hand, Trevaskis argued for the ending of Aden's colony status, incorporating it into the Federation, giving independence to the Federation, securing Britain's base via a treaty, and giving 'the bulk of the essential authority' to the federal Rulers.[25] On the other, Johnston's advisers in Aden, Chief Secretary Kenneth Simmonds and Attorney General W. G. Bryce, saw the continuation of Aden's status as a colony, the promotion of Adenis amenable to British interests, and Aden's gradual constitutional advance as the best course of action. The policy divide between officials in Aden and the

---

[21] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/4, 3 June 1960; James Nash, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 18 October 2016
[22] KCL, LHMA, Charles Johnston Papers, 2/25, Millar to Johnston, 7 March 1960; Macleod to Johnston, 14 March 1960
[23] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/4, 4 December 1960
[24] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/4, 6 July 1960
[25] Spencer Mawby, 'Orientalism and the Failure of British Policy in the Middle East: The Case of Aden', *History: the Journal of the Historical Association*, 95:3 (2010), p. 351

Protectorate was framed by their divergent working and ideological contexts, and Protectorate officials, whose contact with the Aden Secretariat was almost entirely via the British Agent, regarded Aden as 'a different world', 'another planet and of little relevance… as near as 50 miles away.'[26] Officials in the Secretariat, one Protectorate official recalled, were 'conventional colonial servants, they didn't like the idea of taking on these wild and woolly men' of the Protectorate and the federal Rulers.[27] Those in the Secretariat, by contrast, believed it was 'still very early days to talk about' merger as the Federation was not yet 'fully established as a working organisation' and that, given the relatively sophisticated administration and 'embryo[nic] democratic government' in Aden, any merger to the 'tribal bear garden under shotgun rule' of the Protectorate would prove unsustainable.[28] Despite forcefully asserting his arguments, Trevaskis recognised the limits of being the 'lone voice' calling for merger preferential to the Rulers, reflecting that 'I could hardly expect Johnston to give way'. At this stage, his relations with Johnston were cordial, he took solace in getting a fair hearing, and regarded 'poor Johnston' to be a 'well-meaning fellow' compared to his 'rivals' Simmonds and Bryce, finding them irritating on account of their 'yes manning manner' for having moved away from supporting Luce's original position on merger.[29]

Nevertheless, Trevaskis had made an impact. In March 1961, Johnston made his policy recommendations to London and 'declared his support for Trevaskis's approach to merger followed by independence.'[30] The 'best solution' to securing Britain's position, Johnston argued, was 'merger of Colony and Protectorate, including the existing Federation, into a single unit or Union, having a special relationship with Britain which would ensure us the retention of our strategic facilities.' Upholding democratic principles in Aden would allow 'a further stride along the democratic road', but any election would 'almost certainly produce an overwhelming majority of radical nationalists' that would place the Aden base in 'grave jeopardy' and widen the gap between Aden and Federation. Britain should thus move towards bridging the gap on favourable terms as, even if the British withdrew, 'it would not be possible for Colony and Protectorate to remain apart. The Union would

[26] Stephen Day, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 29 March 2017; Peter Hinchcliffe, John T. Ducker, and Maria Holt, *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat from Aden*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 76
[27] James Nash, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 18 October 2016
[28] BL, IOR/R/20/C/2219, Simmonds to Trevaskis, 10 October 1959; Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* pp. 280-281
[29] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/5, 8 February 1961; Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* pp. 278-282
[30] Mawby, *British Policy*, p. 69

simply be effected in the wrong way'. The merger would thus have to be guided by the British because the 'fact is that the Arabs are going to need foreign help for a considerable time to come, and that objectively speaking we British, with all our mistakes, seem better qualified to do this … [than] any of the other foreign powers who have attempted it.' Adeni calls for independence could be 'canalised' into supporting merger by presenting it as a 'choice ... between remaining separate and forfeiting independence, or gaining independence by accepting the Union'. Against these demands, merger would need to be imposed as it was in the 'true interest, as opposed to the present wishes, of the Adenese themselves.' Johnston even placed considerable emphasis on not forfeiting 'the attachment of the Rulers' throughout this process.[31]

Yet, despite Johnston broadly accepting Trevaskis' call for merger, Trevaskis considered Johnston's recommendations to have taken 'the Adeni line.' The point of contention was that Johnston recommended 'that the Colony should go through a substantive transitional stage of internal self-government by the present moderate leaders under British sovereignty' to bolster them against nationalists in Aden. The Rulers, he noted, 'will object violently to this plan' but British needed to be 'firm with them, emphasising that in their own interests as well as ours the future Union must be built on a foundation of consent'. Their own plan for merger, to 'return' Aden unilaterally back under their control without 'even an appearance of consent', would have no long-term viability and would have to be enforced 'at the point of a British shotgun'. 'One Nyasaland problem is enough,' Johnston noted, 'without a new one in Southern Arabia.' To reach a compromise between the concerns of the Adenis and the Federation, Johnston agreed to Trevaskis' compromise that Britain should issue a statement stressing the 'interdependence of Colony and Protectorate', the 'impossibility of separate independence', and intention for a united South Arabia to 'take their place in the Arab world as an independent country, subject always to our retention' of Aden's strategic facilities. Johnston's proposals presented a pathway for the policy goal that Trevaskis had consistently pressed whilst factoring in the recommendations of officials in the Aden Secretariat. But Trevaskis' strength of feeling was enough for Johnston to end his dispatch with the disclaimer that Trevaskis 'would prefer some course approximating to that which the Federal Rulers have in mind, and considers his compromise suggestion to be very much of a second best.'[32] The fact that Johnston included this admission is suggestive of a number of issues. Firstly, that Johnston

[31] TNA, CO 1015/2392, Johnston to Macleod, 3 March 1961
[32] TNA, CO 1015/2392, Johnston to Macleod, 3 March 1961

recognised the need to try to placate Trevaskis, not only by offering a compromise to the contrasting recommendations of his officials but also by acknowledging Trevaskis' dissatisfaction. Secondly, that London would need to be informed of this, serving as a recognition of the weight of Trevaskis' opinion, an indication of the general difficulties controlling his subordinate, and as a warning that Trevaskis might press his case against the formal recommendations of the Governor.

The latter point is particularly pertinent, as it was exactly what Trevaskis did. Utilising Macleod's visit to Aden in April 1961, Trevaskis sought to give himself and the Rulers 'a chance of nobbling' Macleod to elevate the Federation to a position of central importance within British policy deliberations.[33] Though the development of Macleod's position is not as precisely evident, his subsequent recommendations emphasised the Rulers' importance for British future policy in that their desire 'for the British connexion is real; almost alone among the Arab leaders, they have stood by us during recent difficult years.' Therefore, any decision on seeking constitutional advance in Aden without merger with the Federation, Macleod believed, would be 'disastrous' for Britain's relations with the Rulers and thereby undermine Britain's interests in Aden.[34] Macleod went on to present these views at Cabinet, stating that if Britain's objective was to keep control of Aden's defence facilities 'as long as possible … [the] best chance of doing so is to keep our friends' support' and that the '[d]ecisive factor is [the] need to keep Rulers on our side'. The Cabinet concluded in May 1961 that '[o]n balance [the] Rulers [were] more likely to support us longer than [the] pop[ulation] of [Aden] Colony.'[35]

The shift in the Cabinet's favourability towards the Rulers is indicative of the importance of the personal dynamics of the colonial administration in South Arabia in the formation of British policy over merger. Perhaps unwittingly, Macleod had contributed to undermining Johnston's authority as Trevaskis believed his efforts 'did the trick' as 'it showed [Macleod] (what Johnston and the Colony officers will not understand) that the Fed[eration] is not a collections of propped up stooges but a real and valuable asset and indeed our only one.' Instead of Johnston's recommendations, Macleod now insisted 'largely at [Trevaskis'] suggestion' that the federal Rulers would be invited to London first to accept in principle

---

[33] Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* pp. 282-284; TNA, CO 1015/2386, Notes on Meeting with HE the Governor and Senior Officials of the Colony and Protectorate, at Government House at 0930 hours, on Tuesday 4th April 1961

[34] TNA, CAB 129/105/18, Memorandum: Constitutional Development in Aden by Macleod, 26 May 1961

[35] TNA, CAB 195/19/36806, CC 29(61), 30 May 1961

British plans for merger, and then a conference would take place to discuss the details and timetable of Aden self-government and its entry into the Federation. It was to Trevaskis' 'great relief' that 'Macleod has in effect arrived at precisely the same conclusion as myself. … Tonight was a vindication.' Johnston's recommendations had been 'shot down by Macleod', and Aden's officials 'looked pretty glum'.[36] Trevaskis had not only been personally vindicated, but the federal idea had been firmly cemented within policy discourse over merger.

The fallout from Macleod's visit destabilised relations within the colonial administration as Johnston sought to reassert his authority. In May 1961, Trevaskis, frustrated by the apparent lack of acknowledgement of his contribution to the development of the proposals, told Johnston 'quite frankly that I do not consider my advice has been properly listened to and that no real serious account has been taken of my advice as to federal reactions' to British plans for merger. Having seemingly abandoned the compromise option during Johnston's talks in London through May 1961 by considering details of Aden's future constitutional advance without it being explicitly conditional on merger, Trevaskis could 'now see that J[ohnston] is not in the least sincere. … I have felt that, tho[ugh] foolish, he has been honest and sincere. I do not think so now.'[37] Though Trevaskis' ambitions made him overplay the extent to which their objectives diverged, it was a key turning point in their relationship at a crucial moment in the development of British policy.

Defining consent

In the process of formulating the merger policy, a more overt consideration of underlying principles was spearheaded by Macleod, and the manner these principles were defined to rationalise collaborative relations in Aden predicated a conflict with local nationalists that would prove incredibly difficult to rectify. Their appearance is noteworthy for its rarity, driven by pressure exerted by Amery and the Chief of Air Staff, Sir Thomas Pike, to consider the possibility of establishing a sovereign base area modelled on those recently established in Cyprus. If the prospect of constitutional development could not be held off indefinitely they believed the division of Aden and its base facilities would secure Britain's regional and global defence role in the face of any potential future nationalist-leaning

[36] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/5, 6 April 1961
[37] TNA, CO 1015/2386, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 June 1961; OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/5, 15 May, 17 May 1961

government.[38] Having repeatedly dismissed the idea on practical grounds, given the base was entangled with the rest of Aden, frustrated Colonial Office officials reverted to foundational principles to try and fend off the idea permanently, albeit unsuccessfully, by declaring that such a solution 'would be at the expense of the measure of consent we hope to retain' in governing Aden.[39] This consideration, underlined in sharp red by Macleod, rapidly became central to deliberations over merger. But doing so placed British policy into a conflicted position and British efforts to define and rationalise a form of consent compatible with the federal idea and British interests created a contorted logic that shaped the merger controversy in a way that undermined its viability.

Having emphasised the 'consistent principle' and 'first importance' of preserving Britain's 'friendship with the Rulers', the Rulers' understanding of Aden's future place in the Federation posed a dilemma as to how merger was to be actualised.[40] As far as Sharif Hussein of Beihan was concerned, 'we [the Rulers] say we are the Adenis' and that returning Aden to them was, as Sultan Fadhl of Lahej put it, 'simply a matter of rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.'[41] Because the Rulers believed Aden had been taken from the Sultan of Lahej in 1839 and thus subject to its return to the Rulers now in the Federation, the notional consent of the Adenis as a justification of British sovereignty over Aden undermined the logic of the Federation's preferential position within British policy. Sensing the brewing problem, Johnston noted in May 1961 that the Rulers were 'morbidly sensitive' and 'deeply suspicious about our intentions in regard to self-government' in Aden, fearing that should pre-merger constitutional advance in Aden be even suggested 'their reaction will be that HMG and I myself have "ganged up" behind their backs to betray their interests.'[42] Given the considerable investment British policy had made in the federal idea, Johnston and Macleod were keen to avoid jeopardising relations with the Rulers. As long as merger was the end to which British policy was directed, the British would 'regard the Federation as the nucleus' of the merger policy, but the Rulers would have to be handled with 'the utmost tact and patience' whilst doing 'everything possible to persuade the Rulers

[38] TNA, CO 1015/2387, Aden: memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air [undated]
[39] TNA, CO 1015/2387, Memorandum: Constitutional Development in Aden: Brief for the Secretary of State, [May 1961]
[40] TNA, CO 1015/2386, Cabinet Colonial Policy Committee: Constitutional Development in Aden: Memorandum by Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 May 1961; CO 1015/2298, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston, 9 June 1961
[41] TNA, CO 1015/2386, Special meeting no.64 of the Supreme Council of the Federation of Arab Amirates of the South held on Saturday 12th November 1960 at 9am at Champion Lines, Aden; Watt to Melville, 10 April 1961
[42] TNA, CO 1015/2386, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 May 1961

that what we propose in the Colony is in the interests of themselves as well as of the United Kingdom.'[43] Given Johnston's propensity to emphasise the importance of understanding Arab 'psychology' and the continued investment in the federal idea, considerable space was created for Trevaskis to continue to expand his influence as a mediator in the policy-making process through his ability to offer advice on how to 'handle' the federal Rulers, and any new policy or tactical ideas almost always needed 'thorough discussion with Trevaskis'.[44] Trevaskis' personal influence within the colonial administration grew considerably through 1961 as an integral part of managing negotiations over the future of Aden and untangling the dilemma Adeni consent posed.

How this consent was to be defined became more pressing through 1961. This stemmed from how Adeni consent, authentically expressed by 'true Adenis', could be aligned with British interests. Of particular concern was the trade union movement that drew its support from the growing Yemeni migrant population that serviced Aden's economy. The first trade unions formed in 1953 and by 1956 the Aden Trade Union Congress (ATUC) was created to act as an umbrella organisation for the 25 unions that existed in Aden. The expansion its membership from 4,000 to 22,000 by 1963 under its leader, Abdullah al-Asnag, meant the ATUC's use of industrial action became increasingly effective, most notably in the spring of 1956 when a wave of strikes at the port and oil refinery led to rioting and an eventual deal to increase pay whilst further strikes in 1959 and 1960 against low pay, insecure employment, and poor working conditions led to a brief declaration of emergency by Luce. Though division existed within the ATUC as to the utility of engagement with or violence against the British, the interweaving of economic demands with aspirations for a unified, republican Yemen free from British imperial influence, combined with al-Asnag's skill as a communicator and organiser, placed the ATUC at the centre of the nationalist movement in Aden.[45]

As Mawby notes, the Aden Government had pursued confrontation with the trade unions from an early stage. The growth of Aden's population from 51,500 in 1931 to 225,000 by 1963 led to an 'over-supply of labour' in Aden which, the British believed, meant there was

---

[43] TNA, CO 1015/2386, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 June 1961; Watt to Johnston, 9 June 1961

[44] TNA, CO 1015/2298, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 June 1961; CO 1015/2387, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 June 1961, 22 June 1961; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston, 23 June 1961

[45] Joseph Kostiner, *The Struggle for South Yemen,* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 30-32; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 48-49, 78-79

little reason to engage with demands for better pay and improved conditions that would encourage a greater influx of Yemeni migrants that would, in turn, increase the political potency of the ATUC.[46] This, combined with the affiliation of the ATUC with the Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (CATU) in 1960, long considered by the British to be the 'industrial arm of Nasserism', cemented in British minds the notion that the trade union movement was inherently anti-British, Nasser-inspired and orchestrated, and thus deprived of any authentic political position that deserved consideration or involvement in discussions about the future of Aden. The Colonial Office believed they 'need not delude ourselves that we can appease the Nationalists by any policy which stops short of complete withdrawal.'[47] The introduction of an Industrial Relations Ordinance (IRO) in 1960, which imposed mandatory arbitration and 'the effective banning of strike action', was implemented under the same auspices.[48] Trevaskis considered the real purpose of ATUC demonstrations during Macleod's visit to Aden was to 'exhibit themselves to get a pat on the back from their masters' whilst Johnston regarded the 'attitude of TUC and SAL [as] nihilistic and they have no constructive alternative to propose', and that nationalist 'agitation was … largely artificial' given that the 'man-in-the street remains apathetic' to the issue of union and 'a substantial section of intelligent opinion would like to see a union'.[49] This thinking was by no means exclusive to Aden and was manifest in empire-wide responses to trade unionism. Whereas high-minded officials sought to encourage 'responsible' trade unionism, the realities of trade union organisation highlighted the 'flawed' and 'haphazard and contradictory approach' of British policy.[50] The British thus believed that industrial or economic demands could only ever be a front for seemingly intractable, inauthentic, and illegitimate political demands.

The growth of nationalist organisation in Aden, the British feared, risked a nationalist takeover during Aden's elections. The use of force in such an event was readily considered

---

[46] Spencer Mawby, 'Workers in the Vanguard: the 1960 industrial relations ordinance and the struggle for independence in Aden', *Labor History,* 57:1 (2016), pp. 38-39; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 17

[47] TNA, CO 1015/2392, Memorandum: Aden: Future Constitutional Development: Departmental Note, [undated]

[48] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 78-79

[49] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/5, 3 April 1961; TNA, CO 1015/2388, Johnston to Watt, 31 August 1961; Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 October 1961; KCL, LHMA, Charles Johnston Papers, 2/31, Appendix

[50] Gareth Curless, 'Introduction: trade unions in the global south from imperialism to the present day', *Labor History*, 57:1 (2016), p. 5; Curless, 'The Sudan is 'Not Yet Ready for Trade Unions': The Railway Strikes of 1947–1948', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 41:5 (2013), pp. 809-810

though was regarded as an 'extremely awkward' option as it would require 'greatly increased manpower' for security and to replace 'untrustworthy local labour' to ensure the operation of the base, port, and refinery.[51] The British therefore took the path of least resistance to delegitimise, outmanoeuvre and pacify local nationalist sentiment whilst engaging and encouraging, as far as they saw it, a viable, local alternative. The narrow franchise upon which Aden's Legislative Council had been elected in 1959 was intentionally framed to exclude the growing Yemeni population and thus curtail the influence of Aden's trade unions. Out of an approximate population of 180,000 only 21,554 were registered to vote, and as nationalist parties boycotted the election only 5,000 votes were cast. Nevertheless, as far as the British were concerned, the makeup of the Legislative Council presented a satisfactory representation of moderate opinion that was duly amicable and passively functional to the pursuit of British interests rather than a political or intellectual threat. But the British and the elected members of the Legislative Council were quick to recognise any future un-boycotted election based on the 1959 franchise would be dangerous. Furthermore, the pace of constitutional developments across the empire, most clearly the June 1960 declaration of independence in Somaliland, meant that if no constitutional development took place in Aden their position would be undermined by an 'upsurge of damaging influences.'[52] With elections scheduled for January 1963, manoeuvres to ensure a moderate victory and suppress Adeni nationalists were accelerated.

To ensure this, it was apparent to the British and to local elected members that the franchise had to be restricted. 'It is not too much to say', one official noted, 'that decisions about the franchise in Aden Colony can involve our whole position there.'[53] Hassan Bayoomi, leader of the United National Party, spearheaded this discourse at a local level, believing that an Adeni nationality should be established as the basis of the franchise to undermine nationalist agitation.[54] The British and Bayoomi envisaged that, 'no matter how long they may have lived in the Colony', the Yemeni population was to be denied the vote.[55] British officials took comfort in this alignment, providing a basis upon which local consent could be marshalled against the trade union movement and towards merger, and they believed Bayoomi and others personified something of an archetypal Adeni with whom the British

[51] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Minute: Morgan to Watt, 8 December 1961; Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 December 1961; CO 1015/2387, Constitutional Development in Aden: Brief for the Secretary of State, [undated]
[52] TNA, CO 1015/2298, Luce to Melville, 23 June 1960
[53] TNA, CO 1015/2298, Minute by Watt, 3 August 1960
[54] TNA, CO 1015/2298, Simmonds to Watt, 23 July 1960
[55] TNA, CO 1015/2298, Minute by Watt, 9 August 1960

felt they could work. Despite the lack of political cohesion amongst the leading moderate figures in Aden the British nevertheless considered Bayoomi in particular as 'representative of [the] thinking of the various groups of moderates in Aden'.[56] Given that the British understood moderate opinion as consistent with the continuation of the British presence and the maintenance of commercial interests in the port that were central to Aden's economy, they were reassured to hear an ally of Bayoomi in the Legislative Council declare that 'as a long established Colony merchant he considered that 85%-90% of Adenis did not want immediate independence but some form of self-government'.[57] The Aden Secretariat were thus keen to allow 'Mr Bayoomi and his supporters a chance to devise a franchise… which will allow them to fulfil their present claim that they can, thus buttressed, win an election.'[58] Giving them free rein in Aden would, they believed, be the surest way to present a bulwark against growing nationalist pressure and secure British interests.

The British assessed any apparent risks of establishing a firm collaborative relationship with Adeni moderates, exchanging a degree of self-government for notional consent for merger, outweighed the perceived future risk of a nationalist takeover. Seeking to persuade the Cabinet colleagues, Macleod proposed that under a new Aden constitution Britain would 'retain ultimate sovereignty so that if need be we can resume control.' Giving the moderates a degree of constitutional change was less dangerous to British interests because, even if they were unable to control nationalism in Aden or proved unreliable, Britain could 'suspend the constitution and resume direct rule.' Whatever the apparent justification for supporting moderates in Aden, or whatever concessions Britain gave in order to achieve the apparent consent of the Adenis, of greater importance for the British was a policy that enabled Britain 'to exploit to the maximum advantage the several solid assets which we at present possess.'[59] The manoeuvrings the British had undertaken from the founding of the Federation to the first half of 1961 in preparation for merger, despite recognising the 'awkwardness' of maintaining control in Aden by force, had revealed the inherently fractured foundation of British policy, and that the position of defending Aden's strategic

[56] TNA, CO 1015/2386, Visit of Secretary of State to Aden - April 1961: Development's since Governor's despatch no. 399 of 3rd March, 1961, 3 April 1961
[57] TNA, CO 1015/2386, Visit of Secretary of State to Aden - April 1961: Notes on Meeting with Members of the Legislative Council at Government House at 1700 hours on Tuesday, 4th April 1961
[58] TNA, CO 1015/2386, Watt to Melville, 10 April 1961
[59] TNA, CO 1015/2386, Cabinet Colonial Policy Committee: Constitutional Development in Aden: Memorandum by Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 May 1961

assets 'for as long as possible' was one that, in essence, was arrived at by default as a way of mitigating whatever problems arose out of the way in which merger was achieved.

Whilst this conclusion was reached at Cabinet level, at an official level the pretences of courting local consent for the planned merger continued through the summer of 1961 as merger talks with the Federation began. The purpose of the talks was to ensure that the Rulers' concerns about 'further responsible government' in Aden did not amount to anything more than private 'resentment', to remind the Rulers that they and the Adeni moderates had a common enemy in Arab nationalism, and it was 'in their interest as well as ours to enable them to combine to resist this menace'. Furthermore, the talks aimed to see off the sovereign base area idea by emphasising the outward contrast between Amery's arguments and the merger plan, namely that Macleod wished 'to do everything possible to proceed with consent and retain the goodwill of those who are prepared to work with us'.[60] By 'go[ing] along with their political expectations' the British would thus 'secure those defence facilities whose retention must govern our planning.'[61] Consent was valued as supplementary to the more fundamental end of British policy and it had no inherent policy value.

As such, the British had considerable flexibility to redefine consent in the minutiae of negotiations to reach an agreement between Bayoomi and the Federation for merger. When talks with the federal Rulers began in June 1961, Colonial Office briefs flatly rejected any involvement of dissenting opinion in Aden and that a plan should be devised 'whereby those with common interests can prevent elections [on present franchise] taking place'. Any such plan would be sufficient in allowing Aden's entry 'into merger with consent.'[62] This paved the way for Britain to influence the Rulers into considering consent in a more limited sense, and the talks sought to achieve a wider measure of 'mutual consent' between the negotiating parties representing the Federation and Aden, rather than seeking consent from Aden alone.[63] It was stressed to the Federation that, whilst a merger had to be pursued with a 'basis of consent and could not be forced', it was nevertheless 'dangerous if not impossible to risk elections' on the existing franchise and the principle of consent was softened to

[60] TNA, CO 1015/2387, Constitutional development in Aden: brief for the Secretary of State, [June 1961]
[61] TNA, CO 1015/2298, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston, 9 June 1961
[62] TNA, CO 1015/2386, Aden Federation Delegation: Departmental Brief, 14 June 1961
[63] TNA, CO 1015/2387, Aden Federation Delegation: Revised Brief, 16 June 1961

seeking 'agreement with their friends.'[64] The British had played the Rulers into thinking they had won a concession from the British. During the second round of talks with Adeni politicians, Colonial Office briefs highlighted that the 'principle of consent is all important' but defined the principle with the qualification that

> [t]here are… people in the area who are opposed to the political existence and views of everybody at this meeting. We cannot expect them to come round to our views, and, therefore, we may have to exclude them from the principle of consent. … The present franchise gives the vote to some people who may not be true "Adenese" … We believe that we must avoid another election on that franchise, which HMG consider should be confirmed to the true Adenese, before we hold further elections in the Colony.

Macleod promised that the British would make it their priority to 'strengthen the hands of all right thinking people' in order to bring about merger 'as quickly as practicable' and with 'greatest possible measure of consent of those truly concerned … and by that he meant consent among our friends.'[65] Consent was a shield of ambiguity with which the plan for merger could navigate the dilemmas exerted by the need to maintain Britain's interests in Aden, the federal Rulers, and the Adenis. By 5 July, talks reached agreement for the principle of merger. The Rulers' demand that merger should be a condition of any constitutional change in Aden was overshadowed, from their perspective, by the threat nationalism in Aden posed but were reassured that Britain would continue to take a firm line. Similarly, the Adeni politicians recognised that merger provided them with the opportunity to cement their own positions against increasing pressure from the ATUC. On the British side, the elasticity of definitions of consent within British policy discourses rendered it meaningless, having been predetermined to exclude any form of political agency beyond those whom the British determined supported the maintenance of the British presence.

---

[64] TNA, CO 1015/2387, Agreed Record of the First Meeting with the Delegation from the Supreme Council of the Federation of Arab Amirates of the South, held in the Secretary of State's Room at 2:15pm on the 19th June 1961; Agreed Record of the Second Meeting from the Federation of Arab Amirates of the South, hold in the Secretary of State's Room at 9:45 on the 20th June 1961; Agreed Record of the Third Meeting from the Federation of Arab Amirates of the South, hold in the Secretary of State's Room at 4:30pm on the 21st June 1961

[65] TNA, CO 1015/2387, Aden Federation and Colony delegation: Brief for the Secretary of State, 29 June 1961; Agreed record of the first meeting of the delegations from the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South and from Aden Colony with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, held in the main conference room, Church House, at 3:30pm on the 3rd July, 1961; Meeting with Aden Federal Delegation on 28th June [1961]: Brief for Secretary of State

The Bayoomi Plan

Yet the consequences of the merger policy agreed in July 1961 became readily apparent as discussions moved onto the details of merger. Gorell Barnes, the Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, felt 'disturbed' by the plan. The dilemma, as he identified it, stemmed from the inherently conflicted basis upon which the principle for merger had been shaped, namely the need to present the outside appearance of consent whilst at the same time curtailing consent to safeguard Britain's interests. Should Britain seek to maintain an ultimate guarantee of their interests by way of Britain being able to withdraw Aden from the Federation, 'then firstly we shall be undermining the somewhat shaky internal coherence of the Federation, and secondly we shall be causing the Federation to become no longer "respectable" from the Arab point of view.' Should Britain seek to give up the pretence and rely either on keeping Aden out of the Federation and maintaining British sovereignty or on merging Aden with the Federation and 'rely on the provisions of the Treaty with the Federation to safeguard our interests in Aden.… I fear very much', he wrote, 'that we are in danger of falling between two stools.'[66] Untangling of this dilemma through July and August 1961 presented a significant obstacle that demoralised officials. Johnston became increasingly pessimistic over the likelihood of an agreement being struck between Aden and the Federation as talks became deadlocked over the issue of parity of representation for Aden within the Federation's executive and legislature. At this stage, there was little that British officials could do other than press the Rulers as to the 'serious disadvantages of forcing a breakdown in the talks' and return to the default position of deflecting mounting criticism away from the innate merits of the merger idea and delegitimise mounting criticism of the secretive nature of the talks.[67] The idea of merger was being bogged down by the weight of its own dilemmas, and a solution to the technical implications of merger was not foreseen by British officials.

But a plan by Bayoomi to break the stalemate emerged in September 1961. There was, he reported to Johnston, a 'serious risk' that, even if the franchise was amended as to favour parties which supported merger, nationalists would still win. Under his plan, Aden would receive a greater measure of self-government with Bayoomi becoming Chief Minister to give him a freer hand to suppress nationalist opposition and bring Aden into the Federation within six months.[68] Bayoomi's suggestion of sequencing Aden's constitutional advance,

---

[66] TNA, CO 1015/2387, Gorell Barnes to Minister of State, 29 August 1961
[67] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Johnston to Watt, 31 August 1961
[68] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 71

entering into the Federation, then delaying elections on a new franchise 'long enough after the merger for it to have become clear to the Colony voter that the resultant Union was a successful going concern' offered the British a way through the consent quagmire, abandoning direct consent from Adenis prior to merger. Disturbed as Johnston was by the proposal, noting that it would be 'extremely difficult to justify' and that Bayoomi's political support in Aden was 'probably very small', of greater concern was that Bayoomi had brought about a solution to the merger dilemma independently of Johnston's initiative and design, indirectly undermining his position and *raison d'etre* as principal mediator.[69] Colonial Office officials were similarly concerned that, in spite of the apparent urgency that had characterised the merger discourse, the best course of action was 'to play things slowly … and take steps to prepare Colony opinion more thoroughly for the idea of Union' so as to preserve the principle of consent as the apparent 'cardinal feature' of the planned merger.[70] Aden's politics, however, moved faster than anticipated. In mid-September 1961, the People's Congress Party, led by the influential Luqman family, had formed an alliance with the ATUC to campaign against the proposed merger. It was a particularly urgent blow, given that the Luqmans had played an important role, previously allied with Bayoomi, in supporting the British presence as part of the Aden Association; a party that the British had 'hitherto labelled' moderate had just 'ascended the Nationalist band wagon'. The risk that Bayoomi might also jump ship was apparent to both the British and the federal Rulers, who had 'become acutely aware that unless they are able to offer Bayoomi a future in covert alliance' they would be left 'without a friend of substance in Aden.'[71] The Luqman-ATUC alliance came as a profound shock because the realities of the situation in Aden were not conforming to the ideals upon which merger was being driven, namely that seemingly moderate Adeni figures and the Adeni (rather than the Yemeni) population would not become actively engaged in opposing merger.

As this took place, Johnston was in London briefing the Colonial Office on the state of the talks. The vacuum in Aden was filled by Trevaskis who, recognising the opportunity to secure the merger on terms favourable to the Federation, dutifully reported that the federal Rulers and Bayoomi had signed the secret agreement on 20 September 1961 in Johnston's absence.[72] By facilitating the Bayoomi plan in Johnston's absence, Trevaskis had extended his authority to advance the interests of the Federation and subvert Johnston's position.

---

[69] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Johnston to Watt, 31 August 1961; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 71
[70] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Minute: Formoy to Melville, 22 September 1961
[71] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Acting Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 September 1961
[72] TNA, CO 1015/2388, OAG to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 September 1961

Officials back in London suspected as much, noting that 'Trevaskis had a freer hand to dominate the proceedings, and that to some extent the Governor was faced on his return with a situation which he might not have allowed to develop had he been there in person.'[73] After Johnston's return, a confrontation broke out with Trevaskis that, on the face of it, stemmed from a snide comment Trevaskis made about Johnston in the presence of some of the federal Rulers, but is illustrative of the more fundamental issue of Trevaskis' dominance. At an informal gathering at the Audhali Sultan Salah's residence, the discussion turned to Oxford-Cambridge rivalry. In diplomatic form, Johnston noted that 'although an Oxford man, I had high regard for Cambridge because my father had been there.' Trevaskis, turning to the Rulers, said in Arabic, '[y]ou see, the Governor is a traitor'. After dwelling on the comment for a few days, Johnston concluded that he 'could not let it pass unchallenged.'[74] According to Johnston, he gave Trevaskis a gentle rebuke, noting that the comment was 'unwise'. Trevaskis forcibly retorted that he was 'deeply upset' given that 'for an officer of my experience and length of service to be told that he has openly insulted the Governor in Arab company constitutes a most serious inflection upon his sense of responsibility and fitness for his appointment.' Trevaskis' comment, he jibbed, 'could not conceivably have been interpreted as offensive or in bad taste by any Arab present' and Johnston would have realised this had he been 'more familiar with Arab company of this type and with the conversational use of Arabic in the kind of light hearted conversation we were then engaged in'. Cutting to the point, he threatened his resignation.[75] Johnston was at a loss as to how to handle Trevaskis' subversion. He sought to assert his 'clear duty' to speak to Trevaskis in 'that way' and that he 'must maintain completely' what he said. But, the episode did not 'diminish my high opinion of your work', and he could not accept Trevaskis' resignation as his 'work here is much too valuable to be terminated for such a cause.' 'Let me add something which comes from the heart', he concluded, 'This episode is closed so far as I am concerned. When you come back after the financial talks you will get as warm a welcome from me as from your other friends here.'[76] The episode, far from closed, was a power play between the two men. Trevaskis had already established his dominance within the Protectorate administration and he had extended his influence by way of his sway with the federal Rulers. Johnston, however, was bruised by the confrontation, and his reporting of the matter to London was as much explanatory as it was

[73] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Minute: Watt to Martin, 13 October 1961
[74] LHMA, Johnston Papers, 2/25, Johnston to Poynton, 24 October 1961
[75] LHMA, Johnston Papers, 2/25, Trevaskis to Johnston, 19 October 1961
[76] LHMA, Johnston Papers, 2/25, Johnston to Trevaskis, 23 October 1961

a defence of his own standing. Johnston had been 'disturbed' by Trevaskis' 'growing tendency on his part to behave as if he was absolutely indispensable and accountable for his actions neither to me nor to anyone else', and he was, by way of his close connection to the Rulers

> beginning to suffer from the emotionalism and subjectiveness to which even the ablest and best of us are prone in a such a situation. In addition, his naturally ponderous manner has seemed recently to be developing into an attitude which sometimes contained a hint of discourtesy towards myself. This attitude has been noticed by others and, if maintained, would have been harmful to my authority.

There was, however, little Johnston could do to tame his difficult subordinate. Trevaskis leaving would be a 'very serious loss to us indeed' at a crucial moment in the merger negotiations and, though Johnston concluded that they could 'at a pinch' continue negotiations, Trevaskis' relations with the Rulers, his paramountcy within the WAP administration, and his role in making the Federation a reality made him indispensable. Johnston's input as Governor had been subordinated, and the dominance of the Federation's architect within the policy-making process was firmly established.

Back in London the Colonial Office gradually moved away from considering consent as key to securing Aden's viable entry into the Federation. Their initial response to Bayoomi's plan was somewhat wary as to the implications of 'flagrantly deny[ing] the right of the "Adenese" to have some say' and not being 'too disrespectful towards the idea of displaying "consent" through elections before merger takes place'.[77] They were also concerned about investing too much of Britain's position in Aden on Bayoomi *ad personam*, and puzzled by the contrasting conceptions of 'Arab psychology' that officials in South Arabia had previously presented as a basis of their policy recommendations.[78] One commented that they did

> not really believe in the alleged strong sentiment for unity in Southern Arabia… since it so strongly conflicts with the advice so frequently given by previous Arabists … that if there is a dominant motif in Arab character it is the fissiparous tendency to almost individual independence or anarchy – "every Arab is his own King". … [The] gamble may very well not come off, … and if the Colony Nationalists win a post-Union election, we may then be

[77] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Minute: Watt to Martin, 13 October 1961
[78] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Aden Department Memorandum: Future Policy in Aden Colony and Protectorate, 20 October 1961

> in an extremely awkward position, and even with the support of the Rulers of the Protectorate be obliged to use force to maintain our necessary strategic interest in the base.[79]

Such concerns, however, were performative. British officials recognised the utility of Bayoomi's plan especially rather than despite the clear lack of consent it entailed. As one official noted, the principle of consent had been emphasised throughout Macleod's meetings with the Adeni and the Federal delegations, but whether this constituted holding elections was never 'explicitly' said, nor did it go beyond being the 'implication' of his remarks. Additionally, the temperamentality of 'Arab psychology' meant that:

> The people of Aden Colony are, like most Arabs in other countries, coffee house politicians whose views change with the mood of the hour. If they are left to form their own political ideas … then we should not be surprised if they chop and change their opinions quickly, form little groups and short-lived alliances and give ear to every rumour.[80]

Johnston pursued a similar line of reasoning, emphasising that throughout the negotiations it was accepted by both sides that after merger Britain would retain its position in Aden 'on a footing of sovereignty with all that implies. There has been no discussion of full independence'. He would 'certainly stand no nonsense from Bayoomi … about "colonialism" [and had] already given Bayoomi a sharp warning on this point, and he has of course disclaimed any intention of questioning our position.' Johnston also argued that Bayoomi could be trusted as 'the most effective and tough political leader' in Aden to take on nationalism, and having gained support from other members of the Legislative Council in the wake of the Luqman-ATUC alliance there was thus no need to consider opposition groups 'nihilistic' and 'entirely personal' position as 'they have no constructive alternative to propose' and 'if they were in power instead of Bayoomi they would agree to every detail of [the] proposal'.[81] By December 1961, the Colonial Office had come round to the view that they were accepting 'the "lesser risk"' of 'stak[ing] everything on basing assent to the Union in the Colony on a vote of the present unofficial members of the Legislative Council, and then proceeding to bring about the Union before there is a general election in Aden Colony on a reformed franchise.'[82] The opportunities Bayoomi's plan presented to achieve merger

[79] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Minute: Morgan to Watt, 8 December 1961
[80] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Minute: Watt to Martin, 29 September 1961
[81] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 October 1961; Minute: Watt to Martin, 6 October 1961
[82] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Minute: Morgan to Watt, 8 December 1961

on terms favourable to British interests meant that the heavily circumscribed notion of consent did not need to be considered any more. The Colonial Office admitted that

> [t]hroughout our consideration of policy for the Colony and Federation … we have to acknowledge that "consent" means seeking the support and cooperation of people who have, and seem likely to retain, authority - and who of course are disposed, by temperament or self-interest, to see us retain what we want. … [We] need not be surprised that Mr Bayoomi and some others are disposed to turn a blind eye to democratic and Parliamentary practices; so are we. Insofar as we have committed ourselves to remaining in Aden, by encouraging our friends in the Colony and in the Federation to strengthen their positions, and ours, by co-operation, we have much to be thankful for.[83]

The British had thus rapidly absolved themselves of the need to overcome the dilemma merger by consent posed and instead took the path of least intellectual resistance by recourse to imperialist and Orientalist tropes and self-interest. In turn, the merger agreement between the Federation and Bayoomi was facilitated by the power-struggle between Trevaskis and Johnston, demonstrating the importance of such dynamics to policy formation. The culmination of these, to the significant detriment of the viability of merger, meant that consent had not so much been abandoned as never considered sincerely in the first instance.

Towards merger

Progress towards merger through 1962 was shaped by the fallout of the lack of genuine consideration of the principle of consent. British efforts were directed towards managing the technical process of merger whilst deflecting increased scrutiny and criticism of the merger plans as it became apparent a 'shotgun wedding' was the intention. Seeking to take advantage of the 'relatively calm conditions' that prevailed in Aden in the wake of Syria's withdrawal from the UAR and Britain's June-July 1961 intervention in Kuwait to counter Iraqi invasion threats, Johnston pressed to achieve merger 'before the searchlight of anti-colonialist opinion in the world begins to focus on Aden.' The British position was 'saved from this fate by the more sensational attractions of the Congo, Algeria and other territories' and there were thus 'strong reasons for pressing ahead as fast as we can.'[84] This sensitivity is illustrative of an awareness of the fundamental fragility of the merger plan, but also of the hardening of attitudes towards achieving merger through duplicitous means.

---

[83] TNA, CO 1015/2388, Minute: Watt to Martin, 13 October 1961
[84] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1 January 1962

This was superseded, however, by attempts to hide the details of merger and recourse to prevailing assumptions regarding the temperamentality of Arab nationalism. Originally scheduled for January 1963, it became apparent that elections for Aden's Legislative Council would need to be postponed for at least a year to create a new franchise as agreed under the terms of the Bayoomi plan. The 'presentation and justification of this decision', the Colonial Office admitted, 'will obviously be a very tricky matter indeed' as a fierce reaction was anticipated.[85] To shield the revelation, the announcement that elections were to be delayed was packaged together with a new constitution for Aden to 'avoid specific reference' to the change 'since any such reference would make it easier for critics to press their charges of *ad hoc* jiggery pokery.'[86] The 'pill' of merger, Johnston noted, would be 'surrounded by thick layers of cake' to see it through and the prolongation would be revealed 'by implication'.[87] The issue of British sovereignty in Aden was considered in a similar way. The deployment of British forces to Kuwait was felt to demonstrate that the base would be needed to protect British interests for at least the next decade.[88] Merger and the perceived resultant loss of control in Aden resurrected the issue of establishing sovereign enclaves, but aside from countering with well-rehearsed difficulties Colonial Office officials noted that it would be 'unwise' to raise the issue because to do so could force local collaborators to state publicly their support for indefinite British sovereignty and thus 'attract the odium of the Arab world.'[89] In Aden, Johnston worked towards actualising merger on the basis that retention of sovereignty and the base was 'axiomatic by all concerned, to avoid inviting any discussion on them, and to go straight on to an examination of the constitutional means by which they can be given effect.' Though he admitted he could not 'expect to be able to get away with this', it was 'essential politically for us to find some means by which… we avoid … rubbing the public's nose in it.'[90] Having settled the intellectual basis for merger and reached agreement between the Federation and Bayoomi, the primary focus of official efforts were to move quickly and quietly towards securing it, at the risk of alienating collaborators, heightening critical attention, and escalating tensions in Aden.

---

[85] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Morgan to Johnston, 29 January 1962
[86] TNA, CO 1015/2298, Minute by Formoy, 6 April 1962
[87] TNA, CO 1015/2298, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 February 1962; CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 February 1962
[88] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 72; Helene von Bismarck, 'The Kuwait Crisis of 1961 and its Consequences for Great Britain's Persian Gulf Policy', *British Scholar,* 2:1 (2009), pp. 75-96
[89] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Minute: Morgan to Eastwood, 4 January 1962
[90] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Eastwood, 23 March, 1962

Though the merger plan risked a stable, locally consented merger, the British priority during negotiations between the Federation and Adeni ministers throughout 1962 was to secure British interests. Paternalism became the dominant feature. Johnston recommended that talks should be 'conducted at separate meetings' so that 'the two sides have no opportunity for showing off to each other or teasing each other'.[91] Johnston took heart from the opportunities to isolate individuals who presented independent initiatives that might deviate from the Bayoomi plan. V.K. Joshi, an Adeni minister, elected member of the Legislative Council, and President of the Indian Association, called for Aden to be able to unilaterally withdraw from the Federation, a provision Johnston noted would 'completely destroy the cohesion of the present Federation.' Joshi called for elections on a new franchise within six months and, if not, he would resign. Despite recognising that his resignation would produce a 'dangerous opponent', Johnston believed Joshi sooner wanted to keep his ministerial position because 'this is not a point of principle with him' and pressed upon him the 'obvious risks of communal discord' against Indians in Aden should he vote against merger. Keeping him on side, or at least quiet, meant he would be 'still gagged by office' when it came to the vote on merger, with the added advantage that his connections to Jawaharlal Nehru might influence a more 'accommodating' attitude amongst the Afro-Asian bloc that would 'certainly denounce [merger] as a colonialist plot.'[92] Another elected member, Abdulla Saidi, pressed for elections to be held prior to merger. Unlike Joshi, Johnston was cavalier in accepting the risks posed by Saidi's threat of resignation. Saidi's own position, Johnston noted, was 'inarticulate', 'slightly worse for drink', and recently undermined by a scandal whilst Minister of Education. More dangerous, however, was that a local newspaper owned by the Luqman's announced that Saidi would head a three-member team of independent experts to guide his party, the People's Constitutional Congress, on the constitutional proposals. Johnston strong-armed Saidi to distance himself publicly and humiliatingly from the announcement, whilst the newspaper, Johnston reported, 'did exactly as I requested'.[93] Saidi resigned as Minister on the 17 May and a few hours later the merger agreement based on the Bayoomi plan was signed.

Rather than expand collaborative relations and adapt the principles of merger to accommodate them, Johnston forced through the Bayoomi plan and freely admitted that

---

[91] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Eastwood, 6 April 1962
[92] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Eastwood, 4 May 1962, 18 April 1962; Johnston to Maudling, 20 May 1962
[93] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 May 1962; Johnston to Eastwood, 27 April 1962; 4 May 1962

the object of the negotiations was 'to break up the opposition front among the Colony Ministers'.[94] The consequence of the British approach, valuing the Federation and the Bayoomi plan as the basis of local collaboration, was that the structure of the post-merger Federation was undermined. The Federal Supreme Council, expanded since 1959 as further states joined and each new Ruler took a ministerial position on the Council, became increasingly unwieldly. Aden would receive four members on the Council bringing the total to fourteen ministerial positions in what Johnston recorded as a 'regrettable' solution; considering pressure from 'local political considerations' and 'the present state of the Federation', Johnston felt, 'it is simply not possible to maintain cohesion by any other system.' It was a system developed and maintained by Trevaskis, to whom Johnston pledged special thanks on account of his 'essential role; the constructive and helpful attitude shown by the Federal Ministers in discussion with the Colony side has been due to the confidence which they have in him and to the patience which he shows in dealing with their difficulties.'[95] The deliberations over merger and the personal dynamics of the colonial administration were pivotal in fixing collaborative relations in South Arabia.

British management of the public reception of the merger plans was carefully managed, though with counter-productive results caused by the contorted rationalisations that underpinned merger. After issuing a statement in favour of merger in January 1962 but with no details as to how this was to be achieved, Johnston reported the 'satisfactory' reaction in Aden because Britain had given 'a clear lead in the direction of merger'.[96] The British envisaged Adeni public opinion would remain passively disinterested yet unreasonably emotional and easily malleable to the idea of merger. As negotiations continued, public broadcasts were prepared to 'enlighten … opinion of the practical consequences of merger' in the face of growing hostility to the secrecy of the negotiations.[97] In the Colonial Office, thoughts turned to how the announcement of the merger agreement might be softened by providing confirmation 'unofficially' to establish 'an open secret', thus making the official revelation 'less likely to provoke an indignant outburst of protest'.[98] Even then, some officials noted that they 'quite firmly' believed that Britain should avoid publication of the agreement altogether because they were 'far too detailed and technical … to be read and understood by the public, and can only serve as a mine of detailed

[94] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Eastwood, 4 May 1962
[95] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Maudling, 20 May 1962
[96] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 January 1962
[97] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Eastwood, 6 April 1962
[98] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Minute: Formoy to Eastwood, 18 May 1962

information from which hostile propagandists can extract an endless supply of ammunition for use against us.'[99] The Colonial Office, realising the problems this would cause, instead ordered that a 'Child's Guide' be published in Aden alongside the full agreement.[100] Back in Aden, the British administration drafted Major Shackleton, the Psychological Warfare Officer stationed with Middle East Command, to prepare press releases as part of a wider effort to circulate pro-Federation and anti-opposition material, that appeared 'as if entirely unofficially inspired [with] … no element of detectable Government sponsorship in it.'[101] By relying on these somewhat conflicted understandings of how Adeni public opinion operated, responses by Adeni nationalists could be easily dismissed as the uninformed exception rather than the enlightened rule. '[I]n Arabian politics', Johnston recorded in his memoir, 'there are two levels of operation: the rational and irrational. … Under the moderate, sensible political surface the violent passions of nationalistic and communal hatred were still all too strongly in being.'[102] For the January and May 1962 announcements, Johnston reported little reaction, with the public seemingly resigned to merger on account of the 'clear element of historical and economic inevitability about it' that was 'accepted in that way even by those who are opposed to it.'[103] What support there was for merger and the retention of British sovereignty in Aden was reported as elusive, ambiguous, and reserved in quiet and private confidence. 'While nobody says so publicly', Johnston reported, 'there is widespread relief in Aden that British sovereignty is to be maintained.'[104] Though British officials persevered with attempts to rationalise the methods by which the merger was to be achieved and presented, it was nevertheless clear that such methods were inherently destabilising. As one brief noted, the realisation 'that there is no intention to hold Colony elections even thereafter or before merger is likely to precipitate a major crisis both on the Aden and the Parliamentary fronts'.[105] Sandys, the new Colonial Secretary, warned the Cabinet that 'if we carry this merger (against majority's wish in Aden) there will be trouble, locally.'[106] Nevertheless, instructions from London to Aden stressed,

---

[99] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Morgan to Simmonds, 29 June 1962
[100] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Morgan to Simmonds, 9 July 1962
[101] TNA, CO 1015/2390, Simmonds to Morgan, 3 July 1962
[102] Johnston, *The View from Steamer Point*, p. 67
[103] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 January 1962; Johnston to Maudling, 20 May 1962
[104] TNA, CO 1015/2390, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 August 1962
[105] TNA, CO 1015/2390, Aden: Talks on merger of Federation and Colony: Main brief for handling the talks, July 1962
[106] TNA, CAB 195/21/17, 1 August 1962

> the complete confidence … that in some form or other Union between Aden and the Federation satisfies the natural aspirations for greater unity among Arab peoples in these areas - no Arab can attack the principle of Arab unity, and therefore of this merger. … The true wishes of the Aden population are much more likely to be satisfactorily ascertained by an election held after a period during which the benefits or possible disadvantages of the union can be appreciated.[107]

The Aden merger was thus being directly undermined by a deliberate failure, informed by existing assumptions regarding the Adeni population and the seemingly inherent benefits of federation, to take into serious account the consequences of pursuing it by knowingly duplicitous means. This facilitated the deterioration of the situation in Aden after 1962.

The British responded to increased international attention by viewing it as propelled by the ATUC's increasingly disruptive protests and strikes in Aden. As the UK Parliament took greater interest in the situation in Aden, especially visits by Labour MPs Robert Edwards and George Thomson in June 1962, officials argued that such attention made it easier for the ATUC to 'exploit its industrial hold (particularly over mass of uninformed and unsophisticated Yemeni labour) for political purposes'.[108] During their visit, Edwards and Thomson addressed a demonstration in Aden and decried the 'persecution and injustice' they had seen in Aden, 'the legalised tyranny' of the IRO, and promised to oppose the merger in Parliament. They also met with Mohammad Aidrus; a particularly pertinent attack on the federal policy given that Aidrus had increasingly 'proved himself an effective spokesman… and a cunning political strategist' in opposing British designs in the Protectorate. British officials considered him to be 'a notorious rebel leader' and for Trevaskis he was a personal 'nemesis'.[109] The sense that Labour and the international trade union movement were dangerously undermining the planned merger was pervasive, as was a belief that the British press also contributed to this.[110] Bayoomi, the Rulers and British officials in Aden were deeply alarmed by this increased scrutiny, amplified after by-elections through 1962 indicated the Conservatives might soon be out of office, and

---

[107] TNA, CO 1015/2390, Morgan to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 16 August 1962; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Aden, 18 August 1962
[108] TNA, CO 1015/2389, Aden (Acting Governor) to S of S for the Colonies,
[109] TNA, CO 1015/2390, Meeting with Ministers of Federation of South Arabia at 4:30pm on Thursday, 19 July 1962: Brief for Colonial Office Ministers; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 82, 92
[110] Macleod, *The End of British Rule*, p. 100; TNA, CO 1015/2409, Formoy to Marsh, 18 September 1962; CO 1015/2390, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 August 1962

Bayoomi and the Rulers sought to press ahead 'as quickly as possible'.[111] Coinciding with this came a deterioration of the political situation in Aden. With the establishment of the People's Socialist Party (PSP) in August 1962, British fears of a more effective opposition, buoyed by international support, were seemingly confirmed.

The extent to which the leader of the PSP and ATUC, Abdullah al-Asnag, had previously struck a moderating influence within the ATUC is unclear. What is clear is that by August 1962, in the context of the confrontations between unions and the government before and after the IRO, the political space left after the suppression of the SAL and the announcement that no elections were to be held prior to merger, the ATUC's direction of travel was towards confrontation. As al-Asnag 'took his nationalist campaign on to the streets of Aden' the frustration, ferocity and violence of protests in Aden increased.[112] In response the British took a firm and intransigent stance.[113] Al-Asnag was pre-emptively arrested for conducting an illegal procession whilst preparations were made to deport a number of Yemeni 'troublemakers' in anticipation of a 'major clash' ahead of the vote for merger in the Legislative Council, the object being to 'demonstrate [the] extent of popular support in Aden for [merger], and also to convince [the] opposition that … [the] Government does not intend to let itself be defied.'[114] The British were set on a course of confrontation with opposition movements in Aden, and the dangers of doing so were readily apparent. In a prophetic dispatch, Johnston warned of the 'risk' that such groups, 'realising demonstrations and speeches are not going to prevent Legislative Council from approving London proposals, … may turn to methods of terrorism against Ministers and others.'[115] On the eve of the vote for the proposed merger plan, scheduled for 26 September 1962, the various discourses developed since 1958 had coalesced into the single purpose of merger and the means by which this was to be pursued: merger without recourse to consent; to isolate, marginalise, undermine, ignore or deflect criticism; and continue the escalating confrontation with opposition groups in Aden.

---

[111] TNA, CO 1015/2390, Adviser and British Agent WAP to Acting Governor, 29 June 1962; Meeting with Ministers of Federation of South Arabia at 4:30pm on Thursday, 19 July 1962: Brief for Colonial Office Ministers; Simmonds to Morgan, 3 July 1962

[112] Macleod, *The End of British Rule*, p. 102; Mawby, *British Policy*, pp. 48, 74, 77-80; Dennis Sammut, *End of Empire policies, and the politics of local elites: The British exit from South Arabia and the Gulf, 1951-1972,* (PhD thesis: St Peter's College, Oxford, 2014), pp. 170-185; Kostiner, *The Struggle for South Yemen,* pp. 109-116

[113] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston, 13 September 1962

[114] TNA, CO 1015/2390, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 August 1962; 24 August 1962; CO 1015/2391, 14 September 1962

[115] TNA, CO 1015/2390, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 August 1962

On 24 September, the Legislative Council began debating the merger plan, whilst the ATUC orchestrated a general strike and carried out what Johnston called a 'systematic campaign of intimidation including threats of death'. Tensions in Aden were at fever pitch. British troops had to support the Aden Police after riots broke out, tear-gas was fired, two demonstrators were killed, five were wounded and over one hundred were arrested. As the debate proceeded, it was clear that the end vote was going to be close. During discussions with Adeni ministers, Johnston recorded that '*all* Ministers except Bayoomi showed signs of wobble. Their thought was that in view of violent opposition … it would be wiser to postpone a vote.' Promising them extra protection, he nevertheless questioned whether 'they [will] have the courage to vote accordingly … Civic courage is not the Arabs' strong suit'.[116] On the 26 September, two votes were scheduled in the Legislative Council, which consisted of twenty-three members, sixteen of which were local members (twelve elected and four nominated) whilst the remaining seven (five *ex-officio* and two nominated) were British. The first was for an amendment resolution tabled by local elected member Saeed Hasson. Whereas Johnston recounted it as simply 'disagreeing with' the merger motion, the amendment represented the efforts of the Adeni elected opposition who, seeking to challenge the dominance of Bayoomi and mitigate the substance of nationalist attacks, endorsed the principle of unity but rejected the merger plans.[117] It called for the Legislative Council term to end in 1962 and the immediate creation of an elected National Assembly. The leader of the majority in the National Assembly would become Prime Minister, inheriting the powers of the Governor, and form a government to renegotiate unity with the Federation. The British would provide an annual grant of £3 million with an annual increase of £1 million until 'complete independence is obtained'. The vote on the amendment tallied sixteen rejecting and seven supporting. All seven British members voted against, the local nominated members were split two against two, whereas the elected local members voted seven against five to reject the amendment. By a hair's breadth of local members, the opposition amendment had failed. In protest, the seven dissenting members walked out of the chamber. Without hesitation, the second vote for the merger plans passed with approval from all the remaining members.[118]

---

[116] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25 September 1962
[117] Johnston, *The View from Steamer Point*, p. 123
[118] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 September 1962

Immediately after the merger vote Johnston reported that, whilst it was 'not as good as we had wished', it was '[i]n any case … perfectly legal and must now be accepted as final.' He outlined the situation, summing up the contortions of the merger policy.

> It will probably be said that the constitutional plan has been forced down the throat of the Adenese. I believe the contrary to be true. The majority of the Aden-born welcome the plan and understand its political and economic advantages for them. They are however neither very vocal nor very courageous, and their views do not reach the ears of visiting journalists or others. This week a determined attempt has been made to impose on them the views of a minority who dislike the constitutional plan for reasons which have nothing to do with Aden or its welfare. … What it amounts to is that the 3,000 or so (mainly Yemeni) supporters of the PSP who rioted on 24th September were trying by violence to determine the future destiny of 80,000 Adenese to say nothing of the 500,000 inhabitants of the Federation, who are intimately concerned with Aden's future. We can be thankful that these strong-arm methods were thwarted, and with so little bloodshed.

The battle with the PSP/ATUC over the merger vote may have been won, but he recognised the war was ongoing and that an escalation on the part of the British was required as 'the PSP does not yet feel that it has been decisively defeated in the streets. … we shall have to be rather rougher with the PSP if they decide to defy Government again'.[119] Johnston was preparing to press the conflict against local nationalists even further.

Containing the fallout

As the drama over merger unfolded, on 19 September the ailing Yemeni Imam died and was succeeded by his son Muhammad al-Badr. On the night of 26-27 September, an attempted republican coup, al-Badr's escape, and Yemen's subsequent descent into civil war brought about a radical shift in the dynamics of Britain's regional struggle with Arab nationalism. When news of the coup reached Aden before news of al-Badr's escape, it electrified the atmosphere in Aden. Noting that the situation had 'taken a turn for the worse', Johnston claimed that 'the Yemeni revolution has killed any prospect of reconciliation at present … and the Nationalist winds will begin to howl here.' Yet there was to be no change in the approach of British policy and its underlying rationale continued virtually unchanged, marked only by an intensification of its pursuit. Deportations would continue 'in full knowledge that these may precipitate a clash with the PSP which in turn

[119] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 September 1962

would require the declaration of a state of emergency'.[120] Two Adeni ministers, startled by the explosive news from Yemen, threatened to resign if merger was not postponed and all ministers except Bayoomi stressed 'that Colony opinion is now solidly against' the planned merger. But having served their purpose in the Legislative Council vote, such concerns went unheeded.[121] 'Of course we must go ahead with the merger,' Sandys declared, 'whether or not Adeni Ministers resign.'[122] Johnston and Trevaskis provided a fuller justification based on the logic of the merger. Whilst the situation was 'much more difficult', merger was 'more than ever necessary' to prevent Aden and the Protectorate being 'gobbled up … by the Yemeni Republic' and the base being threatened.[123] Somewhat understating the events of the summer of 1962, the disputes over merger were deemed only ever about its timing, whilst the Federation could now 'predominate over our enemies and that in the course of time it would gain the confidence of many who now oppose it.'[124] Yet morale amongst officials was of major concern as a result of 'adverse comments of the British press on the merger plan' and recognition of the dubious basis of merger, to the effect that 'some of them are asking themselves whether their job is worth going on with.'[125] But second thoughts over merger amongst officials, Trevaskis warned, was 'nothing short of disloyalty on the part of those who have a duty to further and not sabotage Her Majesty's Government's policy.'[126]

If there was to be a reconciliation the opportunity had long since passed. A week after the merger vote Sandys enquired as to the possibility of 'broadening [the] present Colony Government by inclusion of … those who voted for Hasson's amendment', but no initiative was forthcoming.[127] Neither was the opposition, the British, Bayoomi, and the Rulers predisposed to pursuing one. Tensions remained at such a height that Macmillan was concerned enough to enquire as to whether 'we have enough troops' in Aden to deal with any escalation.[128] By November, Johnston recognised that 'we must be prepared for continued resistance' to merger and had, after an ATUC-led general strike on the 19 November failed to shut down all commerce in Aden, 'no intention whatever' of allowing

[120] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 September 1962
[121] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 October 1962
[122] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston, 9 October 1962
[123] TNA, CO 1015/2393, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 October 1962
[124] Middle East Centre Archive, St. Anthony's College, Oxford (hereafter MECA), Richard Holmes Papers, 1/2, Johnston to Holmes, 25 November 1962
[125] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 November 1962
[126] BL, IOR/R/20/C/2098, Trevaskis to SAAs and AA, 12 November 1962
[127] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston, 4 October 1962
[128] TNA, PREM 11/4678, Macmillan to Bligh, 18 November 1962

nationalists to regain the initiative.[129] As for the Adeni ministers, the local consequences of the resignation of 'all Colony Ministers except Bayoomi' was 'accepted' and 'wearable' to the continuation of the merger, and efforts to 'stiffen' Adeni ministers, reduce the risk of resignations, and stop them 'corrupting each other' amounted to removing them from the 'emotional pull' of the situation in Aden.[130] Joshi was sent on a month-long meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Nigeria, A.S. Basendwah, Minister of Health, was sent to represent Aden at the Ugandan independence celebrations, whilst H.S. Husseiny, Minister for Education and Information, was sent to London for 'protracted talks about television'. Johnston was sorry 'for unloading Husseiny' onto Sandys and advised that if 'he persists in his intention to resign, I suggest that he be advised to have a good long rest … and that visits to Oxford, Stratford, Edinburgh, etc. be arranged for him.'[131] Husseiny nevertheless persisted, asking Sandys to shelve the merger for one year and bring about the formation of a National Government on a revised franchise. When this was dismissed, he resigned, only for Johnston to refuse it, misleadingly explaining that 'you are out of touch with conditions here which have greatly changed during your absence. Let us talk things over after you return and meanwhile avoid any hasty decisions or statements to the press.'[132]

The Federal Rulers, on the other hand, were greatly startled by the events of September 1962, begrudging the 'disgraceful riots' that took place in Aden and al-Asnag's release from prison after his pre-emptive arrest. Having 'lost all our confidence in the Aden Government', they demanded the British destroy the PSP and the ATUC and that if not the Rulers would 'be forced to take necessary action to protect ourselves and our future.'[133] Taking their demands further, they initially called for immediate independence only for Trevaskis to 'persuade them to abandon it'. Instead, they demanded that the advisory clauses of the federal treaty be annulled, Aden cease to be a colony, and that independence be achieved within 5 years of merger, as well as a new treaty on independence that gave use of military bases modelled on Cyprus in return for financial aid, political and professional advisory services, and a defence treaty. The British recognised all of these were

[129] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 November 1962; 22 November 1962
[130] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8 October 1962
[131] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 October 1962
[132] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston, 15 October 1962; Husseiny to Sandys, 15 October 1962; Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 November 1962
[133] TNA, CO 1015/2391, Chairman, Federal Supreme Council to Governor (Aden), 18 October 1962

incompatible with the agreed terms of merger.[134] Disturbed by these new demands, Sandys took an uncompromising line; 'We must either proceed on the lines agreed, or we must call it all off.'[135] The federal Rulers, fearing a rupture with the British, quickly dropped their demands.[136] The substance of their second thoughts over merger was centred on alleviating the Federation from the charge that they were 'not subject to British control and to safeguard themselves against interference by an unsympathetic Labour Government'.[137] It was, in essence, a concern derived from the principles under which the Federation and the merger had been pursued, not necessarily just the threat from a republican Yemen.

Conclusion

It is beyond doubt that the outbreak of the Yemeni civil war had a significant impact on the situation in South Arabia, but this does not mean the Aden merger and the Federation were inherently viable. The rationalisations and personal continuities within the British administration helped to cement a vision for South Arabia's future that placed the federal idea at the centre of policy deliberations. Because of this, the duplicitous means by which the Aden merger was to be achieved were the product of intellectual contortions forced by Britain's commitment to the federal idea. The inherent tensions over merger were recognised by various contemporaries but untangling them would have undermined the basis of British policy as pursued since 1958. Without a sincere interrogation of the consequences of pursing merger without consent and without a revaluation of merger after the Legislative Council vote, the trajectory of the end of empire in South Arabia continued further down a path fraught with dangers. Though the Yemeni revolution elevated Aden's importance to the broader conflict between British imperialism and Arab nationalism, the British response of increased investment in and commitment to the existing policy of federation built upon an already precarious and increasingly unviable position. As chapter four will show, this posed considerable problems as Britain moved to grant the Federation independence.

[134] TNA, CO 1015/2393, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 November 1962
[135] TNA, CO 1015/2393, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston, 5 November 1962
[136] TNA, CO 1015/2393, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6 November 1962
[137] TNA, CO 1015/2393, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 November 1962

Chapter 4 'I fear the skids are in position': The federal idea, independence, and the Conservative inheritance, 1963-1964

After merger, the next stated goal was to prepare the Federation for independence. The broader Middle Eastern policy of maintaining British influence and the retention of sovereignty in Aden to facilitate this, however, meant that the immediacy of this goal proved difficult for the Conservative government to countenance. Though the offer of independence to the Federation in June 1964 marked a major shift from the long-standing policy as established by Lord Lloyd in 1956, there is relatively little written about the nature of this shift. Mawby argues that the eventual reversal is 'best [seen] … as the final consequence of slow incremental changes in the thinking of ministers', influenced by the 'deterioration of the security situation' and the increased cooperation with key federal Rulers in combatting republican forces in Yemen that 'weighed in the balance as evidence that they would continue to act as trustees of British influence.'[1] But there remains a difficulty in establishing a link between these factors and a positive affirmation of the policy of independence and the ideas that underpinned it given, as Holt points out, 'this had not been the preferred outcome'.[2] Peterson accurately notes 'the curious ambivalence' of the Conservative government's South Arabian policy between its willingness to remain in the Middle East with the use of force and the 'serious deficiencies in British policy' that were exposed as a result, but arguably overemphasises the extent to which Alec Douglas-Home (Prime Minister from October 1963) therefore initiated a fresh plan for political and economic development to address this problem.[3]

This chapter will argue that the decision to offer the Federation independence arrived as a late, sudden, and negative conclusion rather than an incremental realisation or calculation. Utilising the Federation to address the deteriorating security situation and continued subversion in Yemen, rather than causing the decision to offer the Federation

---

[1] Spencer Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67: Last outpost of a Middle East Empire*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p. 98
[2] Andrew Holt, *The Foreign Policy of the Douglas-Home Government: Britain the United States and the End of Empire*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 102
[3] Tore T Petersen, 'Waiting for Labour: Alec Douglas-Home, Lyndon Johnson and the Challenge of South West Arabia, 1963-64', in Noel Brehony & Clive Jones (eds), *Britain's Departure from Aden and South Arabia*, (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2020), pp. 133-151

independence, was understood as distinct to the policy of giving independence. Though Douglas-Home took a heightened interest in the region, being focused on counter-subversion in Yemen, cross-border raids, and the security situation in South Arabia, there was no contrasting policy initiative to address the dilemmas of maintaining Britain's presence in South Arabia, managing increased anti-colonial pressure, and curating a stable pathway to independence. Central to his deliberations was the increased international attention British policy received, but this was regarded as an obstacle to considering independence as an option given it risked being perceived as a retreat from Britain's global role. Domestic political concerns also played a role in encouraging inaction, and Douglas-Home preferred to forestall a significant policy initiative until after the October 1964 election to avoid attracting controversy. When independence was offered, it was not clear to him that Britain's position in Aden would immediately change, and though it was recognised that British sovereignty would come to an end the details of how and when this was to be achieved were left uninterrogated.

In this policy vacuum, space was created for peripheral figures to direct the federal idea and independence as the only available course of policy. Immediately after merger, official commitment to the federal idea's place within British policy was firmly entrenched, but Aden's inauguration into the Federation in January 1963 was to be the federal idea's high-water mark. Officials were confident that the superficial calm in Aden afforded Britain the opportunity to cement merger and secure Britain's interests, but through 1963 the logic of British policy was increasingly recognised as inherently problematic.[4] By July 1963, despite valedictory congratulations from the Colonial Office, the end of Johnston's tenure as High Commissioner came amid a crisis of confidence in the policy Britain had pursued since the founding of the Federation.[5] The appointment of Trevaskis as High Commissioner to succeed Johnston was thus crucial in maintaining the federal idea's momentum and shaping the direction of British policy in South Arabia. His commitment to the federal idea, in the context of increasingly limited alternatives, maintained its position within policy discourse despite substantial misgivings and opposition from local and British figures. The increased reliance on the federal idea as the basis of British policy tightened the knot of

[4] TNA, CO 1055/128, Extract from Minute by Morgan, 8 January 1963; Draft note by Secretary of State for the Colonies: Aden, 4 February 1963; Colonial Office Memorandum: Aden: Future Policy, 17 May 1963; Note by the Secretary of State: Aden: Base Areas, 27 March 1963; CO 1055/111, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 March 1963

[5] KCL, LHMA, Charles Johnston Papers, 1/1/8, Colonial Office to High Commissioner, Aden, 16 July 1963; Martin to Johnston, 27 July 1963

contradictions at the heart of the federal project between Aden and the Protectorate, its increasingly unworkable constitutional framework, and an offer of independence intended to maintain British imperial control. This fractious entanglement would be inherited by the Labour Government elected in October 1964.

The dream falters

Despite the turbulence of the merger, the acceleration of decolonisation, and the strains of maintaining a global role, imperialist instincts remained a potent force within British thinking into 1963. Though Johnston's literary flourish was a welcome feature of his reports, his valedictory dispatch to London resonated beyond an entertaining read and articulated what he believed to be the basic truths behind Britain's imperial and global role. The British, he wrote, 'have been an extrovert people since the reign of the first Elizabeth' imbued with 'an adventurous swashbuckingly strain' that if not sustained would lead to Britain 'becoming a very dull place – a sort of poor man's Sweden.' Britain's position in South Arabia would need to be maintained. British expansion into the Protectorates had been 'an extraordinary, little-publicised achievement of high-minded European imperialism' that challenged the 'historical determinism' of viewing Nasser and Arab nationalism as the 'wave of the future'. Federation's recent failures elsewhere in the empire, he argued, proved 'nothing whatever in respect of British Arabia' because, unlike Africans and West Indians, Arabs 'really care about unity. They are like the Germans before Bismarck'. If the Arabs could be pushed towards unity 'the results may be lasting. If there is a strong Arab leader who can give the necessary push, so much the better. If not, a push from a strong foreign hand is much better than no push at all.' Local opposition against federation was inconsequential because of the 'illogicality … volatility, civic cowardice and sheer contrariness in the Arab character' which, if allowed to vent by way of free elections, would lead to 'the triumph of irrational and incapable extremists devoted to a policy directly opposed to the interests of the country.' However, without irony, he noted that the 'underlying theory… that we know better than the Arabs what is really good for them… strikes me as inverted imperialism of the worst type.' There were still obstacles to moving the Federation to independence such as the abundance of rifles as one of 'certain poisons introduced into Arabia by the West', the need to develop South Arabia's economy, and the post-independence threat of an officer coup but, he argued, Britain should not be deterred

from carving out a future befitting of Britain's imperial vision for and interests in South Arabia.[6]

Coming seven years after the Suez Crisis and three years after Harold Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' speech, the near universal acclaim Johnston's dispatch received is illustrative of the British desire to continue to shape the future of a colonial territory. Macmillan noted it was 'a brilliant document which deserves to be acted upon' and Douglas-Home, then Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, was 'particularly struck' by Johnston's 'poor-man's Sweden' remark, regarding it as 'profoundly true in all sorts of ways.'[7] Nevertheless, the enthusiastic response to Johnston's report masked a deeper crisis of confidence in the federal idea and British imperialism. Efforts to save the Central African Federation faltered over the summer of 1963 and it was formally dissolved later that year, instability in Cyprus undermined the British base there, the Indonesia-Malaysia 'Confrontation' risked an open-ended strain on British resources, and Whitehall debates about future defence policy highlighted the tension between maintaining Britain's global role and the need to find economies to achieve this.[8] Within the context of the perceived precarity of the British position in the Middle East the widely enthusiastic response to Johnston's memorandum, grasping for an emotive justification for Britain's imperial role, serves as a crucial reference point for examining the direction of British South Arabian policy after merger. Maintaining Britain's global and imperial role, senior figures believed, was dependent on sustaining Britain's seemingly inherent willingness to do so.

The main risk to South Arabia's part in these ambitions were elections in Aden. Though scheduled for October 1963, as it became 'clear' that the 'unacceptable risk' of a nationalist victory was likely officials moved to delay the election for at least another year.[9] Should this not be possible it was suggested that Britain would give the nationalists 'a run for their money' and negotiate to see whether a 'reasonable *modus vivendi*' could be achieved. If not, the constitution would be suspended and Britain would 'gain valuable time, which', the Colonial Office noted, had 'always been our main object'.[10] The ease with which the British

---

[6] TNA, CO 1055/167, Johnston to Sandys, 16 July 1963
[7] TNA, CO 1055/167, Macmillan to Foreign Secretary, 2 September 1963; Home to Prime Minister, 20 September 1963
[8] Saki Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 36-42; Jeffrey Pickering, *Britain's Withdrawal from East of Suez: The Politics of Retrenchment,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998), pp. 129-135
[9] TNA, CO 1055/111, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 February 1963, 9 March 1963; CO 1055/128; Milton to Roberts, 23 May 1963
[10] TNA, CO 1055/128, Note by Formoy: Discussion with Sir Charles Johnston, 25 April 1963

considered such measures demonstrates the extent to which British policy would not entertain alternative contingencies for Aden's future that loosened British agency and control.[11] Doing so could remain a fixture of British thinking through 1963 so long as pro-British figures in Aden and the Federation remained as a crutch to the British presence, despite the anticipated problems this would cause. Colonial Office officials argued that achieving Britain's policy aims in Aden would be dependent on Bayoomi maintaining his position 'at all costs… [and] avoid risk of his defeat in elections for a period of several years.'[12] By supporting Bayoomi and the Federation, the main determinant to Britain's position in South Arabia would be, as one official put it in March 1963, Britain's 'manifest determination to stay for as long as we find it necessary' because

> the Federation is so dependent upon us … for its very existence… that there is no real prospect of its attaining a fully independent position for years to come, if indeed ever. If the Federal Rulers and Bayoomi are in fact British puppets, as they are so often described in hostile propaganda, and as they are in truth, we ought to be able to see that they toe the British line.[13]

The confidence with which British officials could envisage a federal future for South Arabia stemmed from the belief in Britain's ability to continue to exercise its imperial control through the collaborative position curated through merger.

After the merger controversy, the prevailing calm in Aden instilled official confidence in British policy. But from March 1963 the reliance on Bayoomi as the lynchpin of the federal policy in Aden proved increasingly precarious. Bayoomi took an increasingly firm line by highlighting his vulnerability in the face of 'intimidation and threats' for seeing through the merger. British sovereignty in Aden, he believed, was increasingly an obstacle to the Aden government being able to 'exert its authority', win over local support, and 'neutralise the influence of Al Asnag and other TUC leaders'. Bayoomi began to press for Britain to grant Aden independence within the Federation 'at a very early stage', whilst the continued British use of the base would be guaranteed through a treaty.[14] Furthermore, Bayoomi became increasingly critical about the structure of a Federation which 'could not continue' and he proposed having a Head of State or 'more permanent' Chair of the Federal Supreme

---

[11] TNA, CO 1055/111, Acting High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 May 1963; CO 1055/128, Milton to Roberts, 23 May 1963
[12] TNA, CO 1055/111, Minute by Doble, 12 March 1963; Minute by Eastwood, 15 March 1963; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston, 9 April 1963; Gilmore to Roberts, 27 April 1963
[13] TNA, CO 1055/128, Formoy to Roberts, 29 March 1963
[14] TNA, CO 1055/128, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 7 March 1963

Council.[15] As the Colonial Office digested these ideas, Bayoomi's sudden declining health rattled British officials. Having steered Aden through merger and being on relatively good terms with the Rulers, officials found forecasting 'with any certainty' how British policy would fare without Bayoomi was 'not possible'.[16] In an effort to detach him from his central role in British policy, Johnston highlighted the need to 'come to terms with Arab nationalism', but faltered in recognising the continued importance of 'assisting the Adenese nationalism of Bayoomi and his friends in order to undercut the Pan-Arab appeal of the PSP/ATUC leaders'.[17] With Bayoomi's death on 24 June 1963, the federal project suffered a considerable blow.[18] Johnston was rattled enough to immediately appoint Zayn Baharoon, a relatively unknown figure in London, without consulting the Colonial Office and to Sandys' consternation.[19] Johnston's retrospective selling of Baharoon to the Colonial Office noted his apparent transformation from 'a rather colourless, opportunistic businessman' into a figure of 'courage, principles, and a quite surprising capacity for leadership'. Whilst Bayoomi was 'the right man for the stormy days of the merger', Baharoon was 'better suited… [for] seeking industrial and political reconciliation on the basis of merger as an accepted fact.'[20] Baharoon, recognising the lingering controversy over merger and the risk this posed to stability in Aden, sought to reach an accommodation with the PSP. After difficult negotiations, Baharoon sought to achieve a cross-party solution to the Aden franchise problem by forming a local commission, with representation from the PSP, that would make recommendations as to the best way forward. But he was also aware that he needed to mitigate nationalist attacks on his own position by seeking reforms to the Federation and the idiosyncrasies of the 'present "Colonial set up"' to avoid federal dominance over Aden.[21]

Because of this, London was sceptical about Baharoon's capacity as a collaborator. Though the Colonial Office took solace from their impression of him apparently being 'in less of a hurry than Bayoomi to achieve any of the more advanced forms of constitutional status in

[15] TNA, CO 1055/129, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 June 1963; Formoy to Pearce, 12 June 1963
[16] TNA, CO 1055/128, Colonial Office Note: Aden Government Majority, April 1963
[17] TNA, CO 1055/111, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 April 1963
[18] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 94; TNA, CO 1055/111, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 June 1963
[19] TNA, CO 1055/111, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston, 2 July 1963
[20] TNA, CO 1055/129, Johnston to Roberts, 10 July 1963
[21] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/7, 26 May 1963; TNA, CO 1055/129, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 August 1963

Aden' they were wary of his 'more conciliatory' approach to the ATUC and PSP.[22] Despite his best efforts to paint a more hopeful picture, Johnston now believed that elections in Aden would need to be 'postponed indefinitely' because of the 'unlikely' chances of Baharoon being able to secure a pro-British majority. The Colonial Office's immediate response to Bayoomi's death recognised the need for a policy review, but there were few concessions 'of real substance' the British were willing to consider that could mitigate the situation.[23] Some reassurance came from intelligence that the SAL had fallen out of favour with the Egyptians, being superseded as 'their instrument' by the PSP and ATUC. Officials in the Colonial Office eagerly pontificated but did not pursue the 'substantial advantage to be gained by permitting - or indeed encouraging - the revival of the League along the right lines' so as to provide an opposition that 'could offer some hope of a reasonable alternative Government to that of Bayoomi.'[24] Given the impact it would have on relations with the Rulers, officials in Aden were sceptical, although the scramble for alternative but equally reliable collaborative local figures to continue the federal policy indicates the fragility of the British position after Bayoomi's death.

The federal Rulers were also increasingly aware of the fragility of their position. Firstly, in the context of the declining popularity of the Conservative government through the early 1960s, the Rulers became more urgently concerned as to what a Labour government would mean for their position.[25] Secondly, with the loss of Bayoomi and increased electoral prospects of the PSP, the federal Rulers increasingly viewed British sovereignty in Aden as 'an obstacle to their countering the PSP'.[26] Thirdly, they realised that merger and the expansion of the Federation exposed severe weaknesses in the Federation's working, efficiency and reputation. Radical changes would be needed to make the Federation less dependent on 'the good offices of Sir Kennedy Trevaskis' and less constrained by the 'whip of the Advisory Clause' in the treaty between Britain and the Federation which created 'a most unfavourable impression' that the Federation was 'completely subjected to British

---

[22] TNA, CO 1055/129, Note by Aden Department: Aden: Future Policy, 22 July 1963; Fisher to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 July 1963
[23] TNA, CO 1055/111, Note on a meeting held in Mr Fisher's room on 23rd July 1963; CO 1055/129, Note by Aden Department: Aden: Future Policy, 27 June 1963
[24] TNA, CO 1055/129, Eastwood to Johnston, 20 June 1963
[25] TNA, CO 1055/111, Johnston to Roberts, 28 March 1963; CO 1015/2390, Adviser and British Agent WAP to Acting Governor, 29 June 1962; KCL, LHMA, Charles Johnston Papers, 2/26, Clipping: *Hansard*, HC Deb 20 December 1962, vol 669:3, cols 1604-1605; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 92; Holt, *The Foreign Policy of the Douglas-Home Government,* p. 88
[26] TNA, CO 1055/111, Acting High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 May 1963; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 94-95

dictation'. Spearheaded by the Fadhli Sultan and Mohamad Farid, the federal Rulers demanded that the clause be removed, Aden be made a Protectorate, federal offices in London and at the UN be created, and for federal officers to be attached to British embassies to promote the Federation in the international sphere.[27] Above all, however, the federal Rulers became increasingly vocal in declaring independence as a central objective. Whereas British policy centred on access to the Aden base until at least 1970, the Federal Supreme Council were by May 1963 making 'almost daily… pledges to work for the earliest possible independence'.[28] Though the stated goal of the federal policy, the recent prioritisation of the Federation's prospective independence was not warmly welcomed. Colonial Office officials were 'doubtful' as to 'whether it is really wise of [the Federation] to ask for this or for us to agree it', and nor should Britain 'volunteer' a fixed timetable or specific date for independence.[29] Instead, officials took solace in reported divisions between the Rulers over independence and doubted the sincerity of their demands. Sandys questioned whether the Federation's demands could simply be bought off or delayed with an increase in economic aid, whilst Sharif Hussein of Beihan's repeated enquires as to whether his state might retain its advisory and protection treaties after independence, though impractical, were amplified in British circles as indicative of a lack of serious determination on the part of the Rulers to press for early independence.[30]

In the context of this crisis of confidence in the federal project, Trevaskis' appointment as High Commissioner came at a crucial moment, giving renewed impetus to the federal project. No longer hindered by a superior in Aden, he believed the appointment afforded him 'more hope of pressing my views' on London and the chance to finish 'the job I had started when I first put pen to paper about federation.'[31] His appointment cemented a vision for South Arabia's future that was increasingly recognised as tenuous, but placing the personification of the federal project into a position of authority compelled no further interrogation of the viability of, or changes to, the Federation. Though Douglas-Home and the Colonial Office resisted giving independence to the Federation along the lines Trevaskis envisaged, this depended upon either the maintenance of the status-quo in Aden or

---

[27] TNA, CO 1055/129, Note of a meeting between Mr Nigel Fisher and the Amir of Beihan in the Colonial Office on 29 August 1963; Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 June 1963
[28] TNA, CO 1055/128, Acting High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 May 1963; OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/7, 14 May 1963 - 5 June 1963
[29] TNA, CO 1055/129, Fisher to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 July 1963
[30] TNA, CO 1055/128, Note by the Secretary of State: Aden: Base Areas, 27 March 1963; CO 1055/129, Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 June 1963; CO 1055/128, Acting High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 May 1963
[31] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* p. 193; Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* p. 295

resurrecting the sovereign base area idea. Both had long been regarded as either implausible or impractical. As such, British thinking did not have the necessary latitude to approach the dilemmas of independence without recourse to the federal idea. The precarity of Britain's international position, looming UK general election, and the increase in violence in Aden through the course of 1963, starting in January when a bomb exploded inside RAF Khormaksar, furthered the fixation on a federal vision for South Arabia's future that would be inherited by the Wilson government after 1964.

A loss of nerve?

Though Trevaskis' appointment was critical in sustaining the momentum of the federal policy, there was no immediate impetus for the British government to grant the Federation independence and give up sovereignty over Aden. From August 1963 Trevaskis repeatedly argued that Aden's status as a colony should end so that British interests there could be managed via a protection treaty. Should those interests be threatened, the High Commissioner could issue advice to the Federation to impose emergency regulations because such measures, he argued, 'if taken by Arabs against Arabs would appear less objectionable than if taken by a British Colonial power against Arabs.' Elections in Aden on a revised franchise would only be held after granting Aden 'independence within the Federation' to ensure Britain could 'negotiate with an amenable lot of Aden Ministers' in the meantime rather than face a likely nationalist-dominated government should elections be held immediately. Against the criticism that such a move would be anti-democratic, a provision that Aden could 'under certain circumstances' withdraw from the Federation after six years could be added to the constitution but on a broader point he claimed

> No one could seriously argue that any substantial element of the population would, whatever private feelings on the subject might be, demand the continuance of the present Colonial regime in Aden. Accordingly, it can be accepted that there is no need to consult the people as to the ending of the Colonial regimes.

Independence for the Federation would be set for 1969 because the Rulers felt it was the 'remotest date … that they can decently suggest … to escape the criticism that they have sold themselves to us indefinitely … Indeed they are generally apprehensive of independence and would certainly not want it without a treaty granting them every kind of safeguard.' Such 'an "independent" Federation' would facilitate British interests in Aden 'through the agency of the Federation'. Nevertheless, preparations would need to begin in

earnest to reinforce and legitimise the Federation against the prospect of a republican victory in Yemen and more targeted criticism by the UN.[32]

In his memoirs, Trevaskis paints his efforts to persuade the Colonial Office to follow his recommendations as an arduous slog to overcome their insistence on the 'flimsy straw of British sovereignty' in Aden and attacked their preferred 'Singapore solution' of Aden becoming a self-governing British territory as the 'colonial solution to our problem.' After Sandys was persuaded to adopt Trevaskis' plan, and the Colonial Office officials' 'resistance' collapsed, sovereignty in Aden was to be ceded and preparations made for a constitutional conference in December 1963 to negotiate independence. The Federation 'had been assured of independence', but a grenade attack at Aden airport on 10 December 1963 that targeted Trevaskis and the federal delegation heading to London and subsequent declaration of emergency caused the British Government to have 'grave doubts as to the wisdom of surrendering British sovereignty in Aden' and that his proposals had 'fallen away' in 'a right-about-turn because of one bomb.'[33] The federal idea, Trevaskis believed, was robbed by the loss of nerve from 'the old women in London.'[34]

The situation through 1963-64 was not, however, as clear cut. Though Douglas-Home and others were concerned not to approve new, far reaching proposals considering 'the new circumstances created by the bomb incident', more fundamental issues affecting British policy had surfaced prior to 10 December.[35] The working assumption was that should an election be held the nationalists would make considerable gains, and Trevaskis reaffirmed this in September 1963 by predicting that the PSP would likely win up to 70% of seats.[36] The situation turned even more precarious when the long awaited recommendations of a cross-party franchise commission were published at the end of October. The measures were 'even more sweeping and controversial' than anticipated, giving the vote to Aden-born Arabs, Arabic speakers, Arabs resident in Aden for 20 years, and to women. Though they did not enfranchise much of the Yemeni population in Aden, the effect of these

[32] TNA, CO 1055/129, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 August 1963, 28 August 1963; Trevaskis to Eastwood, 17 September 1963: A note on constitutional advance in the Federation and Aden by Trevaskis; CO 1055/130, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 October 1963
[33] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* pp. 194-201
[34] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/7, 13 December 1963
[35] TNA, CO 1055/130, Secretary of State for the Colonies to MacDonald, 11 December 1963; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Nairobi [Fisher to Secretary of State], 11 December 1963
[36] TNA, CO 1055/129, Trevaskis to Eastwood, 17 September 1963: A note on constitutional advance in the Federation and Aden by Trevaskis

recommendations would have excluded the generally pro-British but smaller European, Indian and other minority populations whilst bolstering groups likely to support the PSP.[37] Trevaskis and Sandys immediately considered rejecting the commissions' recommendations and moved towards having an election on the existing franchise, securing Adeni moderates and undermining nationalists through financial inducements, phone-tapping, and clamping down on protests held for 'political reasons' so as to maintain the direction of British policy. To rationalise the situation, Trevaskis predicted that rejecting the commission's recommendations and holding elections on the existing franchise would trigger a boycott by the PSP, leading to them winning only six or seven out of sixteen Legislative Council seats. But the Colonial Office were taken aback by the sudden reversal of the apparent danger posed by nationalists and asked for evidence so that they could be 'completely confident' a moderate, pro-British government could be formed and justify a 'major policy decision.'[38] Officials went as far as to contact Johnston to ask for an urgent clarification of the 'apparent discrepancy of view', and enquired as to what basis moderates' and PSP's electoral fortunes had been assessed. Johnston's reply that Bayoomi's views on the matter had been 'purely a "hunch"' may have raised eyebrows in Whitehall.[39] Nevertheless, the apparent urgency of the situation created by the commission's recommendations left the Colonial Office with little option but to run the risk of pursuing the policy Trevaskis pressed for.[40] Given that Baharoon had staked much of his political capital on cooperating with Adeni nationalists to produce the recommendations, their rejection and resultant condemnation of Baharoon by his colleagues in the United National Party for appeasing the nationalists whilst ostracizing the PSP and the SAL left him isolated. Baharoon's position was saved only by a sudden rapprochement with the federal Rulers who sensed that should he be removed as Chief Minister they would be left with no allies in Aden.[41] There was thus little to guarantee that the franchise could be framed in such a way to ensure a pro-British result, and the British would instead rely on underhand tactics to bolster Baharoon and undermine the PSP. The retreat to holding elections on a franchise the British had long considered inadequate further demonstrates how limited British policy

[37] TNA, CO 1055/130, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 October 1964; Mawby, *British Policy*, pp. 94-95
[38] TNA, CO 1055/130, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis, 25 October 1963
[39] TNA, CO 1055/130, Roberts to Johnston, 18 October 1963
[40] TNA, CO 1055/130, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 October 1963; Roberts to Formoy, 21 October 1963
[41] TNA, CO 1055/130, Note: Paper for consideration, arising from meeting on Wednesday, 13th November 1963; Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 November 1963

options were becoming, pushing British policy further along exclusionary lines that helped exacerbate the increasingly violent turn of events in Aden from 1963.[42]

There was also the problem of how British use of the Aden base could be protected after independence, and the fallout from the Aden merger had led some officials to doubt whether the Federation could ensure this. One contingency resurrected through the first half of 1963 was the idea of establishing a sovereign base area (SBA) in Aden where British sovereignty might shield British interests.[43] Given the looming prospect of independence, Sandys believed that it would be far better to establish such areas 'at the first suitable opportunity' whilst Britain still had control in Aden, rather than during independence negotiations.[44] Though Trevaskis had sought to relinquish British sovereignty in Aden and protect the base by way of a treaty with the Federation, as High Commissioner he initially pursued the SBA idea as a compromise, going as far as to force the Rulers to drop their insistence on a treaty.[45] However, a visit to Aden by the Defence Secretary Peter Thorneycroft marked a turning point in negotiations between Trevaskis and London. During his October 1963 visit, Trevaskis was surprised to hear that Thorneycroft's 'strong preference' was to secure the base by treaty rather than by establishing a SBA.[46] Frustrated at having to *volte-face* in front of the Rulers because he believed that HMG 'would insist' on the matter, the revelation changed the tack he would take in negotiations with London.[47] Rather than negotiating through Sandys, he recognised the utility of exploring alternative routes to influence British policy and that, given divisions at Cabinet level, there was little point to compromising on his policy positions. In pursuit of the vindication he felt his ideas ought to receive, Trevaskis returned to London in the autumn of 1963 for negotiations at the Colonial Office.

The significance of these negotiations was considerably less than Trevaskis later presented them. At the time, both the Colonial Office and Trevaskis downplayed any prospect of considering independence at the planned December conference. Sandys rejected a proposal by Nigel Fisher, then a junior minister, to discuss the issue formally, and neither would the base be discussed; the focus would only be on the franchise issue and constitutional

---

[42] TNA, CO 1055/130, Trevaskis to Eastwood, 25 November 1963; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 99-100
[43] TNA, CO 1055/128, Formoy to Roberts, 29 March 1963; CO 1055/129, Eastwood to Milton, 22 August 1963; Minute by Formoy, 16 September 1963
[44] TNA, CO 1055/128, Colonial Office Memorandum: Aden: Future Policy, 17 May 1963; CO 1055/129, Minute by Formoy, 16 September 1963
[45] TNA, CO 1055/129, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 August 1963
[46] TNA, CO 1055/130, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 October 1963
[47] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/7, 22 October 1963

advance in Aden. Sandys pre-emptively warned Trevaskis, that 'there will not be a great deal to discuss' and that 'it would be unwise at this stage to give the impression that the talks are unduly important.'[48] Though Sandys presented to Cabinet the plan to have a second conference in January 1964, whereby the Federation would be informed that the British were willing to end their treaty relationship at 12 months' notice from the Federation, such a manoeuvre was included on the basis that no such notice would arise in the near future. The Colonial Office were pleased to hear that any request by the Federal Supreme Council to kick start a move toward independence would have to be achieved by a unanimous vote, leaving the option open for a single Ruler to hold up any imminent move towards independence whilst lip service could be paid to the technical possibility of achieving independence in 1965.[49] The further expansion of a number of WAP states into the Federation since 1959, with each receiving a seat on the Supreme Council, meant it could be relied upon as a stop-gap against sudden demands for independence from the Rulers. Sandys believed HMG 'need not fear [the Rulers] will be unco-operative for as long as it suits'.[50] Sandys could present to Cabinet a plan that would see the Federation having independence 'as soon as they wish' whilst confidently predicting that British 'influence therefore would remain [and] the Federation would acquire a more respectable international status which should relieve both us and them of much of the present hostile criticism in the United Nations and elsewhere.'[51] In short, there was no breakthrough in setting a pathway to independence prior to the outbreak of the Aden Emergency in December 1963.

Neither was there a breakthrough in Douglas-Home's thinking on South Arabian policy, and he did not appreciate the subtleties of Sandys' and Trevaskis' plan and the offer of independence to the Federation was firmly rejected by the Cabinet Defence and Overseas Policy Committee. Though undoubtedly influenced by the airport attack, Douglas-Home and his advisers already had doubts about whether the Rulers could be trusted with the Federation's internal security, whether moderates in Aden would be strengthened, how the 'substance' of Britain's position in Aden would be maintained, and whether international

---

[48] TNA, CO 1055/130, Sandys to Fisher, 1 December 1963; Milton to Pearce, 2 December 1963; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis, 3 December 1963, 5 December 1963
[49] TNA, CO 1055/130, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 November 1963; CO 1055/129, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis, 11 October 1963
[50] TNA, CAB 21/4987, Sandys to Prime Minister, 9 October 1963: Note on Sir Charles Johnston's valedictory despatch
[51] TNA, CO 1055/130, Cabinet Defence and Oversea Policy Committee: Future of the Federation of South Arabia including Aden: Draft Memorandum by the Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary, December 1963

opinion would interpret 'this subtle constitutional manoeuvring as a typical neo-colonialist trick'.[52] Douglas-Home overlooked the subtext of Sandys' plan and feared that even a cursory reference to independence might increase pressure to grant it 'sooner than we would wish to give it'.[53] Douglas-Home's decision to hold firm in light of the airport attack, having 'interpreted events [in Aden] in the context of Britain's wider conflict with Arab nationalism in the Middle East', was made so as not to 'be seen to be making concession[s] to nationalism' despite the draft policy's intention being the opposite.[54] Of equal importance in his mind, however, was increased pressure from the UN. General Assembly Resolution 1949, passed on 11 December 1963, censured the UK Government's lack of cooperation with the Sub-Committee on Aden's investigations into the implementation of the 1960 UN Resolution 1514 - the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples - and called for the early removal of the British base in Aden, UN-supervised elections, the ending of the state of emergency, and the release of all political prisoners. Though regarded with suspicion by officials in Aden, for Douglas-Home the scrutiny of the international community exposed the dilemma in South Arabian policy that was safer not to interrogate, namely how to find a way to hold on to British interests in Aden whilst managing British prestige on the international scene. When Sandys proposed giving the Federation powers over internal security in Aden, Cabinet Secretary Sir Burke Trend prompted Douglas-Home to consider whether the proposals were sufficient for Britain to retain 'effective power to defend our own interests in Aden', also questioning whether the proposals were 'sufficiently "progressive" … to be defensible to world opinion' whilst still leaving Britain vulnerable to criticism should the Federation take repressive action in Aden.[55] Untying this knot became increasingly difficult through 1964, and no alternative solution to the problem emerged from Douglas-Home's deliberations.

Crisis after crisis

Whilst policy statis in London prevailed, in Aden the federal idea became increasingly entrenched as the only course of policy through increasingly unconventional methods. With one Indian woman killed, over fifty injured (including Trevaskis' wife Shelia, who

[52] TNA, PREM 11/4678, Trend to Prime Minister, 10 December 1963; Holt, *The Foreign Policy of the Douglas-Home Government*, p. 91
[53] TNA, CAB 21/4987, Trend to Prime Minister, 3 December 1963; CAB 195/23/23, CM(63) 9, 5 December 1963
[54] Mawby, *British Policy*, p. 97
[55] TNA, PREM 11/4678, Trend to Prime Minister, 25 February 1964

suffered a series of serious mental breakdowns in the following months) and Trevaskis' life being saved by the intervention of a well-respected political officer, George Henderson, who later died of his injuries, the airport attack cemented Trevaskis' sense of there only being one pathway for South Arabia's future. To him, it was a test of the Federation's resolve against its 'enemies' and that firm action would be needed to 'maintain public confidence in our authority' to ensure its survival against what he believed might have been the beginning of a major terrorist campaign by the PSP who were now 'committed to violence behind a cloak of bogus respectability.'[56] He believed that the entire federal project on which he had laboured since 1952 was at stake.

In a sense he was right, but his defence of the Federation proved counterproductive. His desire to ensure that any action in the wake of the airport attack was seen to be taken by the federal government rather than the British proved a significant detriment in both the short and long term. Whilst outwardly presenting the simultaneous declaration of a state of emergency in Aden and the Federation as a federal measure, there was never any doubt that Travaskis would be the one making the decisions and he reported to the Colonial Office that the Federation's action 'postulates the presence of myself'.[57] Far from bolstering confidence in the federal government, the state of emergency, arrest of the PSP leadership, and deportations of Yemeni migrants encouraged doubts amongst key figures as to the viability of the Federation and created an entanglement in Aden. Baharoon, who was in London at the time of the bombing, conveyed 'his anxiety about the political effect of the current deportations and detentions, which he thought might revive the fears felt among the Adenis at the time of the merger and which would damage the conception of the Federation as a constructive development.'[58] Baharoon's apparent 'loss of nerve' made Sandys doubt whether 'he is the right man to carry our money in an election or that it is really possible to do business with him.'[59] The Colonial Office recognised that 'the present strength of anti-Federation feeling in Aden, which has been revived by the declaration of the State of Emergency', now had to be taken into account during future policy decisions.[60] By February 1964, some in the Federal Supreme Council toyed with the idea of lifting the state of emergency so that 'the people of the South could express themselves', prompting

[56] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/7, 15 December 1963; BL, IOR/R/20/D/50, High Com, Aden to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 December 1963
[57] TNA, CO 1055/130, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 December 1963
[58] TNA, CO 1055/130, Note of a meeting held in Mr Fisher's room on the morning of 12 December 1963
[59] TNA, CO 1055/130, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis, 16 December 1963
[60] TNA, CO 1055/132, Aden: New Paper for DOPC - Second Draft, 17 February 1964

the Assistant High Commissioner to push back 'most strongly'. The Fadhli Sultan began openly calling for immediate independence, though this was dismissed as 'nonsense and irresponsibility that can do little harm or little good to anyone'.[61] At the same time the increased interest the UN took in the situation in Aden as a result of the state of emergency sharpened the political divide, and the implementation of the UN General Assembly's resolution as a condition to begin independence negotiations would become a staple of local nationalists' demands.

But Trevaskis continued to double down. Now reporting that forecasting an election result in Aden was 'very much more difficult', he returned to his instincts to recommend 'bring[ing] about a clash between PSP and SAL which will encourage them to cut each other's throats' and 'corrupt the electorate' to ensure a pro-British result, but nevertheless recognised the limits of abandoning Baharoon because he might 'rally public sympathy against Federation and Britain', leaving both without any ally in Aden.[62] Reacting scornfully to the news that the Cabinet would no longer consider offering independence and ceding sovereignty in Aden, he appealed directly to the Chief of Defence Staff, Lord Mountbatten.[63] During a visit to Aden in early February 1964, Mountbatten reassured Trevaskis that 'nothing is final, least of all in Whitehall', that officials in the Colonial Office had 'taken advantage' of Sandys 'preoccupation with Cyprus and E[ast] Africa' to push their preferred 'Singapore solution', and presented Trevaskis with Cabinet documents that highlighted splits that could be exploited.[64] Though only describing Mountbatten's 'help' in his first memoir, in his posthumously published second memoir Trevaskis recalls how on his return to London in February 1964, Mountbatten suggested getting the Ministry of Defence 'involved on my side' by pre-emptively drafting minutes to a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff. Using these minutes, Mountbatten 'deftly steered the discussion to give him Minutes as he had drafted them the day before.'[65] The minutes, 'carefully worded so as not to attribute the pro-independence recommendations' to Trevaskis, were nevertheless regarded as suspect by the Colonial Office who noted they were 'written in terms strongly

---

[61] TNA, CO 1055/132, Acting High Commissioner (Aden) to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 February 1964, 23 February 1964, 25 February 1964
[62] TNA, CO 1055/130, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 December 1963; OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 21 January 1964
[63] TNA, CO 1055/130, Martin to Secretary of State, 14 January 1964; Fisher to Secretary of State, 20 January 1964, 7 February 1964; Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 January 1964; Formoy to Doble, 10 February 1964
[64] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 4 February 1964, 5 February 1965
[65] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* pp. 204-205; Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* pp. 302-303; TNA, CO 1055/132, Draft Minute by Chief of the Defence Staff, 11 February 1964

reminiscent of the paper which the High Commissioner wrote' for another meeting.[66] Though Mountbatten insisted that 'the draft was his own', the Colonial Office were left 'in no doubt as to the original authorship.'[67] There was, however, little that the Colonial Office were could do in response to Trevaskis' manoeuvre. Not only would it be difficult to challenge Mountbatten on the matter, but Thorneycroft took the opportunity to intercede, forced a re-examination of the issue of future policy in Aden, and questioned whether the Cabinet 'took the right decision' in December.[68] Within a week, Colonial Office officials were tasked to redraft policy recommendations to the Cabinet. Their frustration was palpable; one official took to doodling snakes and ladders in the margins of one draft in an apt illustration of the pitfalls and personalities British policy sought to navigate and accommodate.[69] Frustrations aside, the limited options available to the British were increasingly recognised. There was a danger, one official noted, of Britain 'falling between two stools' by trying to compromise between the continuance of sovereignty that would mean 'discontent and… further acts of sabotage' on the one hand and handing over sovereignty and giving independence on the other.[70] Douglas-Home, however, remained adamant that he would not consider independence for fear of giving the impression that Britain was retreating from its position in the Middle East. He recognised the need to give 'full and unconditional support to the Federation – on which the whole of our policy was based', especially in the area of counter-subversion, but he could not comprehend independence along the lines advanced by Trevaskis.[71]

In February 1964, to find a way through the policy dilemma the Cabinet agreed to a series of limited constitutional changes that sought to maintain the base 'as long as we can foresee' and 'avoid… the impression that we propose to withdraw from Aden in the near future'. The Aden Chief Minister would receive a new title, the Aden government would receive full legislative and executive power except over defence, external affairs and public service which would be retained by the High Commissioner. The High Commissioner would also have power over internal security 'in so far as this affects the safety and efficient operation

---

[66] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 12 February 1964; TNA, CO 1055/131, Formoy to Fisher, Martin, Eastwood, 11 February 1964
[67] TNA, CO 1055/132, Formoy to Fisher, 12 February 1964
[68] TNA, CO 1055/132, Thorneycroft to Colonial Secretary, 18 February 1964; OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 20 February 1964
[69] TNA, CO 1055/132, Aden: New Paper for DOPC - Third Draft, 19 February 1964; Aden: New Paper for DOPC: First (and LAST!) alternative draft, 24 February 1964 [capitalisation and exclamation in original]
[70] TNA, CO 1055/122, Minute by Eastwood, 13 February 1964
[71] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 24 February 1964, 26 February 1964, 28 February 1964

of the Base', a broad qualification designed to mitigate the risk of the Aden government not clamping down on nationalists in Aden. The mandatory advice clause of the federal treaty, long a complaint of the Federation, would be given up.[72] As these constitutional proposals developed, there was an escalation of incidents on the Yemeni border. Airspace infringements by Egyptian and Yemeni aircraft were relatively frequent, but on 13 March planes crossed into Beihan and attacked buildings and livestock. Though little damage was reported, these attacks prompted the Rulers to fear that any modification to the advisory and protection treaties would make Britain less committed to defend them against border incursions or tribal revolts.[73] Though the Rulers demanded immediate action the Cabinet was more cautious, but nevertheless targets in Yemen for retaliation were drawn up should there be another incident. Another helicopter attack on the 27 March forced the issue. The decision was taken to attack a Republican fort across the border at Harib on 28 March; leaflets were dropped fifteen minutes before eight Hunter jets attacked with rockets and reported heavy damage to the fort. Trevaskis, who had long pressed for the freedom to retaliate against border incursions, dismissed the British Embassy in Cairo's 'pathetic squawk' about the dangers of escalation. 'To win a war', he wrote in his diary, 'one must prevail over one's enemy and usually has to escalate higher than him to do so. I really fail to understand the F[oreign] O[ffice] mind.'[74] The Rulers too, though critical of the slow response, were pleased Britain had fulfilled its treaty obligations. Their satisfaction, however, was short-lived.

The attack at Harib caused a severe foreign relations crisis for the Douglas-Home government. Authorities in Yemen lambasted the attack, claiming upwards of twenty dead including civilians and cast the attack as a bombing of a civilian area. The Arab League condemned the incident, and Libya's own denouncement was seen as particularly dangerous given the Americans and British were in negotiations over the use of military bases there.[75] Though Britain had taken great care to garner 'what implicit American assistance they could' for its policies in South Arabia so as to maintain western interests in the Middle East, the Johnson administration grew weary of Britain's strategy creating unnecessary tension in the region whilst the American intervention in Vietnam

[72] TNA, CO 1055/132, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to Acting High Commissioner (Aden), 3 March 1964
[73] TNA, PREM 11/4678, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 16 March 1964; CO 1055/122, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 March 1964
[74] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 29 March 1964
[75] TNA, PREM 11/4679, Butler to Prime Minister, 1 April 1964; CAB 128/38/37, CM(64) 23rd Conclusions, 16 April 1964; Holt, *The Foreign Policy of the Douglas-Home Government,* p. 95

intensified.[76] A rift with the Americans over a UN Security Council motion, tabled to censure the British, left Britain dangerously isolated. Though the United States abstained, President Johnson's cool response to Douglas-Home's eager letter of thanks noted that he had 'approved it reluctantly' and that 'it would be hard for me to make the same decision again.'[77] The fallout from the Harib attack had several important implications. As Mawby notes, the strain in Anglo-American relations and international condemnation 'were precisely the consequences that the British had sought to avoid' and would thus prompt an increase of subversive special operations in Yemen.[78] But they also demonstrated to Douglas-Home the limited extent to which the status-quo and precarious balance between his policy ideals could be maintained. His initial preparedness to consider either a de-militarized zone or to station UN observers on the border as a means of defusing the crisis was quickly shot down by reports from the UK mission to the UN that Arab, African and Asian countries 'intend to launch a major attack on us and make as much capital as they can out of it', a manoeuvre interpreted by one adviser as 'inevitable since we had given sovereignty to a lot of ragamuffins.'[79] On the other hand, another adviser noted that the fundamentals of British policy in the Middle East had not been interrogated and that Britain needed to 'recognise and accept the sort of world we live in'. The 'underlying trend' to Britain's Middle East policy was to 'have a bash at Nasser' which, though 'very understandable' was 'very unwise. We had a bash once and failed with ignominy. We must resist the temptation to do so again.'[80] Douglas-Home's South Arabian future policy had been left dangerously exposed by the Harib incident, caught in a limbo between the perceived dangers of giving independence to territories that might prove hostile post-independence and the reality of Britain's diminished imperial power. But this did not have an immediate impact on Douglas-Home's views on giving Federation independence, who instead preferred to demur the issue until the immediate crisis had passed or an alternative solution was discovered.

---

[76] W. Taylor Fain, *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region,* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 62, 93-94, 153-156; Simon C. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Missile East: Britain, the United States and post-war decolonization, 1945-1973,* (Routledge: London, 2012), pp. 106-111

[77] TNA, CAB 21/5297, President of the US to Prime Minister, 16 April 1964

[78] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 114; Clive Jones, 'Where the state feared to tread': Britain, Britons, covert action and the Yemen Civil War, 1962–64, *Intelligence and National Security,* 21:5 (2006), p. 721

[79] TNA, PREM 11/4679, Wright to Henderson, 3 April 1964; New York (UK Mission to UN) to Foreign Office, 3 April 1964; Bligh to Prime Minister, 3 April 1964

[80] TNA, PREM 11/4679, Wright to Prime Minister, 8 April 1964

In this vacuum, Trevaskis' persistence proved crucial. In addition to measures to counter Yemeni subversion and Egyptian attacks to stop the Rulers losing 'confidence in our ability to protect them' and thus place the Aden base 'in jeopardy', he called for independence to be granted to the Federation in 1966 or 1967 to 'ensure that full power passed decisively into friendly hands'. Doing so swiftly would bring the apparent added advantage of making 'it much easier for friendly powers such as India to support us' on the international stage, but what appears to have caught Douglas-Home's attention, seemingly for the first time, was Trevaskis' reiteration of the dependent position of the Federation after independence and that

> what should be envisaged is not a truly independent state operating without British help but a nominally independent Federation which would in practice remain dependent on us and would accordingly continue to be subject to our influence. In other words what should be envisaged is something akin to Cromer's Egypt.

The Federation would only 'appear, in Arab eyes, to be a genuinely Arab government capable of governing effectively and beneficially' if a programme costing £3 million to accelerate development in the Federation could have a 'real impact locally'. Yet any opposition amongst the tribes against the Rulers should not be regarded as significant because they were driven by 'mercenary' motives that were 'capable of being counteracted by counter-inducements on our side.' There was thus 'no reason to suppose that there is any deep-rooted popular feeling against the Rulers, nor would we expect such feeling to develop so long as their position is manifestly backed by British power.'[81] Though the Harib incident prevented a change in Douglas-Home's position towards independence, Trevaskis would nevertheless repeat these arguments several times over through early 1964.

Trevaskis' persistence does not appear to be driven just by a 'confidence … he was constructing a viable state' to which he had laboured for over twelve years.[82] He also appears to have been motivated by professional and personal desperation. In the wake of the Harib incident, with much of Aden, the Arab League, the UN, the Labour Party and a broad portion of the UK press seemingly against him and the Federation, and a seemingly lacklustre response from the UK government to his counter-subversion plans to save the

---

[81] TNA, CAB 21/4987, Minute of a meeting held in the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs' Room, Foreign Office, 19 March 1964; CAB 21/5297, Trevaskis to Sandys, 31 March 1964; PREM 11/4678, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 March 1964; CO 1055/122, Note: Aden, 31 March 1964

[82] Mawby, *British Policy*, p. 97

Federation, he recorded in his diary feeling 'very depressed'. In such circumstances, he doubted 'our ability to hang on and we shall need to change our tactics or prepare to withdraw without wasting money and lives to no purpose.' But in his desperation, his personal investment in the Federation and the Rulers gave him little to no latitude in his thinking as to how the situation could be resolved, believing there was 'no answer except independence.'[83] In a revealing extract from his first memoir, he recalled 'memories crept up to nudge my conscience' during a Supreme Council meeting in which they demanded Britain act against Egyptian border infringements.

> I remembered all the threats and vilification which every person seated at that table had endured for no other reason than that he was a friend of ours … I was, of course, emotionally involved and had no right to expect others, whose duty like my own was to be dispassionate, to think as I did.[84]

The problem with his plan, however, was that the collaborative relationships upon which the federal idea depended became increasingly fractured, likely fuelling his desperation. In response to the compromise constitutional advance proposals, Baharoon continued to express his dissatisfaction with the flaws in the Federation and internal security arrangements, even floating a suggestion to form a unitary state. Irritated by Baharoon's apparent flustering, Sandys sought to force his acceptance by requesting Trevaskis issue him an ultimatum to accept or risk having the offer withdrawn.[85] Though Trevaskis initially presented it as a 'take it or leave it offer', he soon grew frustrated with the Cabinet's hesitation over retaliation against Egyptian air attacks and air proscription in the Protectorate and became increasingly reluctant to press a compromise policy. Instead, Trevaskis impressed upon Baharoon that he was 'not… at all eager for him to agree' and recommended he reject the offer 'for the time being.'[86] The extent to which Baharoon was influenced by Trevaskis' handling of the compromise proposals is not clear given his long-standing views and struggle to manage the delicate balance between his Ministers, the Legislative Council, the Federation, and Adeni nationalists, but Trevaskis' apathy for implementing orders from London certainly contributed to the denial of a way forward. By April, the pressure of near universal condemnation of the Harib incident broke Baharoon's political will to continue to cooperate with Britain and the Federation. He called upon his

---

[83] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 7 April 1964
[84] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* p. 209
[85] TNA, CO 1055/122, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 March 1964; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis, 24 March 1964
[86] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 19 March 1964 - 30 March 1964

fellow Ministers to petition the UN to intervene, claiming that their 'authority had been reduced to nothing by "merger" and that their position was intolerable.' Should they resign, Trevaskis warned London, he would have 'no option but to suspend the Constitution', a measure he predicted would trigger a violent reaction against Britain across the Middle East. Sandys' offer of a £10,000 'personal gift' was temporarily sufficient to persuade Baharoon to 'think things over' and withdraw his resignation. Though the crisis was quickly over, Trevaskis nevertheless warned that 'unless we enable him to take the heat out of opposition criticism, for example by ending the State of Emergency in Aden or by introducing democratic constitutional reforms in the Federation he will have to resign.' Such measures allowed Trevaskis to present the option of a constitutional conference in London as a 'a temporary measure' to 'calm matters and gain us a bit of breathing space'. Trevaskis' reports painted an increasingly bleak picture for Britain's position in Aden and narrowed the field as to possible ways forward.[87]

The federal Rulers also became increasingly fearful of the precarity of the situation. Especially pertinent to them, in addition to international hostility, was the revival on 7 April of tribal revolt in Radfan immediately after federal and British forces had left the region, and their belief that the British government was not pursuing countersubversion in Yemen forcefully enough. Sharif Hussein, previously cool towards the idea of losing his treaty ties to the British, felt that to continue to intercede in Yemen against Republican forces was leaving him politically exposed.[88] He believed the status quo was unsustainable and that there were only three options available; to carry out 'ruthless and vigorous' suppression against its enemies in Aden and the Protectorate, the liquidation of the Federation, or immediate independence. This, coupled with his threat to 'not co-operate in covert activities against the Yemen in the future, unless HMG agreed to give the Federation independence', marked a significant shift in the position of one of the principal Rulers who had been considered a bulwark against a sudden demand for independence.[89] Though his position on independence was inconsistent, Trevaskis capitalised on the situation to again push his proposals in increasingly apocalyptic tones. The only options available to the British were to 'resort to stern repressive measures undertaken thoroughly and with determination', to give the Federation independence or, for the first time in his dispatches,

[87] TNA, CO 1055/122, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 April 1964, 13 April 1964, 14 April 1964; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis, 12 April 1964, 19 April 1964
[88] Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in Yemen 1962-67,* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2005), p. 128
[89] TNA, CO 1055/122, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 16 April 1964

to come to terms with Nasser and democratise the Federation.[90] Most disturbing of all, from Trevaskis' view, was that the Rulers had 'for perhaps the first time … treated [him] with a disagreeable hint of suspicion and hostility.'[91] Though able to fend off Shariff Hussein's demands for independence, others were still 'anxious to declare a target date for independence since they do not wish to be branded as stooges co-operating to perpetuate "colonialism".'[92]

The Cabinet remained firm in their conviction not to offer immediate independence, but with collaborative relations fracturing it recognised the need to keep the Rulers on side. Building on Trevaskis' recommendations, the Cabinet agreed to hold a constitutional conference in London in June, granted greater freedom to use air proscription against tribal dissidents in the Protectorate, and authorised a more extensive programme of subversion in Yemen to support Royalist forces as a way to placate the Federation's latest crisis of confidence.[93] Shariff Hussein's demand for independence, though regarded as 'Typical Arab blackmail', came as enough of a shock to make Douglas-Home realise the precariousness of the Federation's position and the increasingly limited room to manoeuvre. Private Secretary John Oliver Wright wrote in the margins of one Trevaskis dispatch, and Douglas-Home affirmed, 'I fear the skids are in position'.[94] Of the options laid out, none of them had an immediate appeal. Repression was regarded as 'politically unrealistic' given the certain international and domestic backlash. Similarly, escalating support for Royalists in Yemen would be 'bound to lead in the end to disaster' and risk a further breach with the Americans, cause problems at the UN and risk Britain being 'booted out' of Libya and Kuwait. Disengaging from South Arabia completely would be 'too humiliating to contemplate', whereas negotiating with local nationalists ran the risk of Britain being ejected from Aden or made a pawn, played off against Nasser in exchange for the base's retention. Giving independence might enable the retention of the Aden base 'for a little while longer while we make alternative arrangements' and disengage with 'decency'. It would, however, be a 'complete reversal' of the British position and the consequences of such would need to be considered 'very carefully'. Wright noted it 'would

[90] TNA, CAB 21/5297, High Commissioner to Sandys, 20 April 1964
[91] TNA, CO 1055/122, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 April 1964
[92] TNA, CO 1055/122, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 April 1964
[93] TNA, PREM 11/4680, Sandys to Prime Minister, 21 April 1964: Note: Proposals for Action; CAB 128/38/41, CM(64) 27th Conclusions, 12 May 1964; Mawby, *British Policy*, pp. 103, 116
[94] TNA, PREM 11/4680, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 April 1964, Wright to Prime Minister, [undated]

require the wisdom of Solomon to know what is the best course to take' but that 'unless we give more basic thought to this problem, we shall be hell-bent for disaster.'[95]

Indecision on independence

But by early May there was little to suggest that Douglas-Home had arrived definitively at a policy solution to Britain and the Federation's predicament, despite recognising that the 'moment has now come for us to make a real effort to get to grips with the situation in the Arabian peninsula'. To achieve this, he favoured pursuing a diplomatic initiative amongst Arab countries and the UN to 'get the heat taken out', to 'make [a] serious effort to make our presence there worthwhile to the local inhabitants', and wanted to see 'a well thought out plan for the political advance and economic development of Aden which would give us a reasonable chance of keeping, for some time yet, the military facilities we need.' In Whitehall, he called for the establishment of an 'Aden Executive' of inter-departmental officials to consider policy on a regular basis, whilst the question of establishing a sovereign enclave was again raised. He called on Sandys to investigate during his visit to Aden 'whether the arrangements for … the direction of our policy in the area as a whole are satisfactory' and consult with Trevaskis about military and future policy – albeit whilst momentarily questioning whether Trevaskis would need to be replaced because, as Fisher put it, 'his telegrams are often irritating and sometimes contradictory, and he has poor political judgement; but the broad theme of his warnings and assessments has been proved right'.[96] As for the Federation, Douglas-Home recognised that 'although I see many difficulties in granting independence to the Federation, it may be that we have got to move in that direction' and that a programme of economic aid would be needed to 'make it worthwhile for local inhabitants to go along with us.'[97] Though this was a major shift in tone, the substance of his position remained consistent. His main interjection was to try and focus minds and arrive at a more inventive solution that might thread the gap between conflicting policy priorities. One month before the Federation would eventually be offered independence, Douglas-Home still considered it to be a negative conclusion forced upon him and he continued to enquire after better alternatives.[98]

---

[95] TNA, PREM 11/4680, Trend to Prime Minister 22 April 1964; Wright to Prime Minister, 22 April 1964; CAB 21/5297, Trend to Prime Minister, 22 April 1964
[96] TNA, CO 1055/270, Fisher to Secretary of State, 7 May 1964
[97] TNA, CAB 21/5297, Douglas-Home to Colonial Secretary, 8 May 1964; PREM 11/4680, Douglas-Home to Foreign Secretary, 5 May 1964; Trend to Prime Minister, 2 June 1964
[98] TNA, CAB 195/24/8, CM(64)28, 14 May 1964

However, the alternatives available had been rapidly curtailed. The federal and Adeni ministers called for talks in London to 'frame a programme leading to the independence of the Federation' whilst also calling for greater support to take on tribal revolts.[99] Douglas-Home instinctively pushed back against both, emphasising to Sandys that whilst he 'fully appreciated the difficulties' of the problem

> our overriding purpose is to continue to enjoy the facilities of the Aden base. The need to pacify the hinterland must be balanced against the desirability of giving external influences such as the Committee of 24, the Arab League and the Communists as little ammunition as possible to mobilise world opinion against us.[100]

His desire to court international opinion as a way forward floundered, however, when the Americans, though 'anxious to help', regarded any primary effort to work through the UN to demarcate the border as 'counter-productive', whilst the UK's Permanent Representative at the UN advised that raising the issue of border infringements at the UN Security Council would 'probably be unprofitable.'[101] Whitehall inertia meant that the 'Aden Executive' he called for did not materialise until October 1965, and Sandys' assessment of the military situation after his visit in May 1964 confirmed that though ground operations in Radfan had been 'satisfactorily completed' there was a clear need for air proscription to prevent further revolt and isolate dissident tribes despite the almost certain risk to Britain's international position. After a period of relative quiet, the security situation in Aden deteriorated when two bombs exploded in Aden only an hour after Fisher left Aden for a visit to prepare the ground for the June conference. This marked the beginning of a new revolutionary 'front' by the National Liberation Front (NLF) in Aden, and over the next few months attacks in Aden escalated.[102] On security as well as practical grounds the sovereign enclave idea became increasingly nonsensical, and it was considered impossible to give complete independence to the Federation whilst retaining sovereignty over Aden.[103] On the political side, however, Sandys was reassured that, in his meetings with federal and Adeni

---

[99] TNA, PREM 11/4680, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 May 1964; Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 May 1964

[100] TNA, CO 1055/123, Chair of the Supreme Council to Sandys, 10 May 1964; PREM 11/4680, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis, 12 May 1964

[101] TNA, PREM 11/4680, Washington to Foreign Office, 11 May 1964; CAB 128/38/42, CM(64) 28th Conclusions, 14 May 1964

[102] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 3 June 1964; 'Bomb explodes in Aden', *The Times,* 4 June 1964, p. 14; Vitaly Naumkin, *Red Wolves of Yemen,* (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 2004), pp. 101-111; Walker, *Aden Insurgency,* p. 131

[103] TNA, CO 1055/123, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis [McPetrie to Eastwood], 12 May 1964

ministers, 'nobody had advocated the separation of Aden from the Federation or the removal of the United Kingdom base' but warned that Britain would be pressed to commit to a date for the Federation's independence at the June conference.[104] The policy options available to the British began to coalesce around giving Federation independence along the lines Trevaskis had long pressed for.

Nevertheless, a policy stasis remained, likely encouraged by domestic political pressures. Unease on the Conservative backbenches over decolonisation in Africa and the desire not to make any concessions to Arab nationalism fostered an impulse for inaction to avoid additional controversy before a general election.[105] Given that the 'whole point of the merger policy… [had] been to slow down the tempo of political changes', not moving apace towards independence was consistent with much of the thinking behind British policy.[106] Despite the outward presentation that the London conference sought to discuss the Federation's 'constitutional progress towards independence', no agreement had yet been reached on whether to offer independence to the Federation.[107] A draft brief for the conference, due to start on 9 June, stipulated that its aim was to 'enable the Federation to present a better appearance to the world and to make it easier for friendly states, particularly friendly Arab states, to show their friendship openly.' Though Britain may be asked to fix a date for independence, the preferred course was to declare the aim as 'independence as soon as it is practicable', no later than 1969, and that 'at any time after 2 years from now if the Federation ask[s] for independence we will call a Conference to make the arrangements for it.'[108] As the conference convened the British Government's position, as one former official later put it, was to do 'nothing… but to hang on in the vague sense that something would turn up to save the situation'.[109]

---

[104] TNA, CAB 128/38/42, CM(64) 28th Conclusions, 14 May 1964; PREM 11/4680, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies [Fisher to Secretary of State], 31 May 1964
[105] Phillip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization: The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951-1964,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 168-228; D. R. Thorpe, *Alec Douglas-Home,* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997), pp. 355-358; Holt, *The Foreign Policy of the Douglas-Home Government,* p. 88, Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 109
[106] TNA, CO 1055/128, Formoy to Roberts, 29 March 1963
[107] *Hansard*, HC Deb 14 May 1964, vol 695, cols 610-615; 'Independence hopes for S. Arabia', *The Times,* 6 June 1964, p. 8
[108] TNA, CO 1055/123, Draft DOP paper: Federation of South Arabia: Constitutional Conference, 1 June 1964
[109] Robin Bidwell, *The Two Yemens,* (Harlow: Longman Westview Press, 1983), p. 164

The London Conference

In Aden, however, efforts to redirect policy in the lead up to the London conference accelerated during talks with Baharoon and the Federation. Baharoon, reeling from agitation in Aden, was desperate for concessions that might gain some support amongst the nationalist opposition and mitigate the toxicity left by merger. Talks between Baharoon and the SAL and PSP made it evident that reforms to the existing Federation would not suffice, and their participation in direct talks with the British would have focused on 'the nature of the future … South Arabian State' and the establishment of a unitary state. But there was also a significant shift in the PSP position on the base, in that they would 'be prepared to consider the question of British bases in Aden' if they were included in Aden's government, and claimed to drop their previous aim for union with Yemen. Nevertheless, a veto by the Rulers and the boycott by the PSP of preparatory talks in Aden in response to not being invited to the London conference paved the way for talks to include only the Federation, Baharoon and other moderates from Aden.[110] The Rulers recognised that the Federation would need reform to produce 'a reasonable democratic set-up' and a head of state. But the reforms agreed amongst the Rulers maintained the balance of power of the hinterland over Aden through an electoral college and Council of States, modelled on the existing Supreme Council, that would have 'fairly strong powers' including declaring a state of emergency. As preliminary talks progressed, the Rulers pressed for independence within five years and sovereignty over Aden to be ceded to them to have control over Aden's internal security. Baharoon recognised that these demands could only cause him further problems with Adeni nationalists.[111]

When the London conference finally opened at Lancaster House, the atmosphere was fractious. In addition to the restarting of bombings in Aden, protests by Yemenis who had travelled to London caused a stir amongst the Rulers, whilst nationalists in Aden denounced the conference.[112] On the opening day, Baharoon's speech, produced 'at the last minute', lampooned the constitutional basis of the Federation, called for the creation of democratic institutions and a unitary state, and declared the conference should 'put life into

---

[110] TNA, CO 1055/123, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 May 1964, 19 May 1964, 22 May 1964; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis, 19 May 1964; Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia,* pp. 63-64

[111] TNA, CO 1055/123, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 May 1964, 27 May 1964, 31 May 1964, 3 June 1964; Fisher to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 June 1964

[112] TNA, CO 1055/102, Shihab and Mackawee to Sandys, 9 June 1964; Asnag to Sandys, 12 June 1964

the present constitutional set-up which in our opinion was born paralysed.'[113] Incensed by Baharoon's attack, Sultan Saleh of Audhali denounced him 'at the top of his voice' whilst Farid, who had previously stressed the need for reforms, was 'having hysterics'. The conference very nearly collapsed. 'How I hate these little Adenis', Sandys scorned, 'They are absolute scum.'[114] Nevertheless, fraught negotiations continued through June over representation, internal security, and sovereignty. Despite last-ditch efforts to see if the issue of sovereignty could 'be avoided if possible', it remained the 'main crunch' of contention between the Adeni and federal delegations and it was recognised that independence would necessitate the end of British sovereignty.[115] It was not until 12 June that the Cabinet Defence Committee agreed to offer the delegates independence within five years, and at a further meeting on 22 June it was agreed that independence within four years was conditional on the Federation signing a defence treaty that guaranteed continued access and use of the base. Yet the exact conditions under which this would take place, and to whom sovereignty over Aden would be transferred, were fudged. No significant progress was made during the conference itself, and the subsequent report agreed only to convene a further meeting after elections in Aden to work out the details and sovereignty would be ceded subject to agreement between Aden and the Federation.[116] As the Shadow Foreign Secretary Patrick Gordon-Walker noted, 'the essential question – the relationship between Aden and the rest of the Federation – [had] not been solved but [had] been postponed' and would continue to be a source of consternation, whilst an official in Aden regarded the desired retention of the base and independence as 'mutually irreconcilable'.[117]

Any jubilation felt at the Federation having finally been granted independence was quickly snubbed by the Fadhli Sultan's defection to Cairo on 4 July 1964. Since being injured in the December 1963 bomb attack, Ahmed had become increasingly concerned as to whether he should continue to collaborate with the British in creating an independent South Arabian state. Disturbed by attacks on the Federation after the declaration of the state of emergency and the Harib incident, he lamented the British failure to deal with nationalists in Aden to secure the Federation; 'You will let us down', he warned Trevaskis, 'You always let your

[113] 'Aden Minister disagrees with S. Arabia leaders', *The Times,* 10 June 1964, p. 10
[114] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 9 June 1964
[115] TNA, CO 1055/123, Poynton to Fisher, 19 June 1964; Monson to Sharp, 30 June 1964
[116] TNA, CO 1055/103, Federation of South Arabia: Conference Report, July 1964; *Hansard,* HC Deb, 7 July 1964, vol 298, col 219-220
[117] *Hansard,* HC Deb, 7 July 1964, vol 298, col 221; Michael Crouch, *An Element of Luck: To South Arabia and Beyond,* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1993), pp. 156-157

friends down… Let us die for our own mistakes but not for yours.'[118] Any trust he had left in the British evaporated during the London conference, and the apparent favouritism the Adeni delegation received despite their behaviour was the 'final straw'.[119] The 'terrible blow' of Ahmed's defection, as Trevaskis put it, came at an inopportune moment, striking at the basic premise of the federal idea that the Rulers could be trusted as guarantors for British influence, and raising concerns that other Rulers such as Sultan Fadhli of Lahej, who was unnerved by British contacts with the SAL prior to the conference, might defect. Fearing a breakup of the Federation, Sandys chastised Trevaskis for visiting his wife at Bethlem Hospital instead of securing the remaining Rulers.[120] Though the Minister of Justice Shaikh Said of Dathina resigned, no total collapse occurred. The rest of the Rulers, though committed to carry on, recognised that the Federation could not continue in its present form and that its fundamental nature would need to change if it were to survive. Sultan Saleh and Shariff Hussein believed the Federation was 'slowly heading for disaster' and that negotiations should begin immediately with the SAL to try and facilitate the return of the al-Jifris, Mohammad Aidrus, and Ali Abdul Karim to improve the Federation's image and create breathing space with Nasser and Yemen.[121] Furthermore, a fresh outbreak of dissent in Dathina prompted Saleh to lament 'forcibly' and in 'unusually uncompromising terms' that the 'present security problems… arose out of a foreign policy over which the Federation had no control.'[122] Baharoon was particularly concerned about the forthcoming Aden elections and did not want to enter them 'encumbered by hostile propaganda'. Some form of constitutional advance for Aden would be needed, but he believed that going directly to Cairo 'to explain things to Nasser' and 'try and persuade [him] to take a more moderate and reasonable line in respect of the Federation' would afford sufficient space for moderates in Aden to secure a victory.[123]

The risk that the federal project might unravel was clear to Trevaskis. Writing to London, he listed all the occasions he and Johnston had warned of the deteriorating situation and the causes of the Federation's weakness. Despite many of its problems being of Trevaskis'

---

[118] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546. 2/8, 4 July 1964; Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* p. 218
[119] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 98.
[120] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546. 2/8, 4 July 1964, 5 July 1964
[121] TNA, CO 1055/123, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 16 July 1964; CO 1055/216, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 July 1964; OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546. 2/8, 13 July 1964, 15 July 1964
[122] TNA, CO 1055/201, Acting High Commissioner (Aden) to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 July 1964
[123] TNA, CO 1055/123, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 July 1964; OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546. 2/8, 14 July 1964

design, he lamented that the Federation had no organisational responsibility over policy or its implementation, nor an administrative link between the Supreme Council and federal ministries to the states. Without a single figure of authority, governmental and administrative responsibility was divided and duplicated between the Federation and the WAP Office, the latter being 'relied on… to make good these various inadequacies', with key posts being filled by those of 'somewhat indifferent quality'. Far from being consolidated, Trevaskis wrote, 'the Federation is probably a less effective organisation despite its more grandiose appearance than it was before merger.' It was, he argued, too late to take covert action in Yemen to bolster the Federation, as any countersubversion plans he proposed had been 'whittled down' with restrictions. Instead, to Wright's shock, Trevaskis called for breathing space to be created by coming to terms with the UAR by recognising the Yemeni Arab Republic (YAR) and ending subversion by Sherif Hussein in exchange for the toning down of hostile propaganda and recognition of the Federation's right to decide, whether it should, or should not, unite with the Yemen, after it has gained independence in 1968.' It was the closest Trevaskis had come to drawing attention to the fundamental problems of the federal idea. His proposed solution, however, was to declare that 'no effort or sacrifice should now be spared' to secure the Federation 'on its own feet' because British 'interests depend almost exclusively on the survival of the Federation.' Doing this would involve, contradictorily, moving the WAP Office British Agent, along with other British staff, over to the Federation to act as 'Head of the Federal Administration' to assist in policy formulation and implementation. In order to reinforce the Rulers' positions, he called for an additional £500,000 to be immediately distributed to 'win quick results', an increase in the distribution of arms (requesting an increase of reserve stocks to 5,000 rifles and 10 million rounds of ammunition), and a further £500,000 to deal with emergencies brought on by tribal revolt. He believed that the prospect of an alliance between the exiled SAL leadership and the Rulers should be encouraged, whilst resorting to repressive action against the PSP and 'hostile Aden press' might be needed 'if the protection of our friends and other circumstances warrant it.' In apocalyptic terms, he forecast that unless his proposals were acted upon 'we shall be heading for certain disaster.'[124] Despite Sultan Ahmed's defection and the granting of the Federation's independence on a precarious foundation, the federal idea remained stubbornly fixed in Trevaskis' mind as the only way forward.

[124] TNA, PREM 11/4681, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 July 1964; CAB 21/5297, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 July 1964

London's response was characterised by the lack of direction in its South Arabian policy. Over a month after independence had been approved by the Cabinet, Trend noted that the concerns of ministers had been 'almost exclusively with the various covert and semi-covert measures' Britain had taken against Yemeni infiltration and that 'we have tended to let the question of the Federation's constitutional development drop into the background.'[125] Yet the primary focus of deliberations remained upon the situation in Yemen which, Sandys reported to Cabinet, was 'showing signs of deteriorating'. After a major offensive by Egyptian forces in June 1964 which brought the prospect of a Republican victory, the apparent shifts in position of Jordan towards recognition of the Republican regime, the demoralisation of Royalist forces, and the chance of Saudi Arabia seeking a rapprochement with the UAR 'gave cause for increasing concern' and focused attention to the broader Anglo-Egyptian struggle than to framing a distinct policy for South Arabia's future.[126] The Cabinet immediately approved Trevaskis' requested increase in funds and arms to wrest control of the situation, much to his surprise, recalling in his diary that 'It's only [with] crisis pressure that we get our way!'[127] But the position of the British Government towards supporting the Federation to independence was incidentally formulated, and considered in such a way as to negate an interrogation of the British position in South Arabia and the Federation's centrality to British policy.

Having opened the way for the Federation to move towards independence, the confrontation with Adeni nationalists escalated. The British embassy in Cairo, however, sought to push back against the high-handed approach Britain had so far taken against, not just Nasser, but al-Asnag. For his part, al-Asnag pursued a dual track policy in his dealing with the British and the Federation. On the one hand his public attacks on the Aden base in April 1963 invoked all Arabs' 'duty… to fight this', whilst casting the Federation as a 'distortion' that 'reigned tyrannically'. On the other, he became increasingly uncomfortable with the use of violence and recognised the need for a political settlement with the federal Rulers – positions that put him at odds with the Egyptians and more radical nationalists.[128] The Radfan insurgency, he told the British ambassador to Egypt Sir Harold Beeley in June

---

[125] TNA, PREM 11/4681, Trend to Prime Minister, 27 July 1964
[126] TNA, CAB 128/38/56, CM(64) 42 Conclusions, 28 July 1964; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 117-119; Robert McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-1967,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), pp. 200-202
[127] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546. 2/8, 22 July – 8 October 1964; TNA, PREM 11/4681 Secretary of State for the Colonies to Acting High Commissioner, 24 July 1964
[128] Karl Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia: Abandoning Empire,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), p. 67; Joseph Kostiner, *The Struggle for South Yemen,* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 109-111

1964, was a chance for all parties to 'sit down with the British Government and deal with the problem' and he regretted that Sandys had not taken the time to speak with figures other than the Aden and federal governments during his May visit. Al-Asnag feared that, in Beeley's words, 'control over the situation' would soon be out of South Arabian and British hands, and that it was 'important to restore good will' to ensure that the Egyptians did not become too dominant.[129] By late August, Beeley reported that al-Asnag was 'anxious' to advertise his breach with Nasser having been eclipsed in Cairo by Qahtan al-Shaabi, a former SAL official and head of the NLF, and al-Asnag insisted that 'he had nothing to do with the present acts of violence in Aden and the Federation' and was 'half hoping for an approach from our side to which he might prove receptive.'[130] Al-Asnag also made overtures to Baharoon. During Bahroon's visit to Cairo in August 1964, he reported that al-Asnag's and the al-Jifris' rift with the Egyptians left them 'prepared to cooperate' with the British 'on how to hold back Egyptian interference in South Arabia.' Al-Asnag no longer argued against the mutual interest the Aden base created for the British and Adenis and now 'accepted the Base as a fact'. Baharoon, having long sought more cordial relations, was 'anxious to cooperate with the Nationalists as much as he could in the interests of the advance of the Federation to independence in conditions of stability.'[131] One Adeni Minister even suggested that al-Asnag marry his daughter to foster a 'more reasonable attitude' and exploit his breach with the Egyptians.[132]

In October, Patrick Seale from *The Observer* put to it Trevaskis that al-Asnag was out of favour with the Egyptians and that there was an opportunity to 'get him onto our side' and, as the resulting article put it, 'cut the ground from under the extremists' feet' and secure a peaceful settlement. The British, however, were categoric in their refusal to entertain negotiating with al-Asnag. 'It's very worrying having to answer this kind of naïve clap trap', Trevaskis recorded in his diary.[133] When al-Asnag arrived in London in September 1964 in the hope of meeting figures from the government and the Colonial Office, Fisher noted that there was no point in meeting him because it was 'too late to make a deal with

---

[129] TNA, CO 1055/154, Cairo to Foreign Office, 2 June 1964
[130] TNA, CO 1055/154, Maitland to McCarthy, 27 August 1964; Cairo to Foreign Office, 27 August 1964
[131] TNA, CO 1055/123, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Aden (Acting High Commissioner), 18 August 1964
[132] BL, IOR/R/20/D/7, Note on conversation with Mr H I Khodabux-Khan on 10th August [1964]; High Commissioner, Aden to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 16 August 1964
[133] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546. 2/8, 15 October 1964; Patrick Seale, 'Rebels threaten S. Arabia', *The Observer*, 25 October 1964, p. 2

him (even if we wanted to, in the light of his allegedly more moderate approach in recent weeks).'[134] Even as the collaborative relations at the heart of the federal idea became frayed, and as the British and Rulers recognised the need to engage with nationalist parties such as the SAL, the British position remained obstinate and unaccommodating. As Mawby notes, the British perception of Arabs having an 'innate truculence' led officials to mistrust the signals they received from al-Asnag. Officials emphasised the 'Mr. Hyde lurking behind this Dr. Jekyll', and regarded any breach between al-Asnag with the Egyptians as temporary.[135] There was also a concern that, should they give credence to al-Asnag, this would prove embarrassing to the Conservative government 'in the final stages of the electoral campaign', given the Labour Party's general sympathies for the Adeni labour movement, whilst simultaneously undermining the chance of a moderate victory in the Aden elections.[136] Ideological obstacles aside, whilst Trevaskis remained as High Commissioner, the personal obstacles to engagement with al-Asnag were significant. Having suspected that al-Asnag and the PSP had a hand organising the airport bombing because the prime suspect Abdullah Hasan Khalifa, an Aden Airways employee, had links to the PSP, any engagement with al-Asnag amounted to overlooking the assassination of George Henderson and the attempted assassination of Trevaskis, his wife and the federal delegation.[137] The personal and the policy calculations to exclude nationalists from being involved in formulating South Arabia's post-colonial future were inseparably fused.

In the lead up to the October elections terrorist attacks in Aden continued, with a bomb exploding at the base on 1 September and a gunman attack on a pro-government newspaper on 13 October. Deportations of Yemenis and covert campaigns by Trevaskis to sow discord amongst opposition parties triggered a boycott by the PSP that led to 6,377 votes being cast out of the much reduced registered electorate of 8,019 from a total population of approximately 220,000, of whom 100,000 were Aden-born. Yet the result, even in these 'extraordinary conditions' to bolster Britain's allies, was far from sweeping.

---

[134] TNA, CO 1055/154, Note by Fisher, 15 September 1964
[135] Spencer Mawby, 'Orientalism and the Failure of British Policy in the Middle East: The Case of Aden', *History: the Journal of the Historical Association,* 95:3 (2010), p. 349-350; Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber*, p. 172; TNA, CO 1055/195, Trevaskis to Greenwood, 28 October 1964
[136] TNA, CO 1055/33, Martin to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 September 1964
[137] Whether or not al-Asnag was involved in the airport bombing is not clear. Trevaskis strongly implies, but never directly accuses al-Asnag of involvement (Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* p. 198; Trevaskis, *The Deluge,* pp. 299-300). McNamara cautiously points to British files that record Trevaskis being told in 1966 by Jaabil bin Hussein, a Federal leader, that whilst he was in Cairo, he had met al-Asnag and his 'henchman' Ahmed Basendwah. Basendwah reportedly admitted that he and al-Asnag organised the airport attack and Khalifa had thrown the bomb ('The Nasser factor: Anglo Egyptian relations and Yemen/Aden crisis 1962-65, *Middle Eastern Studies* 53:1 (2017), p. 61).

Though Britain's allies were able to win about half of the 16 seats of the Legislative Council, seven PSP-sympathisers were elected. One such sympathiser was Khalifa. Still imprisoned, he received the greatest support of any candidate, 1,020 votes, and the PSP demanded his appointment as Chief Minister.[138] His election, one journalist noted, indicated the precarity of the situation in Aden post-merger.

> It was at once a protest against the State of Emergency … and against the British policy of federation in general. It gave the lie to the opinion of some British officials that only a gang of Yemenis and others brain-washed by Egypt were responsible for resistance in Aden… Above all, it showed that there was a body of opinion in Aden ready to applaud terrorism.[139]

The simultaneous election in the UK returned the Labour Party under Harold Wilson to power on a narrow majority, inheriting a fractured situation in Aden and a Federation that, though promised independence, still faced considerable and fundamental problems in its viability.

Conclusion

The decision to offer independence was regarded by the Federation's advocates as the logical end point of the federal idea after merger. Officials in Aden, Trevaskis being foremost amongst them, believed that guiding the Federation to independence, whilst still dependent on British support, was the only means to which Britain's interests and global role could be maintained. In the turbulent wake of merger and the onset of the Yemeni civil war, Trevaskis' persistence was crucial in maintaining momentum behind the federal idea, and he utilised unconventional channels to keep it a fixture of British policy deliberations against resistance in London. Yet even as the collaborative relations upon which the federal idea depended became increasingly frayed and it became widely recognised that the Federation could not continue in its intended form, Trevaskis' personal and professional commitment to the federal idea and insistence not to engage with nationalists in Aden solidified. As the security situation deteriorated and the course of nationalist politics became increasingly violent, the periphery stayed on the offensive to secure British support for the Federation as the crux of British policy. As official thinking in Aden coalesced around independence, the Conservative government instinctively sought a policy statis. Though also recognising that the local situation and international scrutiny made the British

---

[138] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 100; TNA, CO 1055/33, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 October 1964

[139] Tom Little, *South Arabia: Arena of Conflict,* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), p. 117

hold on South Arabia increasingly fragile, for the most part these concerns acted as a brake to offering the Federation independence rather than incrementally whittling down the policy status quo. In the context of curtailed policy options, Douglas-Home was entrapped to accept, at a very late stage, that independence was the only course that could be taken. It was recognised that sovereignty over Aden would need to be relinquished upon the Federation's independence. Yet it was far easier to demur on the particulars of how this was to be achieved to a potentially distant point in the future than engage the dilemmas of policy that might supersede the instinctual belief in the merits of continuing Britain's global, imperial role. Even the offer of independence did nothing to aid either the fraught and precarious federal project or relations between Aden and the Protectorate. As chapter five will show, the ever-present prospect of collapse, held together by the federal collaborators' instinct for self-preservation and the perseverance of officials on the spot, would be a difficult inheritance for the incoming Labour government.

Chapter 5 'It's not very nice is it, Tony?': Labour, the federal idea, and the end of empire in South Arabia, 1964-1967

No sooner had the British evacuated Aden at the end of a bloody insurgency on 29 November 1967, contemporaries sought to apportion blame for the violent end to almost 130 years of British rule. The opening explanatory accounts, or salvos, of the historiography of the final years of British rule framed the subsequent debate along lines of assessing the prospects of success, viability, and possibility for an independent, British-aligned South Arabian Federation. Trevaskis' first memoir was quick to lament the abandonment of the Federation, a project for which he had laboured since 1952, by the Harold Wilson government elected in 1964:

> If the building dissolves into a ruin, it is right that the architects should be called into account. But should it later emerge that the builder has ignored their blue-print and, having failed to replace it with another, has trusted to his own intuition and ability to 'play it by ear' they can scarcely be held responsible for the consequences.[1]

Conversely, the memoirs of the final British High Commissioner, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, noted that in May 1967 he took over 'what I and everyone else considered [the] impossible task' of 'somehow [untying] the knot and release ourselves without disaster' and, 'if possible, leave behind an independent Government which could assure peace and stability'.[2] The 'contentious' historiography that followed, broadly speaking, contests the importance and degrees of continuity and change that were detrimental to this goal.[3] Trevaskis' lament has found currency with some who focus on the sudden change, or 'betrayal' as one puts it, in the Wilson government's policy towards the Aden base announced in the 1966 Defence Review, whilst the subsequent chaotic withdrawal and hand over to the National Liberation Front (NLF) underscores the 'humiliation' overseen by Wilson.[4] For others, the 'dismal situation' Labour inherited meant there was little the

---

[1] Kennedy Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber: A South Arabian Episode* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1968), p. 229

[2] Humphrey Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 211-220

[3] Clive Jones, 'Aden, South Arabia and the United Arab Emirates: a retrospective study in state failure and state creation', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 2-3.

[4] J.B. Kelly, *Arabia, the Gulf and the West,* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980), pp. 1-46; Roger Hardy, *The Poisoned Well: Empire and its legacy in the Middle East,* p. 196

new government could do to wrestle control of the South Arabian problem that had been mishandled prior to 1964.[5] The precise details of the collapse and the multitude of elements that brought it about, being well accounted for, are not strictly the focus of this chapter. Instead, it assesses one crucial continuity: the development of and responses to the federal idea after 1964, outlines the course of the Labour government's handling of the Conservative inheritance, and examines how the death throes of the federal idea continued to shape British policy as manifest in the degrees of official resistance to policy change.

This chapter argues that the Labour government brought no immediate change to the perceived need to maintain British global interests and thereby no automatic reassessment of Aden's place in maintaining them. Yet when it came to negotiating a post-colonial future for South Arabia there were significant differences of approach that shaped the new Colonial Secretary Anthony Greenwood's efforts to reach a political settlement that would include a broader range of local elites, not just the Federation. To some extent, Greenwood's efforts were informed by idealised notions of the transfer of power that framed a conceptual rigidity within policymaking far removed from an already precarious situation in South Arabia that deteriorated further. As these efforts faltered, the Labour government grew increasingly impatient with the entanglement they inherited. Though the 1966 Defence Review sealed the Federation's fate the Labour government was forced to rely on the Federation as an unpalatable default to pursue an ultimately fruitless attempt to achieve an orderly withdrawal as the Federation collapsed through 1967.

This chapter further argues that key officials in South Arabia who were the most ardent advocates of the federal idea became increasingly resistant to the Labour government's initiative, and in doing so contributed to the failure of an alternative settlement arising before independence. Considering the partisan and ideological threat Labour posed, officials couched their arguments along lines of personal and ideological loyalties that ran parallel to and were supported by the institutional cultures of the colonial administration in South Arabia, responding as much to the particulars of Labour's initiatives as they were responding to their own much broader sense that change inherently undercut these loyalties and thereby the British position. Unlike the previous decade, where the formulation and argument of policy ideals had been a regular feature of the policy-making process, by the start of 1965 the extent to which the federal idea could be reinvented in

[5] John W. Young, *The Labour governments 1964-70: volume 2: International policy,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 89-98; Spencer Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67: Last outpost of a Middle East Empire*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 186-189

response to the deteriorating situation through formal channels was progressively limited. Instead, the federal idea's adherents took to informal forms of resistance to change government policy. Though identified by contemporaries and several historians, this chapter will seek to more precisely quantify the basis of that resistance and its impact.[6] There are inherent difficulties in measuring the individually varied and exact extent of official resistance within documentary sources, but the deep roots of the federal idea and the obstinance of its adherents created the tussle between competing visions for South Arabia's future after independence which precluded the opportunity to initiate a coherent political settlement.

This aside, this chapter will argue, the key features of the collapse of the Federation and the end of empire in South Arabia were products of cumulative issues associated with the federal idea since its inception, and that the continued influence of the idea and its adherents added to an already fractured, impossible situation. In the context of the local political climate in which non-cooperation and violence became an increasingly valuable political currency, the South Arabian knot was inescapably tightened as the Labour government, officials in South Arabia, and local nationalists vied for a solution that would bring South Arabia to independence in a manner in keeping with their conflicting visions for its post-colonial future.

Labour comes to power

Elected on a majority of four, the return of Labour to power after 13 years in opposition did not herald a dramatic shift in the government's position towards Britain's global role. Though there is some debate as to which factors played the biggest part in the later revaluation of and withdrawal from Britain's east of Suez role, it was not until later in Wilson's administration that this would take place.[7] The new government's initial understanding of Aden's continued importance, therefore, centred on the base's role in

---

[6] See, Peter Brooke, *Duncan Sandys and the Informal Politics of Britain's Late Decolonisation*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 49-111; Karl Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia: Abandoning Empire*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 142, 145, 193, 199; Brian Drohan, *Brutality in an Age of Human Rights: Activism and Counterinsurgency at the End of the British Empire* (London: Cornell University Press, 2017), pp. 81-150; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 134-135, 144

[7] Saki Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World?,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Jeffrey Pickering, *Britain's Withdrawal from East of Suez: The Politics of Retrenchment,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998), pp. 135-142; Simon C. Smith, *Britain's Revival and Fall in the Gulf: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial States, 1950-71,*(London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Young, *The Labour governments,* pp. 31-38; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 128-129

maintaining influence in the Middle East. Meetings at Chequers through November 1964, and the subsequent Defence White Paper in February 1965, endorsed this view. However, the Labour government was acutely conscious of the controversies surrounding the previous government's South Arabian policy. Of greatest significance was the conceptual shift, with qualifications, away from the idea that the federal Rulers were the ideal collaborators to a more open-ended consideration of potential collaborators that could emerge in Aden. It was recognised that though there was a 'strong case for securing the goodwill of the Aden political parties, even at the expense of the Federal leaders', such a move 'might involve the break up of the Federation' and threaten the base.[8] After the Chequers meetings Wilson was equivocal in stating the new 'intention of the present Government to gradually shift the weight of its support from the Rulers of the Federation to the more democratic institutions of Aden itself', but such a statement of intent was mediated by the Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon-Walker, and the Defence Secretary, Denis Healey, who cautioned against an immediate or radical implementation, arguing that, short of abandonment in the face of continued problems on the Yemeni-Federal border, it was 'only common prudence to keep the existing organisation in existence.' In agreement, Greenwood believed 'it right to avoid major activity' but expressed doubt as to how far the Rulers could continue to be trusteed as the lynchpin of British policy. He wanted 'to avoid choosing between them and Aden. But if there had to be a choice his would be for Aden.'[9] For the new government, the initial consensus was that a new initiative to guide South Arabia to independence was needed. The starting point and features of such an analysis was markedly different to the previous government in that Aden would need to play a more central focus within British policymaking. But the details of the extent and rapidity of such a change, the Cabinet recognised, would need more precise analysis and, in recognition of the reality of the Federation's existence and the desire to maintain the Aden base, there could not be a wholesale rejection of the Protectorate Rulers as part of Britain's future policy calculations.

Aden's centrality to Labour's future policy was influenced by a multitude of factors. Aside from seeking a redress of the previous government's policy approach, it was also framed by a belief that decolonisation in South Arabia could conform along archetypal lines, informed by a particular understanding of Britain's experience of decolonisation and the

[8] TNA, CAB 148/17, OPD(64), 1st Meeting, 21 October 1964
[9] TNA, CAB 21/5297, Aden and the Federation: Ministerial Meeting held at No. 10 Downing Street, 25 November 1964

perception of local elites who could serve as recognisable collaborators. Eager to stress the new government's priorities, Greenwood immediately sought the release of Abdullah Hasan Khalifa, the prime suspect in the December 1963 airport attack. The issue was symbolically important for several reasons. Having been elevated as a focus of the nationalist cause in Aden, Khalifa's release was rationalised in a draft telegram, in a paragraph omitted from the final version, on the grounds that doing so had parallels to the 'classic example' of Kwame Nkrumah's election and subsequent release from prison in 1951. Doing so would also prove the Labour government's commitment to democratic ideals given that Khalifa had received the highest number of votes of any candidate in Aden's October election, whilst Greenwood argued that such a 'dramatic and magnanimous gesture' would create the conditions for a breakthrough in relations between Aden and the Federation. Furthermore, seeking Khalifa's release was an early opportunity to demonstrate Labour's authority over the direction of future policy to officials in London and Aden. Greenwood warned Trevaskis that he should do his best to persuade the federal Rulers to release Khalifa, but 'that it will not … be necessary for me at the outset of my new office to consider asking you to use your reserve powers. I leave it to you whether to hint that this possibility can however not … be excluded.'[10] Trevaskis lamented the 'unpalatable nature' of the decision that 'could not have [been] more amiss' and would risk the resignation of several federal ministers and the breakdown of the Federation. Senior officials in Whitehall concurred, regarding Trevaskis' warning as 'not overpainted' and that keeping Khalifa in detention was 'the lesser evil… for the time being.' Despite Trevaskis' efforts to maintain a sense of crisis arising from Greenwood's decision 'against which I most clearly advised you', the short-term fall-out from Khalifa's release quickly resolved.[11] Though ten members of the Legislative Council petitioned Wilson for Khalifa's appointment as Chief Minister, the cohesion of the petitioners disintegrated and Baharoon was able to secure sufficient support in the Legislative Council to maintain his position as Chief Minister. Trevaskis, who had recorded in his diary with a hint of satisfaction that he had landed 'an awkward problem' on Greenwood's lap, was taken aback at its rapid resolution 'in one of those odd Arabian ways.'[12] The first symbolic hurdle to a revaluation

[10] TNA, CO 1055/89, Draft Telegram: Secretary of State for the Colonies to High Commissioner, Aden, 21 October 1964
[11] TNA, CO 1055/89, Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 October 1964; Minute by Marnham, 22 October 1964; Minute by Martin, 22 October 1964; Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 October 1964
[12] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 27 October 1964, 28 October 1964

of British policy in South Arabia was overcome, despite official doubts in London and Aden.

Considering the new government's desire to seek a realignment of collaborative relations, and as the personification of the federal policy and the dominant lynchpin of the Federation, it was inevitable Trevaskis' position would be called into question. Trevaskis likely recognised that his position was no longer tenable and believed it might be better to 'fade out of the picture' after another constitutional conference to work out the details of independence.[13] With the Khalifa episode concluded, and a deterioration in his wife's condition, Trevaskis returned to London at the end of October for discussions with Greenwood. Though he knew the writing was on the wall, Trevaskis made a last-ditch effort to argue his case to Greenwood by imploring him to 'recognise that, fundamentally,' the Federation's 'internal difficulties' stemmed from the Egyptian presence in Yemen and that reaching a satisfactory understanding with Aden's nationalists was impossible because they could only act as auxiliaries to Nasser's plans for regional dominance.[14] Despite the cordial reception, Greenwood was far from persuaded. When warned by Trevaskis that appointing al-Asnag to Aden's Legislative Council would 'increase the anxiety' of the federal Rulers, Greenwood countered by asking 'whether the Federation was so insecure that it could not allow its opponents to express their view point. Was it not time … to come to terms with trade unions in Aden State or at least give them a chance to express themselves?'[15] Rebuffed, Trevaskis was dismayed to find no support to continue to argue the Federation's case amongst the 'lot of chameleons' in the Colonial Office officials who 'pandered to the left wing line.'[16] Following the early end to his career in the colonial service, Trevaskis would struggle to find gainful employment. But he quickly began work on what would become his first memoir in line with a wider effort to advance his personal commitment to the federal cause out of office.[17] His efforts, and those of other adherents of the federal idea, would continue to influence the course of British policy in South Arabia.

[13] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 30 October - 16 December 1964; TNA, CO 1055/123, Notes on some of the main personalities in South Arabia, 21 October 1964; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 132-133
[14] TNA, CO 1055/195, Trevaskis to Greenwood, 28 October 1964
[15] TNA, CO 1055/89, Record of a meeting in the Secretary of State's room on 6 November 1964
[16] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 30 October - 16 December 1964
[17] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, pp. 337-361

Suspicions grow

With Trevaskis unceremoniously replaced by Sir Richard Turnbull, who would arrive in Aden in January 1965, London may well have believed bringing a fresh policy initiative for South Arabia's future might be more easily facilitated. However, resistance of key officials on the spot persisted. This stemmed to a considerable degree from the continuities of personnel and self-perpetuating informal intellectual networks that arose in defence of the federal idea. The close attention Trevaskis had paid to cultivating official commitment to the Federation had, to an extent, borne fruit. Likeminded figures such as Robin Young, who deputised to Trevaskis before replacing him as WAP British Agent and Assistant High Commissioner in 1963, were central to maintaining federal thinking in the wake of Trevaskis' removal. Attracting the same moniker, 'Uncle Robin' was an equally dominant if less domineering figure than 'Uncle Ken' who commanded the respect of his subordinates.[18] For the federal idea's adherents, their role as part of an 'empire represent[ing] a force for human improvement and its true value lay in fulfilling an on-going – and, for some, never-ending – development role' gave potent justification to prioritise the Protectorate over Aden.[19] As one new recruit observed, the federal idea's adherents 'were eager… in promoting the Rulers' interests; they saw their leadership as the only hope of progress in their wild and unstable world, and they argued fiercely against any policy of forcing democracy on them or tying them to the urban rabble in Aden.'[20]

This was compounded by the instinctual Conservative leanings of many key officials, who regarded the efforts of Lennox-Boyd, MacLeod and Sandys and the continued interest and advocacy of the Aden Group in Parliament as indicative of the Conservative Party's pro-Federation stance. One official, Laurie Hobson, who had an even closer connection through his sister Valerie's marriage to John Profumo, would provide a 'sympathetic ear' to Young's berating of the new Labour government that fed 'his existing prejudices all too effectively' and perpetuated hostility towards Labour's policy initiatives.[21] Even less partisan officials, one admitted, had 'developed a deal of personal antagonism to … and an impatience with

---

[18] Peter Hinchcliffe, John T. Ducker, Maria Holt, *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat from Aden*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 90 [Chapter five includes tantalising extracts from Robin Young's diaries which have yet to be released for wider scrutiny.]
[19] Chris Jeppesen, ''Sanders of the river, still the best job for a British boy': Recruitment to the Colonial Administrative Service at the End of Empire', *The Historical Journal*, 59:2 (2016), pp. 501-507
[20] Richard Eberlie, *Aden: The Curtain Falls: The Memoirs of Dick Eberlie: Part 4, 1965 to 1967*, (Self-published, 2016), pp. 24-25
[21] Hinchcliffe *et al, Without Glory,* pp. 153-155

… British politicians' hypocritical and expedient policies under the banner of outdated socialist dogma', even if they were far from committed to the 'right wingers' approach' as 'just as unrealistic' in seeking to support the Federation when it was only 'a small number of British keeping it together.'[22] Such hostility was further reflected by key federal Rulers. Mohammed Farid, the Federation's Minister for External Affairs, recalled the Rulers feeling 'very angry and very upset' at the manner of Trevaskis' departure which was the 'first blow to us' Rulers made by the new Labour government. The Rulers, like British officials on the spot, suspected that Labour's 'sympathies were with the trade union movement leaders… [and] not with the federal government', whereas the perceived assurances Conservative ministers had repeatedly given instilled a partisan confidence that was elevated by the narrowness of Labour's majority in the House of Commons and the prospect of a snap election returning the Conservatives to office.[23] The shared ideas of the Federation's Rulers and British officials on the spot perpetuated a cohesive and persistent commitment to maintaining the basic tenets of the federal policy.

The cohesiveness of the network of support for the federal idea was facilitated by the lack of a counterbalance of officials equally devoted to facilitating a change in policy initiated by the Labour government. In part this was due to the wider decline in the appeal of a career in the Colonial Service and staff shortages across the colonial administration in South Arabia were widespread. The few new recruits 'were all thrown into the lion's den without any … adequate briefing on the overall South Arabian scene' and, as one recalled, the wide range of postings meant officials gained 'a wide but shallow experience' of the Protectorate compared to the longer serving, more experienced, and more invested adherents to the federal idea.[24] The lack of an adequate counter to official resistance was also a result of the need to maintain cordial relations with colleagues who 'all depended on each other'.[25] Even where officials were 'appalled… [by] the system of bribery and corruption' or 'realized early on that *keeny meeny* [covert subversion and intrigue], meat and drink to some of my brother political officers, was never really my thing', there were few means or little

[22] Michael Crouch, *An Element of Luck: To South Arabia and Beyond,* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1993), p. 180
[23] Mohamed Farid Al Aulaqi, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 2 August 2017, 11 August 2017; BFI Archive, End of Empire Collection, Item 26, Aden, transcript of interview with Sheikh Mohamed Farid Al-Aulaqi, 5 March 1984; Item 39, Aden, Transcript of Interview with Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, High Commissioner, Aden, 9 July 1984, Roll 14, pp. 3-4
[24] Hinchcliffe *et al, Without Glory,* pp. 81, 83-84
[25] Stewart Hawkins, written response to author's questions, 8 November 2016

imperative to force a confrontation with more senior officials.[26] Where officials did challenge policy, personality was usually sufficient to temper concerns. One official, making a 'scene' in the 'WAP Office refusing to work … saying the office was corrupt and "bedlam"', was quick to apologise and accept Trevaskis' invitation to dinner as a reprieve.[27] Trevaskis had always been, another recalled, 'courteous, patient and never openly exasperated by my unwillingness to be involved in bribery with rifles, ammunition and money'. Many regarded Trevaskis and Young with 'awe', inspiring 'devotion and loyalty in his junior officers.'[28] It was not always sufficient, however, as one recruit, Hugh Walker, recalled

> it is such an inefficient and corrupt place and has no *esprit de corps* whatsoever that one feels the effort to do anything well just isn't worthwhile. ... Every serving officer I have met who has been in other colonial territories is appalled at what we see here and most are determined to get out just as soon as they are able to without financial loss.

Such were Walker's concerns that he wrote to Healey in November 1964 because he was 'unable to satisfy himself that HMG is fully aware of everything that is done in her name', warning the incoming Labour government of the problems of, and his objections to, the federal policy. Walker's lament, however, could not run counter to the policy status quo on the ground that was maintained by the continuity of British personnel after Trevaskis' departure. Peter Hinchcliffe, another former political officer, records (with a slight hint of satisfaction) that Walker 'bent his principles sufficiently to sell some rifles to finance a development project!'[29] Walker's experience is representative of the futility some officials felt in the face of a deeply entrenched commitment to the federal policy. With independence on the horizon, some took the option to exit the Colonial Service at the earliest opportunity and by the end of 1965 200 of the 600 British positions within the colonial administration were vacant.[30] Those who remained operated under the weighty influence of key personnel and within the confines of the administration's ideological and intellectual orientation.

London was acutely aware of the problem of official resistance to any reassessment of policy but had limited options as to how to deal with or overcome it. After Greenwood's

---

[26] Stephen Day, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 29 March 2017; Oliver Miles, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 4 July 2017; John Harding, *Roads to Nowhere: A South Arabian Odyssey 1960-1965,* (London: Arabian Publishing, 2009), p. 278
[27] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/2, 8 March 1958
[28] Hinchcliffe *et al., Without Glory,* pp. 85, 89; Harding, *Roads to Nowhere,* p. 188
[29] Hinchcliffe *et al., Without Glory,* pp. 94, 96-7
[30] TNA, PREM 13/704, Greenwood to Prime Minister, 3 December 1965, Annex IV: The Machinery of Government

visit to Aden in late 1964, though he made clear he had 'no wish to "desert" the Federation' and sought to emphasise the purpose of his visit as 'not to make pronouncements of policy but to concentrate on listening', officials in London warned that such an approach did nothing to subdue suspicions amongst the Rulers and British officials in South Arabia about Labour's intentions. 'At the risk of betraying a confidence', John Marnham, Assistant Under-Secretary for the Colonies, had,

> heard off-record from one of the middle ranks of the administration that, although the Secretary of State achieved a personal triumph with virtually all whom he met, some of the Federal Ministers are a little reproachful at having been left in the dark. As one of them put it, "We opened all our books to him, but he did not allow us so much as a peep into his notebook."[31]

Turnbull's appointment, it was initially believed, might shift control over policy initiatives away from the federal idea's adherents. He was the Colonial Office's 'first choice', and widely regarded as a suitable appointment for his experience as the last Governor of Tanganyika and Chief Secretary in Kenya during the Mau Mau Uprising, experience that superficially suited the dual problem of managing the process of decolonisation and the deteriorating security situation in South Arabia.[32] Nevertheless, he initially faced at best a sceptical reception amongst British officials and the federal Rulers, who both saw him 'not only as a Labour appointee but also as a very poor substitute for their beloved Kennedy Trevaskis' and 'had a bit of a job securing the loyalty of all the officials'.[33] Furthermore, the continued cooperation of experienced officials on the spot was required to maintain relations with the federal Rulers and avoid the premature breakup of the Federation. Any counter to official commitment to the Federation thus faced considerable obstacles.

Greenwood's unitary initiative

Following Greenwood's visit to Aden in late 1964, his initial success in persuading the Adeni and Federal leadership to issue a joint declaration to agree in principle to work towards establishing a unitary state and the announcement of a constitutional conference the following March to thrash out the details was met with widespread favourable coverage

[31] TNA, CO 1055/124, Minute by Marnham, 22 December 1964
[32] Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia,* p. 95; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 133
[33] Hinchcliffe *et al., Without Glory,* pp. 158, 160; Oliver Miles, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 4 July 2017; Mohamed Farid Al Aulaqi, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 2 August 2017

across the Adeni and UK press.[34] However, the agreement between the Adenis and the federal Rulers seems to have arisen suddenly and unexpectedly; officials were 'astonished' by the turn of events and Trevaskis was 'flabbergasted' by the announcement.[35] The suddenness of the shift in policy objective may have occasioned the eventual postponement of the March conference. The Rulers' initial agreement was likely precipitated by Trevaskis' departure and the belief that the movement towards a unitary state would proceed either gradually or with the continued dominance of the Protectorate states over Aden. During preliminary discussions for the conference, Farid pushed for each federal state and 'interest' to be represented at conference by one representative each to maintain federal dominance, whilst also calling for the representatives to have 'as many advisers, within reason, as each like to bring' to ensure British official advice could reinforce their negotiating hand.[36] As the federal Rulers gradually came to realise the implications of the proposed unitary state on their positions given power would instead centre on Aden, the chances of a successful constitutional conference grew ever slimmer. Furthermore, their insistence that the EAP states should be full participants at the conference proved an anathema. Nationalist politicians across the EAP were immediately suspicious of the planned unitary state and, conscious of the toxicity of the Aden merger and the growing calls for the implementation of the UN resolutions, the EAP state governments calculated it safer to 'sit tight and say nothing at all' rather than participate and risk the ire of local nationalists and Cairo for 'playing [the] British game'.[37] The intractability of the local political situation and the bitter legacies of constitutional devices to advance British interests had created a climate of suspicion that precluded a constitutional redress by the Labour government.

These difficulties aside, Peter Brooke points to the role Sandys and Trevaskis may have played in the abandonment of the conference, highlighting Turnbull's suspicions that Farid 'may have had one or two casual conversations' with Sandys and Trevaskis in January 1965 during Winston Churchill's funeral that reinforced the Rulers' view that their 'future would

---

[34] TNA, CO 1055/105, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Acting High Commissioner, Aden, 5 November 1965; 'Greenwood thaws Aden's freeze-up', *The Observer,* 5 December 1964; CO 1055/124, Account of a meeting between the Secretary of State and the Federal Supreme Council and the Aden Council of Ministers, 7 December 1964; CO 1055/136, Extract from *Aden Chronicle*, 17 December 1964; Young, *The Labour governments,* pp. 90-91

[35] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 135; OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 30 October - 16 December 1964

[36] TNA, CO 1055/105, Stacpoole to Roberts, 29 January 1965

[37] BL, IOR/R/20/C/1927, Record of the Secretary of State's meeting with a 'non-government delegation' in the Residency at Mukalla on 2 December 1964; Resident Adviser (Mukalla) to High Commissioner, 5 January 1965; High Commissioner (Aden) to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 January 1965; IOR/R/20/C/1928, AANA (Saiun) to RA (Mukalla), 23 February 1965; Eyre to Oates, 3 March 1965; RA (Mukalla) to High Coma (Aden), 4 March 1965

be far more assured by a Conference under Conservative auspices than under the present dispensation'.[38] However, British officials' ambivalence towards the idea of a unitary state was also vital in undoing Greenwood's early success in securing agreement in principle to work towards a unitary state. As one official recalled, when faced with fresh policy initiatives from London 'we didn't adapt to it. … We carried on trying to do what we could to pursue the policy that had been implemented over many years, propping up the Federation, assuming that the Rulers were going to take over because we genuinely didn't see any alternative.'[39] A report produced by Young and the Security Operations Advisor, Brigadier Robert Penford, was, in part, a reaction to Trevaskis' dismissal and an attempt to dominate Turnbull's initial brief to blunt the initiation of a change in policy and press the federal policy. The report argued the Trevaskis line that the primary political consideration, even after the unitary state announcement, was to 'make the Federation a reality' as a 'viable independent state' to combat Egyptian aggression and 'prove to Arab public opinion that it has real and unfettered authority over SW Arabia'.[40] Military figures in Aden, reflecting official opinion, maintained that the Federation served at the centre of Britain's interests as 'the forward defence of the base', and that British support should reinforce the Federal Rulers over and above the 'Arabs in Aden' whom Britain 'must not expect… will support us against [the] Arab world led by Nasser.'[41] The report was also one of the last instances in which officials on the spot pushed their preferred policy through conventional channels. Turnbull, unlike his predecessors, was given no opportunity to prepare an inaugural policy dispatch and was instead tasked to negotiate the preliminaries for the March conference, denying subordinate officials the chance to influence his recommendations to London. From 1965 onwards officials turned to less tangible, informal means of countering alternative policy ideals and advancing their own. The British legal adviser in Aden, Hugh Hickling, together with the Federation's Attorney General and close associate of Trevaskis, Richard Holmes, remained sceptical as to the feasibility of a unitary state and appear to have prepared the ground for the planned March conference accordingly. Writing in a personal capacity, Hickling outlined official policy for preparing the Aden and federal representatives of the March conference as, on the one hand, turning them 'to a more detailed consideration of the implications of a "Unitary State"', whilst on

[38] Brooke, *Duncan Sandys,* pp. 62-65; TNA, CO 1055/105, Turnbull to Marnham, 1 March 1965
[39] Stephen Day, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 29 March 2017
[40] TNA, CO 1055/216, A paper by the Western Aden Protectorate Security Committee on the situation in the Federation of South West Arabia on 1 January 1965 and measures required to deal with it
[41] TNA, CO 1055/215, CDS to MOD, 9 February 1965

the other hand, seeking to 'avoid any discussion' of 'any problems of a disruptive tendency' such as sovereignty over Aden or the issue of a local Head of State. But his scepticism stemmed not just from practical difficulties or the need to produce as conducive an atmosphere as possible but from his personal belief that 'a unitary State is no more than an ideal, as noble and confusing as that of Arab unity'. Though he assured his counterpart in the Colonial Office that 'we are doing all we can to create conditions in which the forthcoming Conference may be successful … the local outlook gives, so far, no cause for anything but the most slender of optimisms'.[42] This climate of scepticism filtered into Turnbull's own view who, less than a two weeks before the March conference was postponed, aired his own scepticism as to the prospects of the proposed unitary state given that, he argued, 'the concept of unity is based upon emotion rather than realism' and that it appeared 'certain that no unitary state on lines set out… can be achieved in a viable form by 1968'.[43] The climate of scepticism that pervaded official ranks provided reinforcement to the federal Rulers who became increasingly obstructive during the conference's preparatory negotiations. The federal Rulers' stance prompted the resignation of Baharoon as Chief Minister who believed that, without adequate representation for Aden or the EAP at the conference, 'Aden will continue to be chained and fettered by a constitution which no one in Aden can support.'[44] Not wanting to see a collapse during the conference itself, Greenwood was forced to postpone. The climate of non-cooperation and suspicion was well established prior to the abandonment of the March conference, but the backdrop of official opinion on the spot fostered and encouraged such a climate to maintain the Federation's centrality to British policy and preclude the adjustment of collaborative relations in South Arabia.

Defining collaboration

Aside from wishing to change the constitutional framework in South Arabia, Wilson and Greenwood were eager to address wider political issues they had inherited. After Baharoon was secured as Chief Minister in October 1964, Wilson and Greenwood agreed to 'press forward' with an effort to collaborate with al-Asnag and bring him into the fold.[45] The eagerness with which this was pursued in the first few months of Wilson's government was

[42] TNA, CO 1055/105, Hickling to Rushford, January 1965; 13 February 1965 [Note the use of quotation marks/scare quote.]
[43] TNA, CO 1055/124, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 16 February 1965
[44] TNA, CO 1055/89, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 February 1965
[45] TNA, CO 1055/89, Private Secretary to Marnham, 29 October 1964

fuelled by a desire to move away from the Conservative government's treatment of the labour movement in Aden, to identify with a recognisable, ideal collaborative figure and, for Wilson especially, by a sentimental importance attached to fostering Aden's trade union movement. Wilson enquired about appointing a dedicated Trade Union Adviser to Aden and, when advised it would be regarded with suspicion locally, nevertheless urged officials to 'keep the matter under review.' Under instruction, Greenwood unsuccessfully urged the British TUC General Secretary, George Woodcock, to establish formal contact with the ATUC to 'open the way'.[46] In Aden, Greenwood pressed the issue of either amending or repealing the 1960 Industrial Relations Ordinance to reduce tensions and found Baharoon 'willing to consider' such a move so long as it did not 'affect Aden's well-being' or see a return to 'irresponsible strikes'.[47] But efforts to appoint al-Asnag as a nominated member to Aden's Legislative Council proved fruitless. Working through 'unofficial channels to induce al-Asnag to accept the offer' and rejecting a list of alternative ATUC figures he proposed to the British embassy in Cairo, there was nevertheless considerable political and personal toxicity that precluded cooperation between al-Asnag and the British. According to the ATUC, Trevaskis' tenure as High Commissioner had turned South Arabia 'into a police state in the best tradition of Fascism' and the political currency of non-cooperation had reached the extent that al-Asnag's acceptance of a nominated position 'would lay him open to attack by the UAR' and 'almost certainly' lead to defections of his followers to the NLF, who would 'hold guilty any parties or personalities that sat down to discuss with Britain the retention or leaving of its Aden base'. Al-Asnag's deep-rooted suspicion of the British colonial administration in Aden gave him further reason not to trust that collaborating within the formal state framework would advance his position. Throughout his discussions at the British Embassy in Cairo, al-Asnag requested that details of his contacts should not be disclosed to the British authorities in Aden 'lest the news leak and he be discredited.'[48] He justifiably assumed that there remained a well of antipathy that precluded the necessary conditions to expand collaborative relations. Al-Asnag included, amongst others, 'the continued efforts by Senior members of the British Administration to interrupt the internal relationship between the PSP and its natural [ally] the ATUC in

[46] TNA, CO 1055/223, Stacpoole to Read, 8 January 1965; Read to Stacpoole, 12 January 1965; Note: [Greenwood] to Woodcock, 19 January 1965
[47] TNA, CO 1055/223, Note of meeting at Ministry of Labour at 11.15am on 5 December 1964
[48] TNA, CO 1055/223, Qadhi and al Asnag to Greenwood, 30 November 1964; CO 1055/89, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis, 28 October 1964; Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 October 1964; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Aden (Acting High Commissioner), 2 November 1964, 9 November 1964; CAB 21/5297; Aden monthly intelligence summary for November 1964

pursuance of the policy originated by [Trevaskis]' as one his reasons for not attending the planned March conference.[49]

When officials in Aden reported on the apparent reluctance of al-Asnag to follow demands from Cairo to use violence to undermine the British in Aden their analysis highlighted its supposed novelty, doubting 'whether any Arab nationalist leader, let alone a small-time one like al Asnaj, could fly in the face of Nasser'.[50] This view was further reflected in London where Marnham doubted 'whether it is necessary to trouble [the Cabinet] at this stage with this isolated straw in the wind' as any breach between the two could only ever be temporary because, 'regardless of [the PSP's] own inclinations, it would have no alternative but to toe the Egyptian line'.[51] With the March conference's postponement, Turnbull was 'convinced' that negotiations to form a national government should only be with pro-Federation Adenis and there little point in initiating any discussions with the PSP or SAL. Greenwood, noticing Turnbull's doubts, reminded him of the 'great importance' he attached to maintaining contact with the SAL and PSP.[52] Yet officials on the spot were continually reluctant to conceptually disassociate local nationalists from the belief, a core element of the federal idea, that local nationalism was an extension of and subject to Nasser's ambitions. Nor could al-Asnag easily shift his stance towards the British without undermining his own position within the local nationalist movement. Without that conceptual flexibility, the inability to search for common ground would prove a significant obstacle to implementing a fresh policy in South Arabia.

Searching for a solution

After the postponement of the March conference, Greenwood redirected his efforts to creating conditions in which constitutional talks could begin. His approach consisted of three main priorities. The first was to introduce apparently neutral arbitration by way of a constitutional commission that could provide a start point for the second; to bring as wide a degree of collaboration across all local interests to discuss a constitution 'constructively

[49] TNA, CO 1055/263, al Asnag to Thomson, 10 February 1965
[50] TNA, CO 1055/154, Local Intelligence Committee: Aden: Present Policy of the People's Socialist Party (PSP), 3 November 1964
[51] TNA, CO 1055/154, Minute: Marnham to Martin, 28 October 1964; CO 1055/123, Aden Department Memorandum: South Arabia: Possible sources of action, 13 November 1964; CO 1055/155, Oates to Marnham, 23 December 1964
[52] TNA, CO 1055/89, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 March 1965; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Turnbull, 2 March 1965; Record of teleprinter discussion at 21.15 on 2 March 1965 between the Secretary of State for the Colonies (in the Ministry of Defence) and the High Commissioner, Aden (in HQME)

in the first place without commitment.'[53] He believed building that trust could be facilitated by, thirdly, advancing a programme of liberalisation to disarm febrile criticism of the Federation and 'enable [Britain] to continue to fulfil a peace-keeping role' in South Arabia.[54] The measures were wide-ranging, including the promotion of political parties and trade unions in the Protectorate, the return of exiled Rulers, the relaxation of restrictions under the state of emergency, a review of the distribution of arms, addressing Aden's franchise and a greater emphasis on the importance of human rights across the territory.[55] Such measures, however, were regarded on the spot as an anathema in light of the increased frequency and indiscriminate nature of attacks in Aden, including one on a children's Christmas party. The measures, Marnham warned, 'may be a little startling to those who will be asked to implement them' and suggested sending the Deputy High Commissioner Tom Oates 'a personal letter giving a broad indication of [Greenwood's] background thinking' to soften the blow. Greenwood implored Oates of his hope that 'you will be able to persuade all concerned to consider the problem as objectively and dispassionately as possible, and not to allow the terrorists to achieve their object of clouding our judgment and putting us off our stroke.' Greenwood could 'well imagine that there may be initial doubts' about his desire for liberalisation, but argued they might prove more constructive than further restrictions under emergency regulations that would 'play into the hands of extremists, and these savage acts of terrorism … may come to be regarded by ill-informed critics as spontaneous protests by a subject population against a repressive regime.'[56] In spite of this, officials on the spot became increasingly hostile to Labour's initiatives. In February 1965, Greenwood stressed upon Turnbull his desire to make clear that the Labour government's attitude 'is very different' from its predecessors. But Greenwood, aware of coalescing doubts, reminded Turnbull that it 'will be for his officers' policy and attitude to show that this is so; but I am sure it is not necessary for me to say so.'[57] Throughout early 1965, Greenwood repeatedly stressed these priorities but grew frustrated with the slow pace and lacking initiative with which they were being implemented.

---

[53] TNA, CO 1055/124, Policy in South Arabia: Notes for discussion with the High Commissioner, 1 March 1965
[54] TNA, CO 1055/142, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Turnbull, 2 April 1965
[55] TNA, CO 1055/124, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Acting High Commissioner, 31 December 1964
[56] TNA, CO 1055/124, Minute by Marnham, 22 December 1964; Greenwood to Oates, 30 December 1964; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Acting High Commissioner, 31 December 1964
[57] TNA, CO 1055/124, Marnham to Turnbull, 9 February 1965

On the issue of the distribution of arms in the Protectorate, it was not until November 1965 that Turnbull responded to Greenwood's request for a review, in which he outlined the well-rehearsed arguments that the 'special circumstances of South Arabia' made the distribution of arms a valuable component of British policy. When sold locally at ten times their purchase cost, providing a valuable income stream, there was little point to initiate a reversal of such a long-establish practice. Turnbull stressed that he would 'of course… be happy to have such a sum at our disposal and thus be able to cut down radically on the import of arms', but the apparent controls Britain had over the supply of arms was 'as satisfactory as is possible in the circumstances.'[58] Similarly, Greenwood's desire to establish 'representative institutions' across the Federation received a sluggish response. With the intensification of terrorism, Turnbull regarded persuading the federal Rulers to encourage the formation of political parties and trade unions in the Federation as impolitic and 'virtually impossible'.[59] Greenwood nevertheless had faith that Turnbull could impress upon the Rulers the need for a change, and that the main obstacle was that he was not being

> adequately supported by enough staff of the experience and calibre required in this extremely difficult territory at this critical time. Moreover, some of the local leaders have represented to me that some of the senior civil servants in Aden are too closely identified with the policies of the previous Government (which of course they were duty bound to carry out).[60]

With the lack of means to bring in new staff to remedy this, Turnbull would eventually report on the limited changes made in the Federation. Elections were planned in a handful of town councils, but no progress could be made on establishing political parties and the International Labour Organisation Conventions in the Federation because, as Turnbull explained,

> [i]n a country in which every man goes armed, where family and clan feuds are the dominant factor in social relationships, and where the whole structure of society is fundamentally different from that of Western Europe, the ILO Conventions are scarcely to be related to reality. Nothing has been done about them.[61]

---

[58] TNA, CO 1055/125, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trunbull [sic], 17 March 1965; CO 1055/186, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 November 1965; Minute by Hull, 16 November 1965

[59] TNA, CO 1055/125, Note for the Secretary of State, 19 March 1965; Note of a Meeting held in the Secretary of State's Room on 23rd March [1965]

[60] TNA, CO 1055/125, Greenwood to Prime Minister, 29 March 1965

[61] TNA, CO 1055/125, High Commissioner (Aden) to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 June 1965

Local circumstances aside, it became clear that the Rulers' position was aided in becoming increasingly entrenched by officials on the spot against liberalisation measures. On the issue of returning exiles to South Arabia to initiate discussions with as wide a cross-section of interests as possible, Turnbull noted that some senior officials' 'personal friendships to some of the Federalis' made them 'fearful of being involved in what might perhaps be interpreted as a breach of faith… [and] convinced that the return of the exiles would do nothing but harm.'[62] A letter of protest sent by the Federal Supreme Council to Wilson chastised the government's position, warned that introducing democracy to the states could not be undertaken without 'bloodshed and [chaos]', and demanded that sovereignty over Aden should be handed directly to the Federation.[63] The federal Rulers' letter's 'tone of querulous remonstrance', one Colonial Office official suspected, was 'learned from British advisers in the past'.[64] Though Turnbull regarded it as an 'impertinence', he simultaneously arranged for Sandys to meet with the federal Rulers that, at a moment of heightened tension, 'offered both succour to the Rulers and a shot across Greenwood's bows.' It further opened meetings and a correspondence between Sharif Hussein and Sandys that, as Brooke notes, was facilitated by official channels and translators.[65] Officials on the spot could not carry as much force as they had done within official policy discourse and thus turned to informal networks to vent their frustrations with the new Labour government as it sought to address its precarious inheritance.

The process of bringing together a constitutional commission also illustrates the Wilson government's problem of balancing their own policy priorities and prejudices, as well as indicating how intractable the situation had become. One tension was the extent to which a constitutional commission could present a starting point for a fresh political initiative that was regarded as neutral by the British, Adeni nationalists and the Federation. At face value, a constitutional commission might have been able to take some of the heat out of the situation in South Arabia but doing so in a way compatible with the interests of the various sections involved illustrates one way in which the thinking of the new Labour government bore similarities to the previous Conservative administration. Neutrality, from the British perspective, retained a possessive undercurrent. Emerging as an idea soon after the

[62] TNA, CO 1055/125, Turnbull to Marnham, 25 May 1965
[63] TNA, CO 1055/125, Chairman of the Supreme Council to Wilson, 26 June 1965
[64] TNA, CO 1055/125, Minute: Cumming-Bruce to Roberts, July 1965; Turnbull to Marnham, 28 June 1965
[65] TNA, CO 1055/125, Turnbull to Marnham, 28 June 1965; Brooke, *Duncan Sandys*, pp. 65-69; Churchill Archive Centre, Oxford (hereafter CAC), DSND, 14/1/1, Sharif of Baihan to Sandys, 10 July 1965, 5 August 1965

postponement of the March conference, Greenwood posed a commission as the 'only way' in which 'we [Britain] can best regain the political initiative in South Arabia' in a way that conformed to an ideal transfer of power.[66] As a Colonial Office note stipulated, such a commission would need to appeal to 'the well-disposed' in South Arabia by way of selecting members who were 'free from the imperialist taint', Muslims and nominated by the UN, whilst desirably being knowledgeable of Arab 'tradition and aspirations' and with 'legal experience, preferably of British-type law and institutions.' Yet these requirements were not absolute and would be met only in presentation rather than substance. The commission was under pressure from Healey, who continued to review Britain's defence commitments and was cautious of a negative reaction in Parliament, and so it would be 'excluded from discussing the position of the Base before independence' to not give the impression that Britain was about to abandon its defence commitments. Furthermore, a convoluted scheme to have UN Secretary General U Thant nominate a panel of names for the commission from which Greenwood would appoint would, on the one hand, mean that such a member would 'not thereby become the "representative of [the] UN" … Nor would the report of the commission be caught up in the machinery' of the UN. On the other, it would stop Aden's political parties 'making unreasonable demands' and make them 'probably… willing to co-operate with the commission in view of its evidently independent character and the element of UN participation.' One official, not wanting to exaggerate the substance of this, noted as a reminder in the margin that '[t]here won't be any'.[67] The problem of UN involvement in this way was not lost on another official, who questioned what the 'object in asking the Secretary-General to take a hand in this' was and whether it would be easier for the UK Mission to simply ask the Secretary-General to nominate a member.[68] In the event, U Thant declined to participate under pressure from the British to ensure that they 'in fact if not in form should have the final say in [the commission's] selection', and from the Committee of 24 to not 'compromise with British colonialism', whilst in Parliament Sandys lampooned Greenwood for seemingly 'trying to pass the buck'.[69]

In Aden, the proposed constitutional commission received a hostile reaction from Adeni nationalists. Though Turnbull's initial soundings with various nationalist figures indicated a 'sympathetic reception' amongst their respective parties, with al-Asnag and others

[66] TNA, CO 1055/125, Greenwood to Prime Minister, 25 March 1965
[67] TNA, CO 1055/125, Note: South Arabia: A Constitutional Commission, 23 March 1965
[68] TNA, CO 1055/125, Minute: Jerrom to Eastwood, 23 March 1965
[69] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 136; Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia,* p. 100

making suggestions to aid the commission's presentation amongst Arab countries, the grounds for optimism quickly gave way. Pre-existing suspicion of constitutional 'tricks' to advance British interests, 'delay[ing] political development… and [directing] it into the wrong channels', appears to have played a key role. A constitutional commission 'could not be relied upon to be either perceptive or impartial' given Britain's apparent 'intention [was] to confirm the Rulers in their present position' and it could only be so if the 'Rulers were stripped of their powers and the Governments of the Federation and States and of Eastern Aden Protectorate were demolished'. Instead, in an effort to have the state apparatus transferred to the PSP in the lead up to independence to shore up its position against its local rivals and the British administration on the spot, al-Asnag demanded for political parties to have direct negotiations with the British government as a means to work out and impose a constitution.[70] The rejection of the constitutional commission amongst Adeni nationalists coincided with the formation of the Organisation for the Liberation of the Occupied South (OLOS) in May 1965, an alliance of the PSP and SAL that aimed for a full organisational merger to lead the nationalist struggle. By July, al-Asnag ceased all political activity in South Arabia and moved to Yemen as a base of operations. Denouncing the constitutional commission indicated the trajectory local nationalists were headed, moving towards an increasingly radical position whereby the degree of non-cooperation with the British proved central to their individual and organisational standing.[71]

The federal Rulers proved to be far more receptive towards the idea of a constitutional commission along the lines proposed, and it was on this basis that Turnbull recommended that Britain 'must bend over backwards to keep their full confidence and co-operation.'[72] Despite his frustrations with the Federation, he gradually grew more aligned to aspects of the thinking of officials on the spot and regarded the Federation as Britain's only dependable ally and leading figures in Aden as irksome and disruptive. These perceptions filtered into Greenwood's thinking. Believing that local nationalists' objections lacked substance and maturity, Greenwood agreed that the Federation's encouraging response should be the basis upon which preparations for the commission could continue, whilst any boycott by Adeni nationalists would 'surely make themselves look so foolish as to forfeit sympathy from all but the incurably hostile. By the same token we shall manifestly have

[70] TNA, CO 1055/142, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 April 1965, 16 April 1965; Note on meeting held on 15th April with Representatives of PSP - Mr Asnag, Mr Ba Matraf and Mr Mohamed Sadiq, by Turnbull, 18 April 1965
[71] Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia,* p. 125
[72] TNA, CO 1055/142, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6 May 1965

done all that can reasonably be expected of us.'[73] Efforts to bring Adeni nationalists 'into a more co-operative frame of mind' indicates how a cross-governmental conceptual rigidity continued to influence the continual failure to reach a political settlement prior to independence.[74] But such efforts also overlooked the degree with which non-cooperation with anything associated with the Federation was a centrepiece of nationalists' strategies, and that disruption, dissent and violence as part of these strategies became increasingly utilised through the course of 1965.

The suspension of the Aden constitution

The currency of violent anti-federal politics in Aden is especially notable after the collapse in relations with Baharoon's replacement as Chief Minister, Abdulqawi Mackawee, and the suspension of the Aden constitution and imposition of direct rule on 23 September 1965. After accepting Baharoon's resignation Turnbull had 'no alternative' but to appoint Mackawee as Chief Minister after he secured the required support in the Legislative Council to form a government.[75] But having opposed the June 1964 Conference as undemocratic and having stood in Aden's election because he 'thought it better to fight the present regime from [the] inside', Mackawee was immediately regarded by the British as provocative and uncooperative.[76] In April 1965, Mackawee publicly lamented the 'very painful experience' of merger, which had 'been drawn up in London and then forced upon the people of Aden', the behaviour of 'madmen' British soldiers, and called for the unilateral implementation of the UN resolutions.[77] The federal Rulers were aghast, focusing their ire on the British government, whom they regarded as responsible for allowing such a statement to air, and probed as to whether Mackawee's statement constituted a change in British policy towards the Federation.[78] Turnbull was quick to add to the growing concern, alerting London to the need for legal powers to dissolve the Legislative Council, postpone further elections and 'govern Aden without Ministers for a period within my discretion to

[73] TNA, CO 1055/142, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Turnbull, 22 April 1965; Greenwood to Prime Minister, 4 May 1965
[74] TNA, CO 1055/143, Record of a meeting between the Secretary of State and the SA Constitutional Commission, House of Commons, Tuesday 6th July 1965; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Turnbull, 7 July 1965; Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8 July 1965
[75] TNA, CO 1055/89, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 March 1965
[76] TNA, CO 1055/102, Shihad and Mackawee to Sandys, 9 June 1964; CO 1055/124, Extract from record of meeting between the Secretary of State and the Legislative Council - Aden, 30 November 1964
[77] TNA, CO 1055/90, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 April 1965
[78] TNA, CO 1055/125, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25 April 1965; CO 1055/90, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 April 1965

determine.' Considering Mackawee's position, Turnbull regarded the proposed constitutional commission as a 'non-starter' in Aden. Though he entertained the possibility of holding elections across the Federation for a constituent assembly to regain the political initiative and prevent the constitutional commission 'being smothered before birth', he nevertheless considered such an assembly as 'no more competent to handle this assignment than a troupe of performing seals'.[79] After the Federation's Federal Council called for the adoption of the UN resolutions in May 1965, the federal Rulers' 'angry bewilderment' prompted Turnbull to warn Greenwood that Britain risked losing 'the only support we have in South Arabia' and predict that the security situation might suddenly turn 'exceedingly grave' without immediate action.[80] Mackawee's rejection of a proposed constituent assembly to work with the constitutional commission and the resignation of all of Aden's representatives in the Federal Council brought the federal Rulers to the 'end of their tether'. The 'time has now come', Turnbull warned, 'when I should be accorded discretionary power to dissolve Aden Legislative Council' or else Britain would find 'the Federation breaking up under us.'[81] Turnbull's frustrations with Aden's nationalist personalities and understanding of the Federation as Britain's only dependable allies, particularly as the security situation deteriorated, had prepared the ground for an eventual fallback onto relying solely on the Federation as independence loomed.

Yet Greenwood remained adamant not to allow Mackawee to get 'under our skin' with his provocations.[82] A last ditch effort to have Mackawee and other nationalists 'start constructive discussions … in an atmosphere of confidence' through engagement with the constitutional commission nevertheless faltered. In response to the announcement that the commission would have a delegate from Sudan, Mackawee successfully called on the Sudanese government to stop their involvement, whilst banning the two remaining British commissioners, Noel Coulson and Evelyn Hone, from entering Aden on account of them being 'illegal immigrants'. Another request by Turnbull in July 1965 to issue an ultimatum to Mackawee and be armed with the necessary powers to dissolve the Legislative Council and sack the Adeni government was immediately declined.[83] Unannounced, Greenwood

[79] TNA, CO 1055/90, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 April 1965
[80] TNA, CO 1055/142, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 May 1965; 4 May 1965; CO 1055/125, 5 May 1965
[81] TNA, CO 1055/125, Turnbull to Marnham, 25 May 1965; Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 July 1965
[82] TNA, CO 1055/125, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Turnbull, 26 April 1965
[83] TNA, CO 1055/219, Greenwood to Mackawi, al-Asnag, al-Habshi, Sultan Hussain bin Ali al-Kathiri, al-Attas, Luqman, Girgirah, 15 July 1965; CO 1055/90, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the

arrived in Aden to gain control of the situation. Against pressure from Turnbull and military figures on the spot, Greenwood was able to engineer a working party made up of representatives from the PSP, SAL, EAP, Federation and Adeni government to meet in London to establish an agenda for future negotiations. The open-ended purpose of the working party, the fraught political situation, the suddenness of Greenwood's visit and the short notice of the meeting, scheduled for 2 August, may well have aided the initial agreement for further consultation. But the ambiguous public framing of the starting points of such consultation, 'the generally accepted principles of self-determination and independence expressed by the United Nations Resolution… and… the declared intention of HMG to bring South Arabia to independence not later than 1968', covered Britain's preferred position as it did not, Greenwood's memorandum to Cabinet outlined, 'commit us [Britain] to acceptance of the whole of the Resolution', nor 'involve any commitment on our part as regards the Base'.[84] Any initial cause for optimism was quickly dispelled once the working party got under way.[85] The Adeni delegation's opening remarks demanded the 'adoption without reservation' of the UN resolution, contrasting heavily with the federal delegation's and Greenwood's more qualified lines. The PSP delegates, including al-Asnag, began to protest the procedural focus of discussion as an 'evasion of the UN Resolution' and the meeting 'immediately sank in [a] quagmire of largely artificial dispute[s]', whilst separate informal meetings with the delegations produced 'no useful result'. As the talks broke down over the UN resolutions, the base and the state of emergency, Greenwood terminated proceedings as it became 'clear that progress was impossible'.[86]

Frustrations across the British administration in Aden and Whitehall were palpable with the Cabinet Secretary, Burke Trend, noting the 'ludicrous position' of Britain being 'anxious to grant independence as soon as possible but [that it] cannot get the people concerned even to discuss the sort of independence they would like to have.'[87] Perhaps implicitly

---

Colonies, 20 July 1965; Secretary of State for the Colonies to Turnbull, 20 July 1965; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 136-137

[84] TNA, CO 1055/107, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Turnbull, 27 July 1965; Draft: Cabinet Defence and Overseas Policy Committee: South Arabia: Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary [undated]; CAB 148/22, OPD (65) 119, Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary, 27 July 1965; CAB 148/18, OPD (65) 33rd Meeting, 28 July 1965

[85] TNA, CO 1055/107, 'South Arabia Crisis Saved – Greenwood', *Evening Standard,* 26 July 1965

[86] TNA, CO 1055/107, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Aden (Acting High Commissioner), 3 August 1965, 5 August 1965, 7 August 1965; Greenwood to Prime Minister, 9 August 1965; Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia,* pp. 122-126; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 137

[87] TNA, CAB/21/5297, Trend to Prime Minister, 27 July 1965

recognising this, Greenwood called for a survey of 'all courses of action' open to Britain and, venting his frustrations at the lack of progress towards liberalisation, hoped for 'real progress on the issue of political detainees and exiles.' But the failure of the working party marked the moment where the obvious constitutional avenues to a settlement were closed off, and the options laid out by officials in London and Aden laid bare the precarity of the situation; one official ventured that Britain should 'let the natural forces of the area decide what happened next... we could console our consciences by reference to the precedents we set in India in 1947 and Palestine in 1948.'[88] The problems facing Britain were also a product of what Marnham called the 'fundamentals' of the situation. Bringing the Federation, Aden and the political parties into 'joint harness', though a 'brave attempt … richly worth making', faltered on the inherently zero-sum process of seeking to elevate the collaborative importance of Aden over the Protectorate and moving towards independence whilst maintaining Britain's interests in Aden. The importance previously placed on the Protectorate by the federal policy as a means of achieving the latter had made them 'a necessary part of the equation' that could not be reduced without significant detriment or collapse. But with OLOS calling for all South Arabians to refuse to cooperate, the prospects of achieving a political settlement on the broader basis without fuelling lingering animosity were severely curtailed.[89]

Additionally, the escalation of violence through 1965 had the dual effect of disincentivising political cooperation between Adeni nationalists and the British and a hardening of attitudes amongst British figures on the spot as they, British forces, and local Arabs associated or working with the British were increasingly targeted, with 237 casualties in Aden and 350 casualties across the Protectorate over the year.[90] Of greatest impact on the collapse of efforts to achieve a political solution was the fallout from Mackawee's response to the assassinations of Harry Barrie, a British Superintendent, and Sir Arthur Charles, the British Speaker of the Aden Legislative Council. With the NLF claiming responsibility and warning that British officials in Aden would be 'shot one by one, like dogs', Mackawee's public statement of support for 'what the Front's commandos have done for the sake of liberation of the country' and his demand that negotiations with them as a political party

[88] TNA, CO 1055/126, Stacpoole to Roberts, 18 August 1965; McCarthy to Weir, 2 September 1965; Galsworthy to Secretary of State, 28 August 1965
[89] TNA, CO 1055/125, Marnham to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 May 1965; Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia,* pp. 146-147
[90] TNA, CO 1055/108, Galsworthy to Greenwood, 10 August 1965; Julian Paget, *Last Post: Aden 1964-67,* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), pp. 135, 141

should be pursued because they 'had proved its existence in Aden' horrified officials in Aden and London. With no members of the Legislative Council willing or able to condemn the assassinations for fear of being targeted themselves, Mackawee's blaming of the deteriorating situation on Britain and his further denouncement of the Federation brought the long-entertained prospect of suspending the Aden constitution to the forefront by officials in Aden and London.[91] Greenwood, however, hesitated and hoped that he could urge Mackawee to 'reconsider the matter' and avoid a 'tit-for-tat provocation in a battle of words'. His hesitation was in part fuelled by a fear that suspending the constitution would deny any chance of any political initiatives arising in the near future and endanger the prospects of the Foreign Office Minister of State George Thomson's upcoming visit to Cairo – the first by any British Minister since Suez – but also by political considerations, hoping, according to Richard Crossman, to delay a decision until after Labour's NEC elections were announced.[92] But amidst the dismay of officials in Aden and threats from the federal Rulers to take matters into their own hands there was no alternative.[93] Ministers agreed to suspend the Aden constitution and impose direct rule on 23 September, against Greenwood's pleas to continue seeking a 'political answer' without recourse to additional emergency powers.[94]

The suspension of Aden's constitution marked the moment where the opportunities to realign collaborative relations ended, whilst Greenwood's hesitation poisoned relations between officials in Aden and the Labour government. British policymakers continued to look to Aden for any viable local collaborators, but increasingly found that continuing to work with the Federation became the unpalatable default. In large part this was because of the deterioration of labour relations in Aden which, after a quiet period following the suspension of the Aden constitution, precipitated the continued decline in the broader security situation. Through the second half of 1965, an increasingly militant group of unions emerged and in August the ATUC split from the PSP. After a summer of strikes by workers

---

[91] Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia,* pp. 129-130; TNA, CO 1055/126, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 14 September 1965; Mackawee to High Commissioner, 4 September 1965; Statement by Aden Ministers, 15 September

[92] TNA, CO 1055/126, Galsworthy to Secretary of State, 6 September 1965; Greenwood to Galsworthy, 9 September 1965; Draft: Secretary of State to High Commissioner, Aden, [undated]; Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister: Volume One,* (London: Hamish Hamilton & Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 334

[93] TNA, CO 1055/126, Galsworthy to Secretary of State, 8 September 1965; Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 16 September 1965; 18 September 1965; 20 September 1965; CAB 21/5297, C in C ME to MOD UK, 21 September 1965; PREM 13/113, Chairman, Supreme Council to Wilson, 20 September 1965

[94] TNA, CAB 148/18, OPD (65) 41st Meeting, 23 September 1965; PREM 13/113, McIndoe to [?], 21 September 1965; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 138

formerly employed at the Khormaksar air base, dismissed after the discovery of a bomb planted in a refuelling truck, and a 'go-slow' campaign at the port, the situation was reported to Wilson as 'extremely disquieting' and evidence of significant penetration by the NLF into Aden's unions.[95] A Reuters report of striking schoolboys being tear-gassed prompted a note to Greenwood from Philip Stein, a journalist at the *Daily Worker,* who curtly commented 'It's not very nice is it, Tony?' Emblematic of his frustrations brought on by the previous year, Greenwood penned, after two heavily edited drafts, a response that chastised the 'laconic reproach' that assured Stein that the use of such methods was 'essential to keep the peace' whilst reiterating that the 'real answer of course is to find a political solution to the problems of Aden and South Arabia. I have done everything I could in the past year to find one and it remains our overriding aim.'[96] Yet, as Lord Beswick found after visiting Aden in November 1965, substantial 'inducements' on a wide range of issues; from an investigation into allegations of torture against detainees at Al-Mansoura Detention Centre, the return of exiles, a representative constitution-making assembly, the lifting of the state of emergency, to the status of the base; would be needed. Faced with the difficulties such a policy would pose, Wilson directed officials to consider 'the question of the Federation itself and whether or not it is a "sacred cow"', and to present proposals in light of the declining security situation on whether Britain 'should sink or swim on making the Federation permanent.'[97] Yet in view of considerable scepticism as to its viability, Turnbull pointed out that if Britain were to wrest control of the security situation Britain had to 'take into account the undisguised hostility towards the Federation that is to be found in all sections of Aden opinion.' Changing the federal constitution would be difficult because of the lack of sufficient resources and staff to do so, whilst imposing a solution risked antagonising the situation.[98] The intractable situation and unpalatable options, Greenwood admitted, made it 'difficult to see what the next move should be' but that, for want of a better alternative, Britain now 'had to work through' the Federation.[99]

---

[95] TNA, PREM 13/133, White to Prime Minister, 14 October 1965; Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia,* p. 126; Noel Brehony, 'Explaining the triumph of the National Liberation Front', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), p. 43

[96] TNA, CO 1055/221, Stein [to Greenwood], 22 October 1965; Greenwood to Stein, 10 November 1965

[97] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 133; PREM 13/113, Wright to McIndoe, 21 September 1965; Wright to Stacpoole, 20 September 1965

[98] TNA, CO 1055/208, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 October 1965

[99] TNA, CO 1055/127, Record of meeting between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and Ambassador Raymond Hare, Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asian Affairs, State Department at 3:00pm on 19 October 1965

The 1966 Defence Review

The lack of options led to the appointment of a new commission headed by Hone and Gawain Bell. With the withdrawal of the non-British commissioners in July, the Hone-Bell commission's purpose was to provide a non-committal basis for future constitutional negotiations that would in appearance rather than substance maintain momentum towards a political settlement. Though the federal Rulers eagerly anticipated its findings, Turnbull was more sceptical as to the commission's prospects. He believed all of Britain's 'hopes for a rational and traditional solution' were 'now centred in Hone and Bell', but the intractable and conflicted demands of the Federation and Aden meant Britain could not 'ignore [the] possibility that [the] Hone/Bell exercise will fail'.[100] Because of the failure to secure international representation on the commission local engagement in a commission-inspired political settlement was extremely unlikely.[101] As far as Britain was concerned, the Hone-Bell Commission provided a convenient stop-gap, relieving pressure through the latter half of 1965 to initiate a policy for South Arabia's postcolonial future after the imposition of direct rule in Aden.

Yet any fresh initiative was overshadowed by the long-awaited conclusions of the Defence Review. Without a decision on the future of the Aden base, it was recognised that there was little point in working towards a precise policy position.[102] Though the general attitude towards Britain's east of Suez policy bore a few core similarities to the previous Conservative government, the stance towards the Aden base was less fervently committal. Arguments within the Cabinet as to its value and utility varied. Through 1965, however, the consensus began to shift towards the policy of abandonment. In early 1965, the Cabinet was keen to keep the base separate from constitutional discussions so that, awaiting a firm decision by the Defence Review, Britain maintained its 'freedom of action over it either to stay or go as we may eventually decide' and to avoid providing a 'too open-ended' commitment to defending South Arabia should the base be abandoned. From an early stage, Greenwood had been more open to such a policy, or at least recognised that the British presence antagonised the situation and made it difficult to reach a political settlement. He agreed with Healey that the base would be kept 'for so long as it is required to serve the

[100] TNA, CO 1055/208, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 October 1965, 24 October 1965
[101] TNA, CO 1055/127, Acting High Commissioner (Aden) to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 December 1965
[102] TNA, PREM 13/113, Grey to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 October 1965; PREM 13/704, Greenwood to Prime Minister, 9 December 1965

interests we have in common' with the local population whose good will was 'essential'.[103] But as the security situation deteriorated it became increasingly apparent that such good will would not be forthcoming and thus the operability of the base and chances of a political solution were increasingly in doubt. The formal decision was taken in late November to abandon the base and not 'maintain any obligations to… Aden or the South Arabian Federation', including to provide for its defence. But it would not be until February 1966 that the decision was made public.[104]

As decision-makers in London began to gravitate towards abandonment, officials on the spot were moving in the opposite conceptual direction by investing in the personal and self-proclaimed honour of the federal policy. Without a water-tight legal case based on the protection and advisory treaties the federal idea continued to have considerable purchase, being the antithesis of what was considered to be the material, impersonal, and dishonourable policy of abandonment. In the wake of Mackawee's dismissal and the suspension of the Aden constitution Don McCarthy, the experienced Foreign Office liaison to Middle East Command, gave an assessment that was emblematic of thinking amongst officials on the spot. Though any solution had to be political, 'Arab feeling' could change abruptly and thus a firm position had to be taken to prevent a 'band-wagon' emerging in Aden against British direct rule. A similarly forceful response to terrorism in Aden would have the 'useful and growing effect' of dispelling the 'general assumption… that political murderers no longer pay for their sins'. The central factor in ensuring this, he argued, was to back the Federation. Not only were they more dependent on British support, but doing so would make the Adenis 'much more manageable' once they 'realise that, come 1968, they really will be at the mercy of the boys from inland if they have not previously come to terms with'. It was no use seeking to find local political allies in Aden because, on the one hand, it was important to demonstrate to the local population and international opinion that Britain could maintain direct rule against the threat of terrorism. On the other, al-Asnag had over the previous two years 'shown himself to be both a moral and physical coward' for not standing up to Nasser, even though '[a]ll this may be largely our doing, and unhelpful doing: but again it seems the present reality.' The Federation, in contrast, only

[103] TNA, CO 1055/125, Brown to Colonial Secretary, 3 March 1965; Sharp to Marnham, 5 March 1965; Greenwood to First Secretary of State, 11 March 1965; CO 1055/124, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Acting High Commissioner, 31 December 1964; Greenwood to Turnbull, 11 February 1965; CO 1055/89, Record of a meeting in the Secretary of State's room on 6 November 1964
[104] TNA, CAB 148/18, OPD (65) 36th Meeting, 5 August 1965; OPD (65) 41st Meeting, 23 September 1965; OPD (65) 52nd Meeting, 24 November 1965

had to show that they were 'in earnest about putting their own house in order' by presenting as many 'friendly gestures as possible to the Adenis', stand firm against the NLF, and tour Arab capitals to rally regional support.[105] In the context of British officials being targeted by terrorists in Aden, the pro-federal position on the spot had developed to present the Federation not just as the default basis of local collaboration but substantively the trusted partner by way of the close association it had had with Britain since its founding and that Britain had reciprocal responsibilities to the Federation. This thinking seeped into Lord Beswick's report after his November visit to Aden, which noted that abandonment of the base would lead to the Federation disintegrating, and there would thus 'be a moral problem. I cannot see that we should be proud of ourselves if we leave a people, whom we courted so long, with so many of them without water and with not one metal road linking the Federation.'[106]

The federal counterattack

Officials in London were aware of how contentious the Defence Review's findings would be. In the lead up to its publication the new Colonial Secretary, Frank Longford, sought to 'make absolutely sure that HMG are under no treaty obligation to consult the Federal Government before reaching a decision on the future of the Aden base after independence', and was assured as such by Colonial Office officials.[107] Proposals to inject a 'mild anti-British approach' through well-placed press articles and radio talks that suggested the unimportance of the base and the need for rapprochement with the Arab world were considered to 'prepar[e] the minds of the Federal Rulers' for withdrawal.[108] Such efforts, however, did little to soften the blow amongst the Ruler and officials on the spot. Longford, more interested in domestic than overseas affairs, 'passed the buck to Beswick' to inform the Federation, during a second visit to Aden a few days before the publication of the Review, that the base would be abandoned and no defence treaty would be offered after independence.[109]

However, unbeknownst to Beswick, officials on the spot and the Rulers had been made aware of the outcome of the Defence Review at least a week or two before his arrival.

---

[105] TNA, CO 1055/127, McCarthy (DHC) to Cumming-Bruce, 7 October 1965
[106] TNA, PREM 13/704, Report by Lord Beswick, 30 November 1965
[107] TNA, CO 1055/127, Roberts to Butler, 6 January 1966
[108] TNA, CO 1055/301, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 January 1966
[109] Peter Stanford, *Lord Longford: A Life,* (London: Heinemann, 1994), p. 349, cited from Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 146

Turnbull, who had been pre-emptively informed of the outcome of the Defence Review whilst in London, went on to inform senior staff in Aden. Young was 'hit for six' by the news. In light of this, he made contact with Trevaskis and established a 'plotting committee' consisting of senior political officers Ian Baille, Ralph Daly and Charles Chaplin, with further involvement from Holmes and some federal ministers - Sultan Saleh, Sultan Fadhli bin Ali and Farid - to prepare the Rulers' response to Beswick and enlist the 'help of senior military and political friends to fight [the] Labour Government: Sandys and [Julian] Amery in particular'.[110] At the 'long and stormy' meeting in Aden between Beswick and the federal Rulers, Beswick found that though they 'received news of [the] close of [the] base with restraint… they showed immediate and lively concern when… I had to make clear that we could accept no defence agreement after independence.' Farid lamented the 'disgraceful' announcement as having 'shattered' the Federation, whilst the Sheikh of Dathina urged his colleagues, now seemingly abandoned by the British, 'to go to Cairo to make their peace with Nasser', and demand both the implementation of the UN resolutions and Britain's immediate withdrawal.[111] British officials in Aden aired their 'angriest reaction' directly with Beswick for the government 'dishonouring pledges' made by them and the previous Conservative government.[112] For McCarthy the 'whole Federation was artificially created as an instrument of British policy'. Now, because of the 'crippling' announcement that they would 'have to fend for themselves', the whole edifice risked collapse. Without an acceptance of some 'degree of moral responsibility for our past actions' and a change in policy, he warned, 'a Congo or Palestine seems a real risk.'[113]

Longford and officials in the Colonial Office were taken aback by the charge of a 'breach of faith' as they had anticipated the news of withdrawal of the base, rather than the absence of a defence treaty, would provoke a stronger reaction.[114] The accusation centred around paragraph 38 of the 1964 Conference report and whether it implied Britain would provide for the continued defence of the Federation after independence.[115] It was an issue that had

---

[110] Hinchcliffe *et al., Without Glory,* pp. 158-161
[111] TNA, CO 1055/299, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 16 February 1966; 17 February 1967; FO 371/185178/B1052/58, Ashworth to Elwell, 17 February 1966
[112] Stephen Day, 'Aden and the Gulf: the reflections of a political officer', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), p. 146; Godfrey Meynell, interviewed by Conrad Wood, 10 July 2000, URL: http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80019111 [accessed 24/01/2017]
[113] TNA, CO 1055/299, McCarthy to Brenchley, 17 February 1966
[114] TNA, CO 1055/299, Longford to Secretary of State for Defence, 21 February 1966
[115] 'The delegates asked that Britain should agree to independence for the Federation, while continuing thereafter to assist in its defence. They requested that as soon as practicable the British Government should convene a conference for the purpose of fixing a date for independence not later than 1968, and of concluding a Defence Agreement under which Britain would retain her

been raised only once by officials in the Colonial Office prior to the publication of the Defence Review, and officials scrambled to provide an explanation.[116] As Marnham somewhat sheepishly put it

> as far as officials are concerned those who were present at the time have confirmed that in mid-1964 the idea that we might cease to need the base was not in anyone's mind, and that the question whether we would continue the defence commitment if we ceased to need the base was not one to which anyone gave any thought.[117]

Though Longford was reassured that the Conference Report gave no strict legal obligation to defend the Federation after independence, this sharply contrasted with the personal and ideological affinity many on the spot felt towards the Federation. Beswick left Aden with the Rulers 'bitterly resentful and their advisers simmering with fury' that fuelled the coming tussle over South Arabia's post-colonial future.[118] The Rulers sought to 'count upon the help and advice of those people who had proved themselves to be their friends', but without the means to influence policy through traditional channels officials on the spot utilised informal channels to challenge and change the British policy.[119] Trevaskis acted as the key intermediary between the 'plotting committee' and senior opposition politicians in London, passing on correspondence from the Rulers and details of their meeting with Beswick to Sandys.[120]

Though the federal idea's adherents in Aden had allies in London to fight the federal cause and pressure the Labour government into shifting its policy, the informality of their operation limited the extent to which their ambitions could go against the grain of events. The snap general election of 31 March 1966 secured a comfortable majority for Labour and sapped much of the initial momentum of the 'plotters' in Aden; Young noted in his diary that 'there will be no going back on the Defence Review now'.[121] Similarly, the federal idea's adherents faced a further obstacle when responsibility over South Arabia was transferred

---

military base in Aden for the defence of the Federation and the fulfilment of her world-wide responsibilities. The Secretary of State announced the agreement of the British Government to this request.' TNA, CO 1055/103, South Arabia Conference Report

[116] TNA, CO 1055/125, Minute: Galsworthy to Marnham, 8 March 1965; Minute: Marnham to Galsworthy, 9 March 1965

[117] TNA, CO 1055/299, Marnham to Galsworthy, 24 February 1966; Galsworthy to Poynton, 25 February 1966

[118] TNA, CO 1055/299, Secretary of State for the Colonies to Turnbull, 24 February 1966; PREM 13/704, Longford to Prime Minister, 25 February 1966; Eberlie, *Aden,* p. 61

[119] TNA, FO 371/185178/B1052/58, Ashworth to Elwell, 17 February 1966

[120] Brooke, *Duncan Sandys,* pp. 72-73; CAC, DSND, 14/1/1, Sandys to Trevaskis, 21 February 1966; Saleh Bin Hussein to Trevaskis, 14 March 1966

[121] Hinchcliffe *et al.*, *Without Glory*, p. 162

from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office on 1 May 1966. Though part of a wider winding down of the Colonial Office the transfer 'may have been a least partly due' to the need to curb resistance to the policy of withdrawal and thus limit the ability of officials on the spot to gain traction in Whitehall, fuelling their long-held suspicions of and hostility to the Foreign Office.[122] Oliver Miles, seconded in 1966 from the Foreign Office to Aden but sent to Mukalla over 300 miles away, reflected on whether he was 'regarded as a spy for the Foreign Secretary' by officials in Aden.[123] Despite these limits the aims of the federal idea's adherents remained, at their core, relatively consistent. In addition to persuading the government to defend the Federation after independence, they aimed to broaden the Federal government to include the EAP states, exiles, and 'less radical' figures in Aden, 'put the Federation's house in order… though the adoption of a credible and workable constitution' based on the Hone-Bell Commission's report, and 'strengthen the international reputation of the Federation'.[124] For its defenders in Aden the Federation had to remain at the centre of any political initiative in the lead up to independence.

In the wake of the Defence Review and still looking for a way to revive a political initiative, Labour ministers, ideologically more open to UN co-operation, indicated acceptance of the UN resolutions in March 1966, but with the clear qualification that Britain would continue to exercise responsibility for internal security.[125] But Rulers and officials' movement on this issue was sluggish, having previously regarded UN involvement as an anathema and a significant point of contention with local nationalists. During the first set of negotiations between federal ministers and SAL exiles through March and April 1966, the ministers were urged by the SAL to accept the UN resolutions and establish a provisional government for the whole of South Arabia. Simultaneous meetings with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, aimed to enlist material and political support, proved encouraging but non-committal on the grounds of the need for the Federation to 'make [itself] worthy to [the rest] of [the] Arab world'.[126] Turnbull, sympathetic to but less actively engaged with the 'plotters' efforts, grew frustrated with the lack of movement on the part of the Rulers whom he regarded as 'still [having] their heads firmly stuck in the sand'. He noted that it was 'becoming more

---

[122] Pieragostini, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia,* p. 173
[123] Oliver Miles, 'Breaking Promises and Betraying Friends? Reflections on the British Withdrawal from Aden', in Noel Brehony and Clive Jones (eds), *Britain's Departure from Aden and South Arabia: Without Glory but Without Disaster,* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2020) p. 68
[124] Hinchcliffe *et al.*, *Without Glory*, pp. 162-163
[125] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 159
[126] TNA, CO 1055/300, Memorandum by Arabian Department: South Arabia: Recent attempts at Constitutional Advance, 7 April 1966

and more apparent that acceptance of the UN resolution is the only device that will get us off the present hook'.[127] The Rulers' hesitancy was, however, maintained by discussions amongst the 'plotters' as to whether to accept the UN resolutions 'for tactical reasons' and by Trevaskis' advice to 'treat Beswick's ultimatum as a bluff' and 'come to make a fuss in London'.[128] It was not until 13 May that the Federation stated that it accepted the UN resolutions and proposed a constitutional conference attended by the Federation, political parties and key personalities (including al-Asnag and Mackawee) to discuss their implementation.

Any optimism within the Labour government that progress could be made on the back of this shift in the Federation's position towards the UN was quickly overshadowed by a crisis in Parliament.[129] At Prime Minister's Questions on 10 May, Lord Lambton asked whether Britain would provide aid to the Federation in the event of an Egyptian invasion, reconsider withdrawal and whether the government accepted that, without a defence agreement, the Federation had 'very little chance of survival'. Wilson, relying on an offhand comment Sultan Saleh made to a Reuters journalist, responded that the Federation regarded the base as having 'marred the reputation of South Arabia [and had] created an Iron Curtain between the Federation and other Arab countries.'[130] By placing too much emphasis on this one comment Wilson provided Sandys with the opportunity to embarrass the government with the accusation that they had misrepresented the Federation's views in a nefarious effort to justify the withdrawal of military support. Trevaskis, seeing eye to eye with Sandys, regarded Wilson's comment as 'palpably dishonest' and passed on a verbatim record of Sultan Saleh's statement to Beswick he had received from Farid.[131] Going on the offensive, Sandys gave Sultan Saleh's statement to the press and accused Wilson of misleading Parliament, gathering a hundred and forty signatures for a censure motion. Mounting criticism in the press and trouble with the unions sent Wilson into 'a towering rage at the carefully planned Conservative plot to discredit him' and, in an omitted paragraph of a draft letter, he excoriated the Conservative leader, Ted Heath, for the attacks in Parliament;

---

[127] TNA, CO 1055/300, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 April 1966; 22 April 1966; 27 April 1966
[128] Hinchcliffe *et al.*, *Without Glory,* p. 163; Brooke, *Duncan Sandys,* pp. 73-74; OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 1/7, 19 February 1968
[129] Fuller details can be found in Brooke, *Duncan Sandys,* pp. 79-86
[130] *Hansard,* HC Deb 10 May 1966, vol 728, col 217-220; TNA, PREM 13/704, Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 March 1966
[131] CAC, DSND, 14/1/1, Trevaskis to Sandys, 12 May 1966

> I recall how over our 13 years of Opposition the Labour Party went to great lengths, whatever our feelings about the then Government policies, to avoid being drawn into direct association … with the foreign governments concerned, in opposition to the then Government of this country… [nor acting] to undermine the British governments position and negotiations with other governments.[132]

Sandys' attacks in Parliament had a dael effect at an especially sensitive time just prior to Federal ministers coming to London for talks at the Foreign Office on 23 May. Firstly, it left the Wilson government exposed because of the mishandling of the issue of withdrawal from Aden in the face of a coordinated moral and political attack. Secondly, it demonstrated to the federal idea's adherents that despite significant obstacles a new avenue to push their ideals had opened, with Sandys being the very effective point of the spear.

The Labour reassessment

Having been caught off guard since the announcement of the Defence Review, the efforts of the Federation and its defenders began to have an influence over the Wilson government's policy on South Arabia. In the aftermath of the crisis in Parliament and as discussions with federal ministers got underway, Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart suggested to Cabinet that he felt strongly that Britain 'ought to find the money to increase military aid to South Arabia'. Though the Defence Review had agreed that there would be no defence agreement with an independent South Arabia, there was nevertheless an 'obligation' to build up South Arabia's armed forces. Doing so was a practical minimum to ensure that Britain would not have to make a 'fighting withdrawal' should the Federation collapse, prevent South Arabia's 'relapse into chaos', and retain British prestige in the Gulf. Though Chancellor of the Exchequer James Callaghan remained sceptical as to the utility of providing additional aid, and warned Wilson as to 'how disturbed' he was by the proposal, Healey recognised that a price needed to be paid so that withdrawal could be achieved 'in good order' and that Britain 'could not withdraw politically with honour unless we could secure orderly constitutional progress to independence and for this we were dependent on the co-operation of the Federal Government.'[133] By the middle of June, with talks with the Rulers still ongoing, the Cabinet agreed that the Federation could be offered capital aid of £5.5 million and additional recurrent aid of £2.5 million per year, and

---

[132] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 153; TNA, PREM 13/705, Draft letter from the Prime Minister to the Rt. Hon. Edward Heath, [18 May 1966]
[133] TNA, PREM 13/705, Callaghan to Prime Minister, 25 May 1966; CAB 128/41/26, CC(66) 26th Conclusions, 26 May 1966

that, in principle, the Government would be willing to increase this aid should the EAP states join the Federation. When this was offered to the Federation, Stewart reported that though they 'would still have liked a defence agreement with the United Kingdom, they appeared to be reasonably satisfied with the offer of aid which had been made.'[134] The Labour government, under pressure, had made a significant concession. Whereas Labour ministers may have regarded the Federation as an unwelcome inheritance, the spirit of the attacks by the Federation's supporters had impacted ministerial decision-making to such an extent as to force them to provide support to the Federation in its present form and recognise it as both central to local collaboration to aid Britain's withdrawal and the basis of an independent South Arabian state.

Regardless of this concession the federal Rulers and officials in South Arabia, buoyed by Sandys' attacks in Parliament, recognised the utility of going on the offensive to win further concessions. When some of the Rulers arrived in London for talks, the federal idea's adherents rowed back on their more conciliatory position on the UN resolutions and recognition that a defence treaty would not be forthcoming. The day before talks were due to begin the Rulers issued a statement declaring their aims for defence treaty 'remain unchanged and have never been retracted'. Meanwhile, Sandys guided Farid throughout his negotiations with the Government during May and June, drafted the Federation's statements, and invited Sharif Hussein to the House of Commons to hear Sandys' lambast the Government for the 'utter irresponsibility and perfidy… in their decision to leave the Federation totally defenceless after independence'.[135] Holmes and Daly accompanied the federal delegation to London, staying as a group at the Mount Royal Hotel in Mayfair with their 'own office, an embryonic embassy' in Park Lane as a base for discussions with the Foreign Office and Downing Street, with Turnbull 'shuttl[ing] between' them.[136] After the talks, and still without a defence treaty, officials on the spot continued to look for ways in which the case for the Federation could be made against the government. Seeking additional counsel in November 1966, Holmes acquired a second legal opinion that, despite recognising the 'somewhat pointless' pursuit of using the 1964 Conference Report to demand the Government provide a defence treaty, nevertheless highlighted that it could be used to force the Government to take 'the invidious task of explaining… why the

[134] TNA, CAB 128/41/29, CC(66), 29th Conclusions, 16 June 1966
[135] Brooke, *Duncan Sandys,* pp. 86-87, 91-92; CAC, DSND, 14/1/1, Sandys to Farid, 8 August 1966; *Hansard,* HC Deb 1 August 1966, vol 733, col 35-36
[136] Eberlie, *Aden,* pp. 64-66

paragraph creates no legal obligation' and that the Federation's position on matters to do with independence should be publicised so as to 'make a real impact'.[137]

Into 1967 the exact date of withdrawal became a serious point of contention that the Federation and its adherents used to further the demand for a defence treaty. The Foreign Office had placed January 1968 as the provisional date for independence, but George Brown, appointed Foreign Secretary in August 1966, sought to bring the date forward. Motivated by the apparent economic benefits of early withdrawal and a hope that Anglo-Egyptian relations could be restored, ministers first considered 1 July 1967 as a potential date, only for it to be dismissed on account of impracticality, a temporary halt in a recently initiated correspondence between Brown and Nasser, and pressure from Turnbull.[138] Instead, in early March the Cabinet met to assess the deteriorating security situation in Aden and discuss how far the British government could go towards meeting the Federation's demand for a defence treaty 'with the least risk' of delaying withdrawal or becoming entangled with the deteriorating security situation. It was agreed that withdrawal and independence would be brought forward to 1 November 1967, but for six months afterwards a strike carrier and commando carrier would be stationed in the area to provide air support against any invasion of Egyptian forces from Yemen.[139] Thomson was chosen to deliver the offer to the Rulers, but despite a threat to impose independence unilaterally and withdraw the offer the Rulers hesitated. Though reluctant to bring forward the date of independence they believed, as Farid outlined to Sandys, the Wilson government was 'beginning to have pangs of conscience' over the issue of a defence treaty and that 'now that the door is half open we must all work hard to have it fully opened'. Having leaked details of the meeting with Thomson to Sandys, via Trevaskis, Farid was keen to continue to 'have the benefit of your advice' on how to approach the matter in future talks with Thomson. Sandys advised Farid to refuse the offer and to call the British government's bluff on the threat to impose the date of independence, believing they would not 'be able just to walk out and leave South Arabia totally defenceless.'[140] The federal Rulers' subsequent rejection on 27 April forced the withdrawal of the proposal.[141]

---

[137] MECA, Richard Holmes Papers, 2/5, The Federation of South Arabia & the States in South Arabia & the United Kingdom: Opinion by [R T Jennings], 27 February 1967, pp. 11, 21-22
[138] Robert McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952-1967,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), pp. 233-235; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 155
[139] TNA, CAB 128/42/13, CC(67) 13th Conclusions, 16 March 1967
[140] Brooke, *Duncan Sandys,* pp. 98-99
[141] Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 155

Sandys', and by extension the Rulers', confidence in refusing Thomson's offer was buoyed by discussions with Saudi figures he had had through April and by the farcical failure of a UN initiative in early April 1967, both of which pointed to the Federation as the only means through which an ordered withdrawal could be achieved.[142] Though the UN initiative was from the outset extremely unlikely to succeed it also provides an indication of the hostility toward the UN and support for the Federation that propagated amongst officials on the spot. A new General Assembly resolution passed the previous December had reaffirmed the UN's previous resolutions on Aden and appointed a Special Mission to oversee their implementation and investigate the situation in South Arabia itself. After their arrival in Aden on 2 April a wave of strikes and riots in Aden hampered their itinerary. British officials on the spot had planned, in view of the announced strikes, for the UN commissioners to get away from Aden immediately and tour the federal states, using Aden as a night stop between them and spending only two full days in Aden, so that they 'would have had some personal contact on home ground with each ruler before meeting them all together at Al Ittihad'.[143] But the UN commissioners' refusal to engage with the Federation, instead retreating to their hotel in Aden because of the strikes, did not endear them to either the Rulers or British officials. On 5 April the commissioners requested to speak with nationalist detainees at Al-Mansoura Detention Centre but upon their arrival a riot broke out amongst the prisoners and the commissioners had to be evacuated by helicopter. On their return to Aden the commissioners taped a broadcast, intending to advertise their desire to have 'free and unimpeded contacts with representatives of all shades of opinion', whilst simultaneously declaring it would only deal with representatives of the United Kingdom as the administering power 'and not with the Federal Government.'[144] Upon learning of its content the Federal Government refused to broadcast the commissioners' statement and played the American western Bonanza instead. In the face of this provocation, and after only four days, the UN mission left Aden against U Thant's urgings and spend the rest of their deliberations in Geneva.[145]

As far as the commissioners were concerned, blame for the fiasco rested with the local British authorities' 'unwilling[ness] to cooperate with the Mission'.[146] Turnbull's defence

---

[142] For details on Sandys' discussions with Saudi Arabian figures see Brooke, *Duncan Sandys,* pp. 99-102

[143] MECA, Richard Holmes Papers, 2/5, Draft Minutes of the first meeting of the UN Mission Committee held at Flat/3 Plot 90, Khormaksar on 24th March 1967 by Heaton

[144] MECA, Richard Holmes Papers, 2/5, Special Mission on Aden: Text of Statement, 6 April 1967

[145] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 163-164

[146] TNA, PREM 13/1295, Rome to Foreign Office, 7 April 1967

against the accusation, that the commissioners' broadcast was withdrawn by the Federation because it 'would have been damaging to the dignity and authority of the Federal Government', was not viewed as entirely compelling by George Wigg, the Paymaster General, who believed that Turnbull, in theory, 'could have used his reserve powers to force the Federal Government to grant the Mission the facilities they wanted.'[147] Given Trevaskis had previously boasted of the control Chief Information Officer Tony Ashworth had had over 'every newspaper… following the line he wants' and 'Broadcasting staff … doing just what he wants', and another official noting Ashworth's continued close contacts with the Ministry of Information, at the very least the selective application of British influence over public broadcasting played a role.[148] As far as British officials were concerned, breaching their relations with the Federation for the sake of the UN was unpalatable, thus precluding a means to try to quickly defuse the chaotic episode that, at best, had a slim chance of success.[149] The UN commissioners' inflexibility in the face of 'a most bewildering situation', one 'weary High Commission official' commented, meant they 'could not grasp that [Britain was] merely in treaty relations with established regimes in the Federal states.'[150] Another recalled

> having a blazing row with Sam Falle [of the Foreign office], and he turned on me when the UN Mission came out there and accused me of sabotaging it. And I thought to myself who the... so and so... cares about the United Nations for Christ's sake? What does it matter? Bloody United Nations, what are they doing here? You know we've got people down the road killing each other.[151]

Many of the federal idea's adherents regarded the farcical episode as confirmation of the futility of UN engagement in the problems facing South Arabia and that the only dependable ally and solution to the increasingly precarious situation was the Federation.

Patience wanes

In the wake of the failure of the UN mission, Turnbull became exposed to increasingly critical commentary regarding him as unsuited to the task and not being able to bridge the divides between the federal Rulers, Aden and the EAP nor challenge the pro-federal views

[147] TNA, PREM 13/1295, Aden to Foreign Office, 7 April 1967; George Wigg to Prime Minister, 7 April 1967
[148] OBL, MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546, 2/8, 10 October 1964; Eberlie, *Aden,* p. 26
[149] TNA, FCO 8/322, du Doulay to Linner, 21 April 1967
[150] Stephen Harper, *Last Sunset,* (London: William Collins, 1978), p. 88
[151] Stephen Day, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 29 March 2017

of officials on the spot. Lord Shackleton, Minister without Portfolio, recommended that a new High Commissioner would be needed to manage the increasingly difficult task ahead. As far as Wigg was concerned, Turnbull had proved himself '"plus Royalist que le roi" in carrying out the Tory policy' of backing the Federation over Aden and had 'become identified with the pro-Federal, pro-Rulers group in Aden' by uncritically following 'the line sold to successive Governments' by his subordinates, particularly Ashworth.[152] In Aden, Turnbull's dismissal did little to dispel suspicions of Labour's intentions. Though never able to attract the same level of devotion as his predecessors, Turnbull had built a sufficient level of respect amongst officials that his dismissal by Brown, in a manner comparable to Trevaskis, 'caused a lot of bad blood' – especially because only six months before Brown had requested Turnbull stay on as there was 'no one better qualified than yourself to see us through'. As a result, officials' reluctance to give up on the Federation as a viable entity and hostility towards the Wilson government 'became even more acute'.[153] One official, stationed in the EAP, recorded at the time that

> Turnbull's replacement by Trevelyan is being interpreted as a sell-out to Nasser which it may well be. If so the British Government will have to start looking for a new team to apply its new policy of negotiating with FLOSY and other terrorist groups as we, and almost certainly the Advisory staff in the Federation, will be handing in our resignations.[154]

Regardless of whether the Labour government was motivated by the desire to curtail the influence of pro-federal views on the spot, it certainly had that effect. Turnbull's replacement was Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, a seasoned diplomat recently retired as ambassador in Moscow who had previously served in Cairo during the Suez Crisis and in Baghdad in the aftermath of the July 1958 Revolution. Though blunt in approach, Trevelyan's pragmaticism towards reconciling with Arab nationalism and an eagerness to move towards withdrawal closely aligned to the brief he had been given, conveyed to officials on the spot as a 'blank cheque from London' to 'get the British army and civilian officials out with the minimum bloodshed' and, if possible, 'provide a framework in which

---

[152] TNA, PREM 13/1295, George Wigg to Prime Minister, 10 April 1967
[153] TNA, FO 371/185319, Brown to Turnbull, 8 November 1966; Turnbull to Brown, 21 November 1966; Oliver Miles, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 4 July 2017
[154] Thanos Petouris, ''The Present Drift of Events Makes One Feel Extremely Embittered and Depressed': The British Exit from South Arabia', in Brehony and Jones (eds), *Britain's Departure from Aden and South Arabia,* p. 60

relatively democratic forces in Aden and our traditional friends in the upcountry states could work together in peace'.[155]

Back in London, however, weariness as to the intractability of the South Arabian problem and impatience with the Federation grew. Immediately after the failure of the UN Special Mission, Shackleton made the first of two visits to Aden to reassess the situation and recommended that concessions would be needed to bolster the Federation.[156] At a Cabinet meeting on 11 May Brown stressed that the unlikelihood of a breakthrough with nationalists meant that Britain 'must continue to back the Federal Government itself', but the reality of the situation was that 'neither the local population in Aden nor the Federal Government themselves found their survival as such credible' and Britain 'could not ignore the possibility that … there might be no local Government at all.'[157] In light of this, Brown recommended that greater measures might be needed to 'improve the prospect' of the Federation's survival until withdrawal. 1 January 1968 would be fixed as the date for independence alongside an offer of six months carrier cover, with the potential for a land-based bomber force stationed in Masirah, was to be made to the Federation. Taking a firmer stance on the ability of the British to impose independence, Brown reiterated that 'time [was] too short to leave the Federal Government in any doubt about the realities we think they must face.'[158] Though cracks emerged amongst the federal Rulers as to the utility of the hard line so far taken, the federal Rulers nevertheless rejected the offer, demanding that independence could come no earlier than September 1968 and at least three years of air support to defend the Federation.[159] Trevelyan noted that the federal Rulers 'still seem to expect something more' and were not yet convinced that 'we are not going to change our policy' on the absence of a defence treaty.[160] In light of the concessions the Labour government had been forced to offer since the announcement of the Defence Review, the Rulers' continued demand for a defence treaty was beginning to prove counterproductive and London's patience was wearing thin. As a new package of support was prepared in early June, the Foreign Office warned the Rulers that, though they could 'take legitimate

---

[155] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 156-157; Stephen Day, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 29 March 2017; Oliver Miles, 'The British withdrawal from Aden: A personal memory by Oliver Miles', (The British-Yemeni Society, December 1997), http://al-bab.com/albab-orig/albab/bys/articles/miles.htm [accessed 27th July 2016]
[156] TNA, FCO 8/184, Shackleton to Private Secretary, 2 May; Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 9 May 1967; Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 155-156
[157] TNA, CAB 128/42/30, CC(67) 30th Conclusions, 11 May 1967
[158] TNA, FCO 8/184, Foreign Office to Minister without Portfolio, Aden, 11 May 1967
[159] TNA, FCO 8/184, Minister without Portfolio, Aden to Foreign Office, 11 May 1967
[160] TNA, FCO 8/185, Aden to Foreign Office, 7 June 1967

pride' in their ability to persuade the government to extent military support to South Arabia, 'further carping could easily affect our ability to continue in these courses.'[161] The overriding desire to withdraw in 'good order' and hand over to a federal government that could at least cooperate with some elements in Aden remained, but the lack of a breakthrough on the political front precluded the Labour government matching what the Federation and its most ardent supporters on the spot wanted.

Acting on Trevelyan's recommendations, one final concession on post-independence support for the Federation, in recognition of 'the force of some of the arguments', was offered. Independence was still fixed for January 1968, but a new package presented to Parliament by Brown on 19 June 1967 went some way to address concerns about the defence of the Federation after independence. Britain would re-equip the South Arabian Army (SAA) and a British military aid mission would provide advice and training, whilst the financing of the Hadhrami Bedouin Legion would continue for two years after independence to support the EAP states. A nascent air force, consisting of eight Hunter fighters and Jet Provost ground attack aircraft, would be provided, and the offer of a six month stationing of a carrier force to repel external aggression was backed up by a force of V-bombers stationed in Masirah 'for as long thereafter… according to circumstance[s] ruling at the time.' On the issue of internal security, to bolster counter-terrorism efforts and prevent the intimidation of witnesses and jurors, trial by jury would be suspended, whereas on the political front the issue of nationalist detainees would be reviewed and the ban on the NLF lifted to try and encourage round-table discussions with all parties. Brown's announcement marked a major shift that built on the government's earlier recognition that dealing the Federation was the default basis of ensuring an effective withdrawal but went much further in providing for its security needs beyond independence. Brown received a rough reception in the House of Commons from both Labour and Conservative benches, and Sandys took the opportunity to embarrass Brown by declaring he was 'almost stunned' by the statement because '[o]nce or twice I thought I was listening to myself.'[162] Brown was shaken by the debate in the House of Commons, and London urged Trevelyan to press the Federation 'into doing the right thing' and impress upon Farid and the Federation's Permanent Secretary, David Treffry, that the Government's parliamentary difficulties 'were by no means exaggerated'.[163]

---

[161] TNA, FCO 8/186, Foreign Office to Aden, 9 June 1967; Foreign Office to HC Aden, 15 June 1967
[162] *Hansard,* HC Deb 19 June 1967, vol 748, col 1126-1262
[163] TNA, FCO 8/186, McCarthy to Trevelyan, 20 June 1967

Despite the significance of the shift, the Federation persisted in taking a hard line. Farid, responding on behalf of the Supreme Council, welcomed the offer but demurred on a formal response and instead asked for time to study the proposals. Sharif Hussein, who had already abandoned Al Ittihad to keep a firmer grip in Beihan, regarded the offer as 'totally inadequate' and that 'nothing less than a full Defence Treaty for a period of five years would do.'[164] The continued hard-line of the Rulers, however, contrasted a shift in Sandys' position on the issue. Having pushed the Federation's case for nearly two years, the change in the government's position and the turn of events in South Arabia after 20 June (discussed below) led Sandys to concede in a letter to Farid that Brown's statement, though in some respects did not go far enough, was still 'an enormous step in the right direction' because 'the British Government are putting their money on the Federal Government'. He recommended that the Federation 'should still not agree to any proposals which you do not regard as satisfactory' and 'continued to press for the retention of a British military presence in Aden after independence' until the external threat from Egypt was removed. But the deteriorating situation and chaos in the lead up the final withdrawal in November 1967 rendered further promotion of the Federation irrelevant, and Sandys thereafter ceased to provide direct support.[165] The Federation's continued demand for a defence treaty demonstrates the extent to which the federal idea's lingering potency, having for so long been central to British policy, continued to maintain its own momentum with support from officials in Aden and Conservative politicians in London.

Towards collapse

The clear indication of Trevelyan's brief, a more generous defence offer from Labour, and Sandys no longer providing an offensive avenue for the Federation meant the scale of the obstacles faced by the federal idea's adherents were now considerable. The 'British cement' on the spot – consisting of Treffry, Holmes, Daly and Young – attempted to keep the Federation going, but up to and beyond June 1967 the wider loss of control of the situation in South Arabia had overshadowed all meaningful deliberation over the Federation's future.[166] Efforts to negotiate with nationalists to establish a broader based government continued through 1966 and 1967, but mistrust in the British and the toxicity of the Federation meant no breakthrough would be forthcoming. Negotiations with exiled leaders

[164] TNA, FCO 8/186, Aden to Foreign Office, 21 June 1967
[165] CAC, DSND, Sandys to Farid, 22 June 1967; Brooke, *Duncan Sandys,* p. 105
[166] Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber,* pp. 245-246

took place through 1966 and the third round of discussions in Beirut failed as the SAL, though reluctant partners of the PSP in OLOS, were unwilling to accept posts within the Federal government or engage in constitutional discussions and risk the ire of either the Egyptians or other local nationalists. Though contacts with al-Asnag continued and some high-profile nationalists, the ex-Fadhli Sultan and the Awdhali leader Jaabil bin Husayn, renounced their alliance with Nasser, al-Asnag never became directly involved in negotiations. Meanwhile, the situation across South Arabia continued on a violent trajectory; by the end of 1966 five British serviceman had been killed, 216 wounded, whilst 33 civilians were killed and 315 wounded.[167] The formation in Cairo of the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY) in January 1966, consisting of OLOS and the NLF, sought to form a unified, Nasser-orientated organisation to challenge the Federation and British direct rule in Aden.

The arrangement, however, proved tenuous. The left-wing of the NLF, who opposed the 'forced merger', forcefully sought to maintain the NLF's ideological and organisational autonomy and a further reorganisation of FLOSY in Alexandria in August 1966 failed to satisfy their demands. Violent demonstrations instigated by the NLF's 'Secondary Leadership' in Aden from October precipitated its formal split from FLOSY and the end of Egyptian support in December. FLOSY established its own armed wing, the Popular Organisation of Revolution Forces (PORF), to counter the threat from increasingly targeted killings of FLOSY leaders, but several high-profile attacks, strikes and demonstrations buoyed NLF support in Aden. Though British troops were able to thwart mass demonstrations on the eighth anniversary of the founding of the Federation, the 'portentously named the Day of the Volcano', assassinations were increasingly utilised to considerable effect. On 27 February 1967 a bomb exploded by Mackawee's house, killing three of his sons. Processions for their funerals turned into violent demonstrations between FLOSY and SAL supporters that required British troops to intervene, but the killings had triggered a loss of faith in the British to maintain security and the fight for control over Aden between the various nationalist groups was considered a portent to who would be in control of a post-independence South Arabia.[168]

The outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war on 5 June 1967 further contributed to the deteriorating situation in Aden. Israel's swift victory fuelled Egyptian propaganda accusations that

---

[167] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 162, 166
[168] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 165-166; Brehony, 'Explaining the triumph', pp. 44-45; Hinchcliffe *et. al., Without Glory,* p. 247

Britain was supporting the Israelis which, back in Aden, coincided with aircraft taking off from HMS Hermes which was stationed just offshore. In the explosive atmosphere, the mutiny of 20 June of the South Arabian Army and Aden's police accelerated the final collapse of the Federation. Fuelled by local suspicions of British forces and protests over the dominance of certain tribes amongst the senior ranks of the SAA, demonstrations quickly spread into a riot, order broke down and confusion reigned. In the chaos, an ambush of a British army patrol and the loss of the district of Carter to NLF and FLOSY guerrillas led to 22 British soldiers killed. Though Colin 'Mad Mitch' Mitchell of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders reoccupied Carter to much fanfare, the mutiny had sealed the fate of the Federation. In the chaotic aftermath, Hussain Bayoomi, brother of the late Hassan Bayoomi, was appointed Prime Minister under a new proposed constitution at a meeting of the Supreme Council on 5 July. Though he claimed an ability to negotiate with both the NLF and FLOSY, threats against him as a 'traitor to Arabism and Islam' and the continued violence precluded negotiations.[169] The federal Rulers regarded his appointment as a 'joke', conspired to remove him and, having lost hope of keeping the Federation together, decamped to their states.[170] But with British troops withdrawn from the Protectorate by 30 June to help deal with the situation in Aden and the SAA no longer reliably taking orders from the British Commander, one by one the 'crumbling Sultanates and Emirates were there for the taking', mostly by the NLF.[171] Without a federal government nor alternative with which to negotiate independence, Trevelyan issued a broadcast on 5 September declaring that the federal government was no longer functioning and indicated that Britain was now willing to negotiate with the NLF, whom looked likely to come 'out on top'.[172] Fractures within the SAA maintained a political statis, but in an effort to maintain Egyptian influence in South Arabia after British withdrawal against the 'particularism' of the NLF, Nasser pushed for negotiations between the NLF and FLOSY. On 1 November an agreement for the formation of a coalition government was announced, but by 4 November fighting broke out in Aden between the two factions. On 6 November the SAA publicly declared its support for the NLF and the remanets of FLOSY in Aden and the neighbouring Shaykh

[169] Jonathan Walker, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in Yemen, 1962-67,* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2011), pp. 270-271
[170] Mawby, *British Policy,* pp. 171-173
[171] TNA, PREM 13/1297, Aden to Foreign Office, 10 August 1967; Brehony, 'Explaining the triumph', p. 46
[172] TNA, PREM 13/1297, Foreign Office and Commonwealth Office to Certain Missions, 5 September 1967; Trevelyan, *The Middle East in Revolution,* pp. 246-247

Uthman district were eliminated.[173] Now in sole control, the NLF declared its willingness to negotiate with the British on 11 November and after fraught negotiations in Geneva an agreement was reached on 29 November just as the last British troops were withdrawn. The following day the People's Republic of South Yemen marked its independence, ending close to 130 years of British rule.

Conclusion

Given the drama of these events, justifiable attention has been given to dissecting the finer details of the final years of British rule in South Arabia as overseen by the Labour government, panning for the particularities of 1964-1967 as a period. The new Labour government sought to take a different approach to South Arabia compared to their Conservative predecessors, even if the contrast of the east of Suez policy was initially less evident. In their handling of the Conservative inheritance, there was some degree of naivety in seeking a rebalance of collaborative relations to Aden as a means to move South Arabia towards independence, and the inherent problems of identifying an ideal collaborative partner in Aden were comparable to the problems the previous Conservative government had in identifying the Protectorate Rulers as the same. Further issues such as putting together a constitutional commission or seeking involvement of the UN demonstrated how Labour's solutions were far from flawless. But Greenwood's desire to reach a broad-based political and constitutional settlement in time for South Arabia's independence was genuine, even if it was not fully shared by more dominant figures in Wilson's Cabinet. But the policy choices made in its pursuit were made in the context of a fractious inheritance that was configured to deteriorate further. After the 1966 Defence Review, the decision to withdraw without a defence treaty with the Federation, even if taken on a valid basis, was a significant miscalculation. It antagonised pre-existing suspicions of the Rulers and British officials on the spot and did not have the desired effect, as Brown believed, of engendering a rapprochement with Nasser nor pressuring all parties in South Arabia towards agreement. The subsequent concessions the Labour government were forced to offer to the Federation, which by their nature were significant, exposed a weakness that was fully exploited by Sandys, the Federation, and officials on the spot.

[173] TNA, PREM 13/1297, Aden to Foreign Office, 6 November 1967; Mawby, *British Policy,* p. 174-175

But the federal idea's adherents became overstretched in their ambitions, and their belief that relying on the Federation and a policy status quo were a panacea to the deteriorating situation proved fatal. Most importantly this was driven by the persistence within official circles of the federal idea as developed since the 1950s, and was compounded by the ever-increasing sense that officials were taking on a personal commitment that gravitated loyalties towards the federal Rulers, like-minded colleagues, and the federal policy. Because of this, official resistance on the spot consisted of more than a response to the particulars of the Labour government's position but was a broad push against a shift in policy, ideological and intellectual outlook. In response to a perceived change in direction initiated by London, and as formal channels gradually closed off, officials turned to informal networks to advance the federal idea. The continued presence of Egyptian troops in Yemen and the gradually deteriorating security situation across South Arabia sustained the logic and rationale of the federal policy, whilst Labour's slim majority in Parliament before March 1966 amplified and enthused pre-existing partisan tendencies of an informal network that sought to reverse government policy. Even where circumstances changed to the detriment of the federal idea's adherents, the force of that idea contributed to the denial of an alternative policy outcome. The momentum created by Greenwood's initiative to work towards a unitary state floundered, in part, because of lingering scepticism as to its viability compared to official preference to reinforce the Federation. Efforts to liberalise or reform the Federation had limited progress, in part because the onus to change was placed on nationalist groups' demands rather than the Federation itself, whilst the perpetual hostility towards nationalism and nationalists continued to hinder efforts to broaden the basis of a South Arabian government. Similarly, the centrality of the Federation to official thinking imparted a situational inflexibility that prevented officials from responding to crises. Though official resistance's singular importance as a factor in explaining the chaotic end of empire from 1964 to 1967 is somewhat overshadowed by the inherently intractable nature of the situation and the increasingly violent course local nationalism took, it nevertheless illustrates the federal idea's potent and persistent influence over those tasked with implementing British policy at the end of empire.

Ultimately, however, the root of the problems of the final years of British rule were not fundamentally unique to that period, and to a considerable extent were borne out of inherent tensions that had arisen and matured before, during and after the Federation's founding. Whether or not the collapse of the Federation was inevitable poses an unsatisfactory counter-factual, but the situation inherited by Labour in 1964 was already precarious, its intractability apparent, and the already limited possibilities and

opportunities to untie the South Arabian knot progressively deteriorated. The proposed March 1965 conference was potentially the last and only moment in which the focus and direction of British policy and collaborative relations within South Arabia could have been reset. But as had been the case since the Aden merger, the lingering toxicity of the Federation disincentivised nationalists to cooperate and incentivised non-cooperation and, eventually, violence. This in turn increased British reliance on the Federation either as the preferred basis of local collaboration or to ensure a speedy and orderly withdrawal, further perpetuating a cycle that culminated in the Federation's collapse, Britain's evacuation, and the handover of power to the NLF. Breaking that cycle proved beyond the capabilities of those involved, and beyond the possibilities that circumstance would allow.

Conclusion

This thesis is the first assessment of imperial federalism in South Arabia as a historical phenomenon of the end of empire. It has explained how and why the Federation of South Arabia was such a precarious entity. In doing so, this thesis has addressed a notable gap in the historiography, redressing the broader scholarly balance that has so far emphasised the external forces that acted upon the Federation to explain its demise. This thesis has also demonstrated the importance of contingent British articulations and imaginaries of an unrealised federal future as a central feature of the end of empire in South Arabia. Though intended to address a series of imperial ills and maintain British control, interests, and global reach, the federal idea did not come to pass because of the conflicts inherent within it. The most important of these conflicts was that its advocates believed it could prove British commitment to bring its dependent territories to independence, whilst simultaneously cultivate select collaborators' dependency on Britain. Such a conflict was extenuated by the contradiction between the federal project's benign aims and malignant means. Its advocates believed that federation could bring peace and modernity to the Protectorate's tribal society through reinforcing what British colonial officials and ministers regarded as the necessarily violent and archaic features of that society to sustain British influence and control. Simultaneously, federation would seemingly provide a more efficient means of administering the Protectorate and expand opportunities for the fulfilment of developmental aspirations, when in reality its supposed efficiencies were a poor remedy to the financial paucity that perpetually curtailed grander plans to develop the Protectorate and give the Federation purchase within the society it sought to govern. But the federal idea was more than just an effort to preserve Britain's imperial interests. It was fundamentally an effort to rationalise and justify the perpetual agency of imperialism at the core of South Arabian affairs and the global world order, and thereby imagine a future shaped according to British will and ambition against the uncertainties, limits and forces of the post-war world, an alluring promise that helped sustain the federal idea despite its conflicted logic.

It was further sustained by the depth of commitment of key officials on the spot, especially Trevaskis. Though the federal idea struggled to provide a cohesive and coherent vision when it was first introduced in 1952, his and others' efforts to cultivate federal thinking proved instrumental in keeping the idea alive by overcoming initial concerns about its viability and preventing it being abandoned as a policy option in 1956. This was especially

important for the development of British policy after the 1958 union of Egypt, Syria and Yemen left Britain scrambling for a policy that could regain the initiative over the region's destiny. In the rush to establish the Federation, conflicts inherent within the federal idea became manifest within the Federation's unwieldy constitution and growing dependency on British political, material, and military support as the Federation grew in size and sought to cement its authority over dissenting tribes. Whilst the Federation struggled to attract local loyalty and international sympathy, the federal idea became central to British policy deliberations. This led to the active rejection of alternative collaborators and collaborative frameworks. Given that such alternatives were not conducive to British ambitions the federal idea promised to fulfil, any initiative outside the dictation of the federal idea could only ever be considered a threat, not just to British interests, but to British agency over the future of the region. This imbued the contorted rationalisations of the Aden merger, shaping a settlement on exclusionary and intentionally duplicitous rather than locally consented and viable means. The knot of contradictions at the heart of the federal project, building on what was an inherently complex problem of bringing together the tribal Protectorate and the port Colony, tightened further still.

These problems, on the one hand, were regularly recognised as detrimental to the future of the Federation. But, on the other, there was little appetite for a fundamental redress of the federal policy as to do so would expose the precarity of the British position in the face of growing local and international condemnation. Nor did officials such as Trevaskis have the capacity to renege on efforts to make their conception of the federal idea a reality, a goal that had become embedded amongst the ranks of British officials on the spot and had solidified the divide between contested visions for South Arabia's future. With the entanglements of the federal project only nebulously engaged with by the Douglas-Home government, the offer of independence to the Federation in 1964 left the successor Labour government under Wilson with a fractious inheritance. Though Greenwood recognised the Federation was antagonistic to establishing a broader-based constitutional settlement, his efforts to redress the balance of collaborative relations in South Arabia created new problems. Such efforts were resisted by a cohort of British officials and Federal Ministers who took steps to ensure that the Federation remained central to British efforts to take South Arabia to independence. These figures, in response to the 1966 Defence Review which further undermined the Federation, coordinated through informal networks to challenge and change British policy to the detriment of an alternative settlement. Ultimately, however, such efforts came to nothing as the ensuing collapse of the Federation's authority across the Protectorate and the battle over control of Aden between FLOSY and the NLF

overtook the chance for a peaceful handover of power. In the final years of its existence, the federal idea continued to exert a powerful influence over the course of the end of empire and those officials who worked to see its realisation.

Within the broader study of the 'federal moment' and the debate between revisionists and their critics as to how to understand its place within the formation for the post-colonial order, this thesis has argued that it is difficult to view federalism in South Arabia as demonstrative of competing discourses between colonial power and subject or competing threads of nationalism, as some scholars have suggested of federal experiments elsewhere.[1] Whilst local conceptions of federation across decolonising European empires envisaged various alternative forms of sovereignty that debated the extent of autonomy and association with the former imperial power or within a transnational polity, this thesis has shown that the space for discourse and debate about South Arabia's federal future was deliberately and repeatedly curtailed by Britain in an effort to maintain an intellectual monopoly over state-formation and nation-building. The British federal idea was utilised to harness, recast, and elevate a particular conception of South Arabian society and its politics to weather the threatening but seemingly temporary storm of nationalism, and actualise the apparently logical evolution of British imperialism whilst excluding alternatives that did not conform to British federal thinking. Within South Arabian nationalist politics, the conceptual controversy of the federation as British-inspired could not be easily overcome. Correlating with the entrenchment of British commitment to the Federation, the currency of anti-federal politics became a predominant fixture of South Arabian nationalists' lexicon that gradually become more radical in rhetoric and violent in action.

It is possible to argue that tribal dissent against the imposition of the federal state's authority across the Protectorate and the backlash against draconian policies in Aden point to the failure of imperial federalism in South Arabia as being the product of disputes over the legitimacy of state action, and as contesting the Federation's existence as a state.[2] But this thesis has argued that, as important as these controversies were, the extent to which contested statism serves as the comprehensive explanation or unifying thread to imperial federalism is not matched by the consistency with which the British federal idea

[1] Chris Vaughan, 'The Politics of Regionalism and Federation in East Africa, 1958-1964', *The Historical Journal*, 62:2 (2019), pp. 519-540; Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
[2] Merve Fejzula, 'The Cosmopolitan Historiography of Twentieth-Century Federalism', *The Historical Journal*, 64:2 (2021), pp. 477-500

underpinned British policy, manifested itself within the Federation's state structures, justified federal and British action, and served as an important feature of the irreconcilable contest between British imperialism and South Arabian nationalism. This thesis has shown the controversies of the South Arabian 'federal moment' of the 1950s and 1960s were necessarily rooted in the idea that a federal future could be guided according to the insistence of British ambition against broader forces of decolonisation and alternative visions for South Arabia's future.

This thesis has also argued that the experience of imperial federation in South Arabia is an important caveat to assessing the extent of the cohesiveness of post-war federalism. This thesis has shown that the inherent tensions and amorphous logic of the Federation were as much characteristic of its failure as the external forces that undermined it, and the issue of the (un)viability of post-war federalism that has been emphasised by critics of revisionist claims would appear to be evident in South Arabia.[3] The insistence that federation would provide a solution to an array of problems masked tensions and contortions that contributed to the Federation's inherent instability. Yet this thesis has argued against critics' dismissive reading of the unviability of post-war federalism. This thesis has demonstrated that assessing the significance of imperial federalism is not just about the extent of its viability as a means of maintaining empire under another guise, but through key contemporaries' insistence that federation was viable when it was increasingly evident that it was not. The distance between the perceived logic of federalism and the actual integrity, or lack thereof, of that logic is where the historical significance of imperial federalism can be found. The seemingly all-encompassing utility and momentum of the federal idea, increasing personal and policy commitment to the Federation, and a lack of willingness to accommodate revision or alternative contributions, led to a persistent failure to interrogate the fundamentals of the federal policy as the need to do so became progressively more urgent. It was on this basis that the force of the federal idea itself played an important causal role in the chaotic collapse of British rule.

[3] Richard Drayton, 'Federal Utopias and the Realities of Imperial Power', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* 37:2 (2017), pp. 406-411; Musab Younis, 'Against Independence', *London Review of Books,* 39:13 (29 June 2017), URL: https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v39/n13/musab-younis/against-independence; Samuel Moyn, 'Fantasies of Federalism', *Dissent,* 62 (2015), pp. 145-151; Michael Goebel, 'After empire must come nation?', *Afro-Asian Visions* (8 Sept. 2016), URL: https://medium.com/afro-asian-visions/after-empire-must-come-nation-cd220f1977c

With this in mind, it is perhaps not so surprising that references to other ailing federations to support the development of the last of Britain's experiments in imperial federalism seldom appear in the documentary record. Though inklings of doubt periodically surfaced, it was only after the cathartic effect of the Federation of South Arabia's collapse that officials explicitly recognised in the documentary record that British-inspired or imposed federations were an 'albatross' that should be avoided, particularly during deliberations about the creation of the United Arab Emirates.[4] Where other federations such as the Malay Federation were invoked for technical inspiration, the basis of British policy rationalisations rested on the particulars of South Arabia and that meant that federation there had to be tailored accordingly. As particular as the circumstances might have been, this thesis has shown that officials' emphasis on the uniqueness of the South Arabian federal experiment served two connected purposes. Firstly, doing so was a means by which officials on the spot sought to enhance their importance as gatekeepers of policy information about the local situation and thereby influence policy. Secondly, it provided a means to insulate the South Arabian federal idea from its own fragility and the 'Winds of Change' to maintain the belief that Britain could continue to fulfil a global role and shape the destiny of a dependent territory. The maintenance of British prestige necessitated a denial of the problems Britain faced, but the commitment to the federal idea was integral to the underlying commitment to imperialism and officials' roles in it in South Arabia, and to explain the deficiencies of the former would have inferred deficiencies in the latter. This underscores the need to examine post-war federalism as an intellectual moment where explicit links between imperial federations will likely be found wanting but connections through informal networks, rationalisations, and justifications of the continuation of British imperial involvement in the future of its dependent territories are potentially abundant. The same could be said for future examinations of the links between these post-war federal experiments and earlier notions of imperial unity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, later myths about the perceived role and potential of the Commonwealth, and

[4] Simon C. Smith, 'Managing and Mismanaging Departure: The South Arabian Federation and the United Arab Emirates in Comparative Perspective', in Noel Brehony and Clive Jones (eds), *Britain's Departure from Aden and South Arabia: Without Glory but Without Disaster,* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2020), pp. 169-170; Smith, 'Failure and success in state formation: British policy towards the Federation of South Arabia and the United Arab Emirates', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 84-97

Britain's sense of place and purpose in the world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[5]

Though this thesis has primarily focused on archival material produced by the Colonial Office and colonial administration in South Arabia, an examination of federal discourse in the press and by public intellectuals outside the official policy-making process might also offer useful insights into the relationship between the two and the formation of federal thinking. Future research into as yet uncatalogued personal papers of colonial officials stationed in South Arabia and the recent emergence of a number of memoirs from British and local figures based in South Arabia might still provide opportunities to examine how such officials and local figures understood their place in and responded to the formulation and implementation of British policy at the end of empire.[6] Furthermore, whilst this thesis has not examined the intricacies of contemporary South Arabian responses to and initiatives for possible post-colonial futures, there remains scope to examine the ambitions of groups such as the South Arabian League in the 1950s as part of the broader development of ideas of unity and nationalism that contrasted the idea of imperial federalism in the region. Such ambitions for achieving unity in south-west Arabia are pertinent for Yemen today, not least because federal solutions continue to be considered as a potential means of resolving the humanitarian disaster of the ongoing civil war, the end of which remains as uncertain as ever.[7]

Looking back at post-war federalism, as this thesis has done, allows for an examination of how historical actors responded to what was to them an uncertain future. For the British in South Arabia, the resulting federal experiment sought to push through that uncertainty, with surety and conviction, to shape a future according to British design and answer the

---

[5] Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of the World Order, 1860-1900*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011); Phillip Murphy, *The Empire's New Clothes: The Myth of the Commonwealth,* (London: Hurst, 2018)

[6] Peter Hinchcliffe, John Ducker, and Maria Holt, *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat from Aden,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 149-172; Thanos Petouris, 'Britain and Yemen: The end of British rule in South Arabia through the eyes of a young political officer', *Asian Affairs*, 49:1 (2018), pp. 56-81; Sultan Ghalib Bin 'Awadh Al-Qu'aiti II, *"Fair Play" or Poisoned Chalice: The Last Years of Britain's Presence and Policy in Southern Arabia,* (London: Darf Publishers, 2021); Noel Brehony & Clive Jones (eds), *Britain's Departure from Aden and South Arabia: Without Glory but Without Disaster,* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2020); Kennedy Trevaskis, *The Deluge: A Personal View of the End of Empire,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019); Richard Eberlie, *Aden: The Curtain Falls: The Memoirs of Dick Eberlie: Part 4, 1965 to 1967,* (Self-published, 2016); Nathan Tamblyn, *A Year in Yemen,* (Self-published, 2016)

[7] Maria-Louis Clausen, 'Can Federalism Save the Yemeni State?', in Marie-Christine Heinze (ed), *Yemen and the Search for Stability: Power, Politics and Society After the Arab Spring,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019); Stephen W. Day, *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: A Troubled National Union,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 308-311

burning questions of what might emerge from the apparent decline of imperial power. Yet, as the British found in the 1950s and 1960s, federalism offers no easy answer to those questions of sovereignty, political organisation and national belonging that continue to vex the post-colonial world.

Appendix: Interview Consent Forms

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

CONSENT FORM *(FACE TO FACE)*

Study title: The Federal Panacea: British decolonisation and state-building in South Arabia

Researcher name: Joseph Higgins
Staff/Student number: 23409193
ERGO reference number: 18521

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (insert date /version no. of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	☑
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study	☑
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected	☑

Data Protection
I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Name of participant (print name)..... James Nash .....

Signature of participant.....

Date..... 18/10/16 .....

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

CONSENT FORM *(FACE TO FACE)*

Study title: The Federal Panacea: British decolonisation and state-building in South Arabia

Researcher name: Joseph Higgins
Staff/Student number: 23409193
ERGO reference number: 18521

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (insert date /version no. of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	☑
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study	☑
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected	☑

Data Protection
I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Name of participant (print name)...AL-QU'AITI (Sultan Ghalib bin 'Awadh)

Signature of participant.....

Date.....14th October 2016.....

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

CONSENT FORM *(FACE TO FACE)*

Study title: The Federal Panacea: British decolonisation and state-building in South Arabia

Researcher name: Joseph Higgins
Staff/Student number: 23409193
ERGO reference number: 18521

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (insert date /version no. of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. [JH]

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study [JH]

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected [JH]

Data Protection
I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Name of participant (print name)..STEPHEN DAY.....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....29 MARCH 2017.....

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

CONSENT FORM *(FACE TO FACE)*

Study title: The Federal Panacea: British decolonisation and state-building in South Arabia

Researcher name: Joseph Higgins
Staff/Student number: 23409193
ERGO reference number: 18521

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (insert date /version no. of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	✓
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study	✓
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected	✓

Data Protection
I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Name of participant (print name) OLIVER MILES

Signature of participant Oliver Miles

Date 3 Aug 2017

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

CONSENT FORM *(FACE TO FACE)*

Study title: The Federal Panacea: British decolonisation and state-building in South Arabia

Researcher name: Joseph Higgins
Staff/Student number: 23409193
ERGO reference number: 18521

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (insert date /version no. of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	☑
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study	☑
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected	☑

Data Protection
I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Name of participant (print name)....Mohamed Farid Alawlaqi

Signature of participant.....

Date....11/8/2017.....

UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

CONSENT FORM *(FACE TO FACE)*

Study title: The Federal Panacea: British decolonisation and state-building in South Arabia

Researcher name: Joseph Higgins
Staff/Student number: 23409193
ERGO reference number: 18521

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (insert date /version no. of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. [JH]

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study [JH]

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected [JH]

Data Protection
I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Name of participant (print name)..... John C. Decker

Signature of participant.....

Date..... 15th August 2017

Bibliography

Primary Materials

Archival Sources

The National Archives, Kew
CAB – Cabinet Office
CAB 21: Cabinet Office and predecessors: Registered Files, 1916-1965
CAB 128: Cabinet: Minutes, 1945-1997
CAB 129: Cabinet: Memoranda, 1945-1997
CAB 148: Cabinet Office: Defence and Oversea Policy Committees and Sub-Committees: Minutes and Papers, 1964-1997
CAB 164: Cabinet Office: Subject (Theme Series) Files, 1963-1990
CAB 195: Cabinet Secretary's Notebooks, 1942-1965
CAB 301: Cabinet Office: Cabinet Secretary's Miscellaneous Papers, 1936-1979

CO – Colonial Office:
CO 967: Colonial Office: Private Office Papers, 1873-1966
CO 1015: Colonial Office: Central Africa and Aden Department, 1950-1962
CO 1055: Colonial Office: Aden Department, 1962-1966

FCO – Foreign and Commonwealth Office:
FCO 8: Arabian Department: Registered Files, 1967-1972

FO – Foreign Office
FO 371: Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1966

PREM – Prime Minister's Office:
PREM 11: Correspondence and Papers, 1951-1964
PREM 13: Correspondence and Papers, 1964-1970

T – Treasury:
T 220: Imperial and Foreign Division: Registered Files, 1914-1961
T 295: Overseas Finance (Exchange Control) Division: Registered Files, 1947-1975
T 296: Foreign and Commonwealth Division: Registered Files, 1960-1963
T 317: Finance and Overseas Development Division: Registered Files, 1960-1963

Indian Office Records, British Library, London
R/20/B: Records of the Secretariat of the Colony of Aden, 1937-62
R/20/C: Files of the Aden Protectorate, 1928-1962
R/20/D: Files of the High Commission for Aden, 1962-1967
R/20/G: Aden Library, c1860-1967

Liddell Hart Military Archives, King's College London
Sir Charles (Hepburn) Johnston Papers
- GB0099 KCLMA Johnston CH

Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, University of Cambridge
British Diplomatic Oral History Programme
- Sir Brian Lee Crowe, interviewed by Gwenda Scarlett, 15 October 2003
- Oliver Miles, interviewed by Malcolm McBain, 27 August 2004

Julian Amery Papers
- AMEJ

Lord Duncan-Sandys Papers
- DSND

Middle East Centre Archive, St. Anthony's College, University of Oxford
Richard J Holmes Papers
- GB165-0149

Weston Library, Oxford Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford
Alistair James McIntosh Papers
- MSS Ind. Ocn. s. 246

Sir Kennedy Trevaskis Papers
- MSS Brit. Emp. s. 367
- MSS Brit. Emp. s. 546

BFI Archive, Southbank
End of Empire Collection
- Item 26, Aden, Transcript of interview with Sheikh Mohammed Farid Al-Aulaqi, 5 March 1984
- Item 28, Aden, Transcript of Interview with Denis Healey, 21 April 1984
- Item 29, Aden, Transcript of Interview with Sir Samuel Falle, 7 June 1984
- Item 39, Aden, Transcript of Interview with Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, 9 July 1984
- Item 40, Aden, Transcript of Interview with Sir John Wilton, 8 July 1984

Published Documentary Collections

British Documents at the End of Empire, (HMSO, London):
- Series A, Vol. 3, David Goldsworthy (ed), *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire, 1951-1957*, parts 1-3, (1994)
- Series A, Vol. 4, Ronald Hyam and Wm. R. Louis (eds), *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire 1957-64,* parts 1-2, (2000)
- Series A, Vol. 5, S.R. Ashton and Wm. R. Louis (eds), *East of Suez and the Commonwealth 1964-1971,* part 1, (2004)

Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) – URL: hansard.parliament.uk

Newspapers

The Daily Telegraph
The Guardian
The Observer
The Sunday Times
The Times

Memoirs, Autobiographies and Diaries

Allfree, P. S., *Hawks of the Hadhramaut,* (London: Robert Hale, 1967)

Al-Qu'aiti, Sultan Ghalib Bin 'Awadh, *"Fair Play" or Poisoned Chalice: The Last Years of Britain's Presence and Policy in Southern Arabia,* (London: Darf Publishers, 2021)

Lord Belhaven, *The Uneven Road,* (London: John Murray, 1955)

Bell, Sir Gawain, *An Imperial Twilight,* (London: Lester Crook Academic Publishing, 1989)

Boustead, Hugh, *The Wind of Morning: The autobiography of Hugh Boustead,* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971)

Castle, Barbara, *The Castle Diaries, 1964-1976,* (London: Papermac, 1990)

Catterall, Peter (ed), *The MacMillan Diaries: Vol I: The Cabinet Years, 1950-1957,* (London: Macmillan, 2004)

———, *The MacMillan Diaries: Vol II: Prime Minster and After, 1957-1966,* (London: Macmillan, 2011)

Crossman, Richard, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister: Volume One,* (London: Hamish Hamilton & Jonathan Cape, 1975)

———, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister: Volume Two,* (London: Hamish Hamilton & Jonathan Cape, 197)

Crouch, Michael, *An Element of Luck: To South Arabia and Beyond,* (London: The Radcliffe Press, 1993)

Day, Stephen, 'Aden and the Gulf: the reflections of a political officer', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 136-151

Eberlie, Richard, *Aden: The Curtain Falls: The Memoirs of Dick Eberlie: Part 4, 1965 to 1967,* (Self-published, 2016)

Eden, Sir Anthony, *The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden: Full Circle,* (London: Cassell & Company, 1960)

Folkard, Lionel, *The Sky and the Desert,* (Penzance: United Writers, 1985)

Foster, Donald, *Landscape With Arabs: Travels in Aden and South Arabia,* (Brighton: Clifton Books, 1969)

Groom, Nigel, *Sheba Revealed: A Posting to Bayhan in the Yemen,* (London: London Centre of Arab Studies, 2002)

Harding, John, *Roads to Nowhere: A South Arabian Odyssey 1960-1965,* (London: Arabian Publishing, 2009)

Harper, Stephen, *Last Sunset,* (London: William Collins, 1978)

Healey, Denis, *The Time of My Life,* (London: Michael Joseph, 1989)

Hickinbotham, Sir Tom, *Aden,* (London: Constable and Co., 1958)

Holden, David, *Farewell to Arabia,* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966)

Johnston, Charles Hepburn, *The View from Steamer Point: Being an Account of Three Years in Aden,* (London: Collins, 1964)

Knox-Mawer, June, *The Sultans Came to Tea,* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1961)

Luce, Margaret, *From Aden to the Gulf: Personal Diaries, 1956-1966,* (Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1987)

Lunt, James, *The Barren Rocks of Aden*, (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1966)

Macmillan, Harold, *At the End of the Day, 1961-1963,* (London, Macmillan, 1972)

———, *Riding the Storm, 1956-1959,* (London, Macmillan, 1971)

———, *Tides of Fortune, 1946-1955,* (London: Macmillan, 1969)

Miles, Oliver, 'The British withdrawal from Aden: A personal memory by Oliver Miles', (The British-Yemeni Society, December 1997), http://al-bab.com/albab-orig/albab/bys/articles/miles.htm [accessed 27/07/2016]

Paget, Julian, *Last Post: Aden 1964-67,* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969)

Reilly, Sir Bernard, *Aden and the Yemen,* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960)

Tamblyn, Nathan, *A Year in Yemen,* (Self-published, 2016)

Trevaskis, Kennedy, *Shades of Amber: A South Arabian Episode*, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1968)

———, *The Deluge: A Personal View of the End of Empire,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019)

Trevelyan, Humphrey, *The Middle East in Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1970)

Wise, Janet, *My Adventures East of Suez: A Wife in the British Empire,* (unpublished memoir)

Interviews

Al Aulaqi, Mohamed Farid, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 2 August 2017, 11 August 2017

Al Qu'aiti, Sultan Ghalib, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 14 October 2016

Crook, Paul, interviewed by Julian Thompson, 6 February 2001, URL: https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80021562 [accessed 24/01/2017]

Day, Stephen, interviewed by Conrad Wood, 7 November 2000, URL: https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80019928 [accessed 24/01/2017]

Day, Stephen, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 29 March 2017

Ducker, John, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 14 August 2017

Ledger, David, interviewed by Conrad Wood, 23 May 1988, URL: https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80009987 [accessed 24/01/2017]

Meynell, Godfrey, interviewed by Conrad Wood, 10 July 2000, URL: http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80019111 [accessed 24/01/2017]

Miles, Oliver, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 4 July 2017, 3 August 2017

Miles, Oliver, interviewed by Rodney Giesler, 24 April 2001, URL: https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80020225 [accessed 24/01/2017]

Nash, James, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 18 October 2016

Sharif, Haider Shafal Ali, interviewed by Joseph Higgins, 3 July 2017

Trevaskis, Sir Kennedy, interviewed by Karl Pieragostini, 29 November 1979

Secondary Published Materials

'Arabia Felix and the Indian Ocean', *The Round Table,* 54:216 (1964), pp. 343-351

'Panorama from Aden', *The Round Table,* 55:219 (1965), pp. 226-233

Abadi, Jacob, 'Britain's Abandonment of South Arabia: A Reassessment', *Journal of Third World Studies*, 12 (1995), pp. 152-80

Anderson, David M., 'Mau Mau in the High Court and the 'Lost' British Empire Archives: Colonial Conspiracy or Bureaucratic Bungle?', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:5 (2011), pp. 699-716

Badger, Anthony, 'Historians, a legacy of suspicion and the 'migrated archives'', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 23:4-5 (2012), pp. 799-807

Balfour-Paul, Glen, *The End of Empire in the Middle East: Britain's Relinquishment of Power in Her Last Three Arab Dependencies,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Bell, Duncan, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire,* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016)

———, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of the World Order, 1860-1900,* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011)

Bell, Sir Gawain, 'A constitution for South Arabia', *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society,* 53:3 (1966), pp. 266-276

Beloff, Max, 'Empire reconsidered', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 27:2 (1999), pp. 13-26

Bennett, Hew, 'Detainees Are Always One's Achilles Heel: The Struggle over the Scrutiny of Detention and Interrogation in Aden, 1963-1967', *War in History,* 23:4 (2016), pp. 457-488

———, 'Soldiers in the Court Room: The British Army's Part in the Kenya Emergency under the Legal Spotlight', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:5 (2011), pp. 717-730

Bidwell, Robin, *The Two Yemens,* (Harlow: Longman Westview Press, 1983)

Bismarck, Helene von, 'The Kuwait Crisis of 1961 and its Consequences for Great Britain's Persian Gulf Policy', *British Scholar*, 2:1 (2009), pp. 75-96

Blackwell, Stephen, 'Pursuing Nasser: The Macmillan Government and the Management of British Policy Towards the Middle East Cold War, 1957-63', *Cold War History,* 4:3 (2004), pp. 85-104

Braun, Lindsay, 'Suez reconsidered: Anthony Eden's Orientalism and the Suez Crisis', *The Historian,* 65:3 (2003), pp. 535-561

Brehony, Noel & Clive Jones (eds), *Britain's Departure from Aden and South Arabia: Without Glory but Without Disaster,* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2020)

Brehony, Noel, 'Explaining the triumph of the National Liberation Front', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 35-50

———, 'From Chaos to Chaos: South Yemen 50 Years after the British Departure', *Asian Affairs,* 48:3 (2017), pp. 428-444

———, *Yemen Divided: The Story of a Failed State in South Arabia,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014)

Brendon, Piers, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire 1781-1997,* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2008)

Brooke, Peter, *Duncan Sandys and the Informal Politics of Britain's Late Decolonisation,* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)

Brown, Judith M. and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV: The Twentieth Century,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Bujra, A. S., 'Urban elites and colonialism: the national elites of Aden and South Arabia', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 6:2 (1970), pp. 189-211

Burgess, Michael, 'Imperial Federation: Continuity and Change in British Imperial Ideas, 1869-1871', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 17:1 (April 1983), pp. 60-80

———, *The British Tradition of Federalism*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1995)

Butler, L. J. & Sarah Stockwell (eds), *The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Butler, L. J., *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002)

———, 'Business and British Decolonisation: Sir Ronald Prain, the Mining Industry and the Central African Federation', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 35:3 (2007), pp. 459-484

Cain, P. J. & A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism 1688-2000: Third Edition,* (London: Pearson, 2016)

Caplan, Richard (ed), *Exit Strategies and State Building,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Carapico, Shelia, *Civil society in Yemen: The political economy of activism in modern Arabia,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

Carr, K., 'The End of the British Empire in Aden', *Foreign Service Journal*, 92:6 (2015), p. 101

Chang, King-Yuh, 'The United Nations and Decolonization: The Case of Southern Yemen', *International Organization,* 26:1 (1972), pp. 37-61

Cinres, Andrew S. & Kevin Hickson (eds), *Harold Wilson: The Unprincipled Prime Minister? Reappraising Harold Wilson,* (London: Biteback, 2016)

Clarke, Sabine, 'A Technocratic Imperial State? The Colonial Office and Scientific Research, 1940-1960', *Twentieth Century British History,* 18:4 (2007), pp. 453-480

Cohen, Andrew, *The Politics and Economics of Decolonization in Africa: The Failed Experiment of the Central African Federation,* (London: I B Tauris, 2017)

Collins, Michael, 'Decolonisation and the "Federal Moment"', *Diplomacy & Statecraft,* 24:1 (2013), pp. 21-40

Cooper, Frederick, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014)

———, 'Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective', *The Journal of African History,* 49:2 (2008), pp. 167-196

———, 'Routes out of Empire', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* 37:2 (2017), pp. 406-411

Cumming-Bruce, The Hon. A. P. H. T., 'Federation of South Arabia', *Royal United Services Institution Journal,* 110:638 (1965), pp. 112-120

Curless, Gareth, 'Introduction: trade unions in the global south from imperialism to the present day', *Labor History,* 57:1 (2016), pp. 1-19

———, 'The Sudan is 'Not Yet Ready for Trade Unions': The Railway Strikes of 1947–1948', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 41:5 (2013), pp. 804-822

Daly, M. W., *The Last of the Great Proconsuls: The Biography of Sir William Luce,* (San Diego: Nathan Berg, 2014)

Darwin, John, 'An undeclared empire: The British in the middle east, 1918–39', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 27:2 (1999), pp. 159-176

———, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-war World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988)

———, 'British decolonization since 1945: A pattern or a puzzle?', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12:2 (1984), pp. 187-209

———, 'Diplomacy and Decolonization', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28:3 (2000), pp. 5-24

———, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British-World System 1830-1970,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

———, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate,* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991)

———, 'The Fear of Falling: British Politics and Imperial Decline Since 1900', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 36 (1986), pp. 27-43

———, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain,* (London: Penguin, 2012)

Dawisha, Adeed, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to* Despair, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016)

Day, Stephen W., *Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: A Troubled National Union,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Dockrill, Saki, 'Britain's power and influence: Dealing with three roles and the Wilson government's defence debate at Chequers in November 1964', *Diplomacy and Statecraft,* 11:1 (2000), pp. 211-240

———, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World?*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002)

Drayton, Richard, 'Britain's Secret Archive of Decolonisation', *History Workshop Online,* (19 April 2012), URL: https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/britains-secret-archive-of-decolonisation/ [accessed 22 May 2021]

———, 'Federal Utopias and the Realities of Imperial Power', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* 37:2 (2017), pp. 401-406

———, 'Where Does the World Historian Write From? Objectivity, Moral Conscience and the Past and Present of Imperialism, *Journal of Contemporary History,* 46:3 (2011), pp. 671-685

Dresch, Paul, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)

Drohan, Brian, *Brutality in an Age of Human Rights: Activism and Counterinsurgency at the End of the British Empire* (London: Cornell University Press, 2017)

Duffield, Mark & Vernon Hewitt, *Empire, Development and Colonialism: The Past in the Present,* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009)

Edwards, Aaron, 'A triumph of realism? Britain, Aden and the end of empire, 1964-67', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 6-18

———, *Mad Mitch's Tribal Law: Aden and the End of Empire* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2014)

Elie, Serge D., 'Soqotra: South Arabia's Strategic Gateway and Symbolic Playground', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 33:2 (2006), pp. 131-160

Elkins, Caroline, 'Alchemy of Evidence: Mau Mau, the British Empire, and the High Court of Justice', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:5 (2011), pp. 731-748

Faber, David, *Speaking for England: Leo, Julian and John Amery – The Tragedy of a Political Family,* (London: Free Press, 2005)

Fain, W. Taylor, *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region,* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008)

———, ''Unfortunate Arabia': The United States, Great Britain and Yemen, 1955–63', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 12:2 (2001), pp. 125-152

Fejzula, Merve, 'The Cosmopolitan Historiography of Twentieth-Century Federalism', *The Historical Journal,* 64:2 (2021), pp. 477-500.

Fielding, Xan, *One Man in His Time: The Life of Lieutenant-Colonel NLD ('Billy') McLean, DSO,* (London: Macmillan, 1990)

Fletcher, R. S. G., *British Imperialism and 'The Tribal Question': Desert Administration and Nomadic Societies in the Middle East, 1919-1936,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Franck, Thomas M. (ed), *Why Federations Fail: An Inquiry into the Requisites for Successful Federalism,* (London: University of London Press, 1968)

Freitag, Ulrike, *Indian Ocean migrants and state formation in Hadhramaut: Reforming the homeland,* (Leiden: Brill, 2003)

Friedman, Brandon, 'From union (ʾittihād) to united (muttahida): the United Arab Emirates, a success born of failure', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 112-135

Gallagher, John, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and other essays,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)

Garston, J., 'Aden: The First Hundred Years, 1839 to 1939', *History Today*, 15:3 (March 1965)

Gavin, A.J. *Aden Under British Rule,* (London: Hurst, 1975)

Gerges, Fawaz A., 'The Kennedy Administration and the Egyptian-Saudi Conflict in Yemen: Co-opting Arab Nationalism', *Middle East Journal,* 49:2 (Spring 1995), pp. 292-311

Getachew, Adom, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019)

Gildea, Robert, *Empires of the Mind: The Colonial Past and the Politics of the Present,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)

Goebel, Michael, 'After empire must come nation?', *Afro-Asian Visions* (8 Sept. 2016), URL: https://medium.com/afro-asian-visions/after-empire-must-come-nation-cd220f1977c [accessed 1 September 2017]

———, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Goldsworthy, David, 'Britain and the International Critics of British Colonialism, 1951-56', *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics,* 29:1 (1991), pp. 1-24

———, 'Keeping change within bounds: Aspects of colonial policy during the Churchill and Eden governments, 1951-57', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 18:1 (1990), pp. 81-108

Grob-Fitzgibbon, Benjamin, *Imperial Endgame: Britain's Dirty Wars and the End of Empire,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

Halliday, Fred, *Arabia Without Sultans,* (London: Penguin, 1974)

Hardy, Roger, *The Poisoned Well: Empire and its Legacy in the Middle East*, (London: Hurst, 2018)

Harrington, Craig A., 'The Colonial Office and the Retreat from Aden: Great Britain in South Arabia, 1957-1967', *Mediterranean Quarterly,* 25:3 (2014), pp. 5-26

Hart-Davis, Duff, *The War That Never Was: The True Story of the Men who Fought Britain's Most Secret Battle,* (London: Random House, 2011)

Heikal, Mohamed H., *Cutting the Lion's Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes,* (London: Corgi Books, 1988)

Heinlein, Frank, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation 1945-1963,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002)

Heinze, Marie-Christine (ed), *Yemen and the Search for Stability: Power, Politics and Society After the Arab Spring,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019)

Hinchcliffe, Peter, 'The Overseas Civil Service 1837-1997 I: South Arabian Federation', *Asian Affairs,* 30:3 (1999), pp. 305-312

Hinchcliffe, Peter, John T. Ducker, and Maria Holt, *Without Glory in Arabia: The British Retreat from Aden,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006)

Holt, Andrew, *The Foreign Policy of the Douglas-Home Government: Britain the United States and the End of Empire,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Holt, Maria, 'Memories of Arabia and Empire: An Oral History of the British in Aden', *Contemporary British History*, 18:4 (2004), pp. 93-112

Hopkins, A. G., 'Rethinking Decolonization', *Past & Present,* 200 (August 2008), pp. 211-247

Hyam, Ronald, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

———, 'The primacy of geopolitics: The dynamics of British imperial policy, 1763–1963', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 27:2 (1999), pp. 27-52

Ingrams, Harold, *The Yemen: Imams, Rulers and Revolutions,* (London: John Murray, 1963)

Ingrams, W. H., 'The Exploration of the Aden Protectorate', *Geographical Review,* 28:4 (October 1938), pp. 638-651

Jacob, Alaric, 'The British Arabists', *History Today,* 23:5 (May 1973), URL: http://www.historytoday.com/alaric-jacob/british-arabists [accessed 14/11/16]

Jankowski, James, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic,* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2001)

Jeppesen, Chris, ''Sanders of the river, still the best job for a British boy': Recruitment to the Colonial Administrative Service at the End of Empire', *The Historical Journal,* 59:2 (2016), pp. 469-508

Johnson, Robert, Timothy Clack (eds), *At the End of Military Intervention: Historical, Theoretical and Applied Approaches to Transition, Handover and Withdrawal,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Jones, Clive, 'Aden, South Arabia and the United Arab Emirates: a retrospective study in state failure and state creation', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 2-5

———, 'Where the state feared to tread': Britain, Britons, covert action and the Yemen Civil War, 1962–64, *Intelligence and National Security,* 21:5 (2006), pp. 717-737

Karam, Jeffry G. (ed), *The Middle East in 1958: Reimagining a Revolutionary Year,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2021)

Kelly, J.B., *Arabia, the Gulf and the West,* (London: George Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980)

Kelly, S.B. (ed), *Fighting the Retreat from Arabia and the Gulf: The Collected Essays and Reviews of J.B. Kelly, Vol. 1,* (London: New English Review Press, 2013)

Kendle, John, *Federal Britain: A History*, (London: Routledge, 1997)

Kennedy, Dane, *The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire,* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018)

———, 'The Means and Ends of Empires', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* 34:3 (2014), pp. 604-610

Kent, John, 'The Egyptian base and the defence of the Middle East, 1945–54', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21:3 (1993), pp. 45-65

Kettle, Louise, 'Learning to Pull the Strings after Suez: Macmillan's Management of the Eisenhower Administration during the Intervention in Jordan, 1958', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 27:1 (2016), pp. 45-64

Kirk-Greene, Anthony, *Britain's Imperial Administrators, 1858-1966,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000)

Kostiner, Joseph, *The Struggle for South Yemen* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1984)

Kumarasingham, H., 'Liberal Ideals and the Politics of Decolonisation', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 46:5 (2018), pp. 815-820

Lee, J. M., *Colonial Development and Good Government,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967)

Liebesny, Hebert J., 'Administration and Legal Development in Arabia: Aden Colony and Protectorate', *Middle East Journal,* 9:4 (1955), p. 385-396

———, 'Administration and Legal Development in Arabia: The Persian Gulf Principalities', *Middle East Journal,* 10:1 (1956), pp. 33-42

Little, Tom, *South Arabia: Arena of Conflict,* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968)

Livingston, William S., *Federalism and Constitutional Change,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956)

Louis, Wm. Roger, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006)

———, *The British Empire in the Middle East: 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, The United States, and Postwar Imperialism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984)

———, 'The Dissolution of the British Empire in the Era of Vietnam', *The American Historical Review,* 107:1 (2002), pp. 1-25

Lynn, Martin (ed), *The British Empire in the 1950s: Retreat or Revival?,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

MacKenzie, J. M., 'The British Empire: Ramshackle or Rampaging? A Historiographical Reflection', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43:1 (2015), pp. 99-124

Macleod, Calum A., *The End of British Rule in South Arabia, 1959-1967*, (PhD Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 2001)

Marlowe, John, *Arab Nationalism and British Imperialism: A Study in Power Politics,* (London: The Cresset Press, 1961)

Martin, Ged, 'Empire Federalism and Imperial Parliamentary Union, 1820-1870', *The Historical Journal*, 16:1 (March 1973), pp. 65-92

Mawby, Spencer, 'A Crisis of Empire: The Anglo–Ottoman Dispute Over the Aden Frontier, 1901–1905', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 18:1 (2007), pp. 27-52

———, 'Britain's last imperial frontier: The Aden protectorates, 1952–59', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 29:2 (2001), pp. 75-100

———, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67: Last outpost of a Middle East Empire,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005)

———, 'From Tribal Rebellions to Revolution: British Counter-Insurgency Operations in Southwest Arabia 1955-67', *Electronic Journal of International History*, 5 (2000), URL: http://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/3392/ [accessed 10/01/2018]

———, *Ordering Independence: The End of Empire in the Anglophone Caribbean, 1947-1969,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

———, 'Orientalism and the Failure of British Policy in the Middle East: The Case of Aden', *History: the Journal of the Historical Association*, 95:3 (2010), pp. 332-353

———, 'The clandestine defence of empire: British special operations in Yemen 1951-64', *Intelligence and National Security,* 17:3 (2002), pp. 105-130

———, *The Transformation and Decline of the British Empire: Decolonisation after the First World War,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

———, 'Workers in the Vanguard: the 1960 industrial relations ordinance and the struggle for independence in Aden', *Labor History,* 57:1 (2016), pp. 35-52

McCourt, David M., 'What was Britain's "East of Suez Role"? Reassessing the Withdrawal, 1964-1968, *Diplomacy and Statecraft,* 20 (2009), pp. 453-472

McNamara, Robert, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018)

———, 'The Nasser factor: Anglo-Egyptian relations and Yemen/Aden crisis 1962-65', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 51-68

Misra, Maria, 'Colonial officers and gentlemen: the British Empire and the globalization of 'tradition', *Journal of Global History,* 3:2 (2008), pp. 135-161

Moyn, Samuel, 'Fantasies of Federalism', *Dissent,* 62 (2015), pp. 145-151

Murphy, Philip, *Alan Lennox-Boyd: A Biography,* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999)

———, *The Empire's New Clothes: The Myth of the Commonwealth,* (London: Hurst, 2018)

———, *Party Politics and Decolonization: The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951-1964,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)

Naumkin, Vitaly, *Red Wolves of Yemen,* (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 2004)

Orkaby, Asher, 'The North Yemen civil war and the failure of the Federation of South Arabia', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 69-83

Otte, T.G., *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Petersen, Tore, 'Anglo-American relations over Aden and the United Arab Emirates, 1967-71', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 98-111

———, 'Crossing the Rubicon? Britain's Withdrawal from the Middle East, 1964–1968: A Bibliographical Review', *The International History Review*, 22:2 (2000), pp. 318-340

———, *The Decline of the Anglo-American Middle East, 1961-1969: A Willing Retreat,* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2014)

Petouris, Thanos, 'Britain and Yemen: The end of British rule in South Arabia through the eyes of a young political officer', *Asian Affairs,* 49:1 (2018), pp. 56-81

Pickering, Jeffrey, *Britain's Withdrawal from East of Suez: The Politics of Retrenchment,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998)

Pieragostini, Karl, *Britain, Aden and South Arabia: Abandoning Empire,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991)

Podeh, Elie, 'The Struggle over Arab Hegemony after the Suez Crisis', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 29:1 (1993), pp. 91-110

Pridham, B.R. (ed), *Contemporary Yemen: Politics and Historical Background,* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1984)

Prior, Christopher, '"A brotherhood of Britons?": public schooling esprit de corps and colonial officials in Africa, c.1900-39', *History*, 98:330 (2013), pp. 174-190

———, '"This Community Which Nobody Can Define": Meanings of Commonwealth in the Late 1940s and 1950s', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 47:3 (2019), pp. 567-590

Reilly, Benjamin, 'Arabian Travellers, 1800-1950: An Analytical Bibliography', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 43:1 (2016), pp. 71-93

Robinson, R., 'Wm. Roger Louis and the official mind of decolonization', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 27:2 (1999), pp. 1-12

Sammut, Dennis, *End of Empire policies, and the politics of local elites: The British exit from South Arabia and the Gulf, 1951-1972,* (PhD thesis: St Peter's College, Oxford, 2014)

Sato, S., 'Britain's Decision to Withdraw from the Persian Gulf, 1964–68: A Pattern and a Puzzle', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37:1 (2009), pp. 99-117

———, 'Operation Legacy': Britain's Destruction and Concealment of Colonial Records Worldwide', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 45:4 (2017), pp. 697-719

Shepard, Todd, 'Making French and European Coincide: Decolonization and the Politics of Comparative and Transnational Histories', *Ad Imperio,* 2 (2007), pp. 339-360

———, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France,* (London: Cornell University Press, 2006)

Shepherd, Robert, *Iain Macleod: A Biography,* (London: Random House, 1994)

Smith, Andrew W. M. and Chris Jeppersen (eds), *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?,* (London: UCL Press, 2017)

Smith, Simon C., ''America in Britain's place?': Anglo-American relations and the Middle East in the aftermath of the Suez crisis', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 10:3 (2012), pp. 252-270

———, 'Britain's Decision to Withdraw from the Persian Gulf: A Pattern Not a Puzzle', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 44:2 (2016), pp. 328-351

———, *Britain's Revival and Fall in the Gulf: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial States, 1950-71,* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004)

———, *Ending Empire in the Middle East: Britain, the United States and post-war decolonization, 1945-1973,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012)

———, 'Failure and success in state formation: British policy towards the Federation of South Arabia and the United Arab Emirates', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 84-97

———, 'Revolution and reaction: South Arabia in the aftermath of the Yemeni revolution', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 28:3 (2000), pp. 193-208

———, 'Rulers and residents: British relations with the Aden protectorate, 1937–59', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31:3 (1995), pp. 509-523

Stark, Freya, *The Southern Gates of Arabia: A Journey in the Hadhramaut*, (London: John Murray, 1936)

Stockwell, A. J., 'Malaysia: The making of a neo-colony?', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 26:2 (1998), pp. 138-156

Stockwell, Sarah, 'Imperial Liberalism and Institution Building at the End of Empire in Africa', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 46:5 (2018), pp. 1009-1033

Stoler, Ann Laura, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance', *Archival Science,* 2 (2002), pp. 87-109

Thomas, Martin, *Fight or Flight: Britain, France, and their Roads from Empire,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Thompson, Andrew (ed), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Thorpe, D. R., *Alec Douglas-Home,* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997)

Tripodi, Christian, ''A Bed of Procrustes': The Aden Protectorate and the Forward Policy 1934–44', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 44:1 (2016), pp. 95-120

Tyler, J.E., *The Struggle for Imperial Unity, 1868-1895,* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1938)

Vaughan, Chris, 'The Politics of Regionalism and Federation in East Africa, 1958-1964', *The Historical Journal*, 62:2 (2019), pp. 519-540

Walker, Jonathan, *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in Yemen 1962-67,* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2005)

Walton, Calder, *Empire of Secrets: British Intelligence, the Cold War and the Twilight of Empire,* (London: HarperPress, 2013)

Waterfield, Gordon, *Sultans of Aden,* (London: John Murry, 1968)

Watt, D. C., 'Labor Relations and Trades Unionism in Aden, 1952-1960', *Middle East Journal,* 16:4 (1962), pp. 443-456

Wilder, Gary, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonisation and the Future of the World,* (London: Duke University Press, 2015)

Willis, John M., *Unmaking North and South: Cartographies of the Yemeni Past,* (London: Hurst, 2012)

Winks, Robin W. (ed), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V: Historiography,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Worrall, James, 'The missing link? Police and state-building in South Arabia', *Middle Eastern Studies,* 53:1 (2017), pp. 19-34

Worrall, Richard John, ''Coping with a Coup d'Etat': British Policy towards Post-Revolutionary Iraq, 1958-63', *Contemporary British History,* 21:2 (2007), pp. 173-199

Young, John W., *The Labour governments 1964-70: volume 2: International policy,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)

Younis, Musab, 'Against Independence', *London Review of Books,* 39:13 (29 June 2017), URL: https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v39/n13/musab-younis/against-independence [accessed 1 September 2017]

Zinkin, Maurice, 'The Commonwealth and Britain East of Suez', *International Affairs*, 42:2 (1966), pp. 207-218