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# Decolonising Britain

To what extent did the activities of right-wing groups between 1960-1973 indicate a wider British inability to come to terms with the new post-colonial order?

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## Introduction

The disinterest of the British people towards empire is a phenomenon that has long been observed by historians; as early as 1906, John Seeley wrote that there was ‘something very characteristic in the indifference which we show towards this mighty phenomenon of the diffusion of our race and the expansion of our state. We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind.’<sup>1</sup> Historical consensus indicates that popular British indifference towards empire continued throughout the life of the British Empire, through to its dismantling in the twentieth century. Historians such as John Darwin, Robert James, and Bernard Porter largely accept that the majority of Britons, from working men and women to political elites, had more pressing problems particularly in the post-war era, and that decolonisation was quickly and painlessly processed as a pragmatic necessity.<sup>2</sup> This paper, however, seeks to explore the extent to which Britons struggled to come to terms with the new post-colonial order, as reflected in British politics. While historical reality showed that there were indeed few that sought to hold onto empire when it was clear that economic, moral and international pressures would make it near impossible to do so, it would be naïve to presume that the breakdown of an institution that had occupied British elites since the seventeenth century had no significant impact at all on British politics. Through an analysis of the activity and rhetoric of prominent right-wing individuals, namely John Tyndall, A. K. Chesterton and John Enoch Powell, along with the Monday Club and the Conservative Party at large, this paper seeks to show how political resistance to the post-colonial order was articulated in Britain. By evaluating contemporary newspapers and parliamentary records, this paper explores the extent to which the Right’s outward expression of discomfort reflected a wider British inability to come to terms with a post-imperial Britain.

This study will direct its analysis on the right-wing of British politics between 1960-1973; this focus was selected because the Right traditionally represented the imperialist wing of British politics and was therefore more inclined than the Left to show resistance to the consequences of decolonisation. However, in the mid-nineteenth century, the British Left was far from anti-militarist or anti-imperialist, therefore the Left should not be neglected from a discussion on Britain’s adjustment to a post-colonial world; this study must therefore be seen as a contribution to a wider debate on British internal decolonisation that encompasses the whole spectrum of British politics and society. On the left wing of British politics, there is much scope for research, for example, on the British New Left movement from the 1960s, working-class nationalism, and imperialist wars conducted by Labour

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<sup>1</sup> Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> See: Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*; James, ‘The Conservative Party and the Empire’; Porter, *The Lion’s Share*.

governments. This paper, however, will focus on the right wing of British politics, or the British Right, which in this case refers to the Conservative Party and all groups and individuals that sat further right of official party policy.

The Right, however, encompassed a wide spectrum of groups and individuals, therefore some attempt will be made to distinguish between the 'moderate right' and the 'far right'. The term 'far right' was particularly difficult to objectively apply between 1960-1975; as the anti-colonial lobby grew increasingly vocal over immoral policy, and Conservative Party leadership moved gradually towards centrist policies, many Conservative MPs inadvertently found themselves on the fringe of mainstream politics.<sup>3</sup> Individuals moved fluidly between groups such as the Monday Club, National Front and League of Empire Loyalists, moving with ease along the political spectrum depending on the circumstances that presented themselves. The term 'far right', therefore, will be taken to refer to ideas that sat further right than official Conservative Party policy, and does not, in this instance, necessarily refer to any form of extremism. The term 'moderate right' will be used to describe the Conservative Party.

This paper will focus on the period 1960-1973 as this marks the era when decolonisation was definitively and openly accepted by politicians of both major parties as a necessary policy, however it must be recognised that this period and justification is, to some degree, arbitrary. The temporal marking of a post-colonial era is by no means clear-cut in the case of the metropole; for an ex-colony, the post-colonial period clearly begins with that nation's independence, however Britain relinquished her colonies gradually over the twentieth century, making it more difficult to put a date on the beginning of Britain's post-colonial adjustment. There is a strong case to be made for 1947 marking the end of empire, for that was the year that Britain lost her most-prized possession, India. Here, there is ample evidence of elites (notably, such as Winston Churchill) who struggled to come to terms with the loss.<sup>4</sup> There is an equally strong case for using 1956, the year of the Suez Crisis, as a marker; certainly in retrospect, the Suez crisis has served 'as a convenient watershed to separate the years in which Britain's survival as an independent world power seemed possible (and desirable) from the subsequent era which saw the rapid liquidation of the colonial empire.'<sup>5</sup> One could also argue for the existence of a post-colonial state of mind from as early as the inter-war years, when Britain accepted the policy of eventual self-government, or as late as 1982, which signalled the end of Britain's final explicitly imperial war in the Falklands. This paper, however, will purport that the post-colonial era in Britain began in February 1960, with Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's 'Wind of

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<sup>3</sup> Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires*, 404.

<sup>4</sup> Veerathappa, *British Conservative Party*, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 223.

Change' speech in Cape Town, South Africa. The Gold Coast, famously Britain's most politically advanced colony in Africa, had already been granted independence in 1957; however, Macmillan's speech in 1960 signalled that this Tory government was prepared to grant independence to more territories in Africa. Until 1960, there were limited indications that the bulk of British Africa was ready for independence; however, Macmillan's speech indicated that his government intended to thrust independence upon African states, whether they were ready for it or not. Indeed, by 1968, most of Britain's possessions in Africa had been given independence. This study ends in 1973, with Britain's accession to the EEC marking a new focus for British foreign policy, away from the Empire. However, future research on British post-colonial readjustment need not be limited to the years laid out in this paper; one could argue that even to this day, the use of colonial-tinged rhetoric by governing ministers suggests that British politics is still yet to be fully 'decolonised'.<sup>6</sup>

In order to explore the nature of resistance to the new post-colonial order, this study will examine a variety of documents, ranging from published journals such as *Candour*, by A. K. Chesterton's League of Empire Loyalists, and the National Front's *Spearhead*, to speeches by Tory government minister, Enoch Powell, and pamphlets issued by the Monday Club. Given that few individuals explicitly opposed decolonisation itself, an analysis of these documents enables us to examine how imperialist attitudes continued to be channelled indirectly through issues affecting Britain as it transitioned into its new world position. Through an analysis of rhetoric and ideas in these documents, it will be shown how resistance to a post-colonial world was articulated in ways other than resistance to decolonisation. There existed a plethora of right-wing groups between 1960 and 1975, including organisations such as the National Democratic Party, the British Defence League, and the Immigrant Control Association, which could plausibly be included in this paper. However, given the national scope of this paper, this study has chosen to focus on groups and individuals that were national in reach, and that enjoyed varying, but generally relatively high levels of publicity and recognition.

The chosen sources allow the broad national reaction to right-wing rhetoric to be gauged from parliamentary debates and newspaper references. Given that this study seeks to explore how far right-wing activity reflected a wider British inability to come to terms with Britain becoming a post-imperial power, newspaper articles are useful for showing how issues were framed and presented to the public, and also for indicating how relevant and popular particular issues were (or were not) for the readership of any given newspaper. This study therefore primarily uses the most widely circulated broadsheet newspapers in Britain between 1961 and 1976: the *Times*, the *Telegraph* and

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<sup>6</sup> 'Boris Johnson: Brexit mustn't leave us a 'vassal state'', *The Times*, 17 December 2017.

the *Guardian*, which will be taken to broadly represent mainstream opinion.<sup>7</sup> Although this will enable us to gain a broad idea of how right-wing imperialist rhetoric was received, this paper does not claim to fully illuminate the realities of public opinion on decolonisation. Such a claim would require a separate study of popular culture, for example through books, plays, films, music, and newspapers, which is outside of the scope of this paper.

Through an analysis of political rhetoric, this paper will argue that resistance to the post-colonial order did not simply mean resistance to decolonisation; it also referred to grappling with changing conceptions of race, social order, monarchical function, and parliamentary representation. While historians such as Porter argue that to include debates over ideas such as monarchy, constitution and race is to over-extend the meaning of empire, this paper argues that in the British case, given that these ideas and concepts are inextricably tied to Britain's imperial experience, it is fully valid to include them in a discussion of post-imperial adjustment.

It is important at this stage to establish more fully a working definition of both imperialism and colonialism. Imperialism refers to the theory, ideology and practice of a 'mother country' or metropole that rules or dominates foreign territories; colonialism, on the other hand, refers to the settlement of colonies on foreign territories. Writing in 1994, Said argued 'In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism, as we shall see, lingers where it has always been.'<sup>8</sup> This is in line with the argument of this paper (within the specified time brackets). By 1960, Britain was outwardly becoming post-colonial; in other words, Britain had already let go of several colonies and had openly, explicitly accepted that remaining colonies would soon be given independence. However, in 1960, Britain was far from 'post-imperial', because, as will be illustrated, British politics and ideologies remained saturated with the residue of empire. To give colonies on the periphery self-governance was but one side of the coin; on the other was the overhaul, in the imperial, metropolitan mind, of the paternalist, racist, progress-driven attitudes that had supported imperialist structures. While, today, many would argue that we live in a post-imperial age, international relations are still plagued by unequal power structures, with states continuing to use the same age-old moral and economic justifications for pressurising less powerful states into certain courses of action. This paper, however, limits its focus to a thirteen-year window at a crucial time in Britain's imperial history. As there exists no noun to describe the metropolitan equivalent of the peripheral process of decolonisation (i.e. de-imperialisation), this study will refer to this process as the decolonisation of Britain, or the British mind. By arguing that a meaningful proportion of society

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<sup>7</sup> Fisher, Denver & Benyon, *Central Debates*, 197.

<sup>8</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 9.

struggled to come to terms with the new post-colonial order around the 1960s, this paper shows that while the British Right may (eventually) have accepted that colonies had been lost, they did not give up the imperial state of mind, meaning the ideologies that drove empire, and the institutions that sustained it.

While the British Empire is generally well-documented, the history of late- and post-imperial Britain remains incomplete. Traditional imperial historians tended to look at the grand-narratives of empire, exploring the causes for both its proliferation and its decline. In the post-colonial era, emphasis shifted towards the periphery, as historians sought to examine the agency of colonial subjects in determining the realities of empire. However, few historians have examined the legacy of empire in Britain, in the post-colonial era. Where historians have analysed the legacy of empire, it has been generally focused on the colonised periphery. For example, Barratt Brown's *After Imperialism* focuses on the political hangovers from the colonial regime on the periphery, only addressing the metropole to summarise her economic ties to empire and to speculate on Britain's future in corporate investment in an increasingly industrialised world.<sup>9</sup> Addressing domestic imperial legacy has generally fallen to scholars outside of the historical discipline, often to cultural and literary critics. Such scholars tend to focus on a wider range of cultural texts than traditional historians, insisting on addressing how 'the 'hegemonic imperial project' was primarily concerned with the production of derogatory stereotypes of other, alien, subordinated societies', while neglecting to incorporate the 'hard evidence' of government documents, parliamentary records or trading figures.<sup>10</sup>

Traditional historians moved away from imperial studies around the mid-1960s, which coincided with trends towards area studies which concentrated on the periphery, and comparative histories that compared the British experience to other empires.<sup>11</sup> Later studies of imperialism incorporated the growing fields of women's studies, environmental studies, and aboriginal/indigenous studies, and the 1990s saw the resurgence of broad survey histories of imperialism.<sup>12</sup> Importantly for this study, in 2003, Stephen Howe wrote a speculative article, considering how ideas concerning crises within the British state might be linked to the process of decolonisation; his article 'sketched what may be a suggestive, plausible case for seeing British 'internal decolonisation' or 'becoming post-colonial' as a major theme, still awaiting proper investigation.'<sup>13</sup> The process of 'becoming post-colonial' is exactly what this paper seeks to analyse from the perspective of the British Right. In

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<sup>9</sup> Barratt Brown, *After Imperialism*.

<sup>10</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, xvi.

<sup>11</sup> Winks, 'The Future of Imperial History', 655.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 663-6.

<sup>13</sup> Howe, 'Internal Decolonization?' 303.

doing so, this study contributes to a relatively new field within British imperial history, outlined by Howe.

It is important to recognise that historians 'are as much enmeshed in the temporal dislocations of modern times as anyone else', and therefore it is beneficial to address one's positionality.<sup>14</sup> To argue of an inability to adjust to a post-imperial culture 'is not so much a historical argument as a political or indeed, ethical (anti-racist) imperative,' and it is a political imperative that is salient in current British politics.<sup>15</sup> Following the 2016 referendum, Britain has begun the process of withdrawing from the European Union; this has caused the resurgence of themes which were pertinent in the 1960s such as race, British sovereignty and Britain's great power status. As Britain looks to where it can turn for political and economic support, there are clear echoes back to the post-colonial transition of the 1960s. For example, in March 2017, Whitehall officials dubbed attempts to boost trade links with the African Commonwealth as 'Empire 2.0', similar to the way in which, during the 1960s, the Commonwealth was seen by many as a continuation of the Empire.<sup>16</sup> The themes of this paper thus clearly remain relevant to contemporary politics, however, a diligent attempt will be made to keep this study within the confines of 1960-1973; no sweeping assertions will be made, claiming to draw linear connections between the themes of the 1960s to corresponding themes today.

Beginning with an analysis of Britain's reaction to the unilateral declaration of independence in Rhodesia, the first chapter of this paper introduces various key groups and individuals across the British Right and explores how they mobilised in response to the threat to white settler communities. This chapter highlights paternalist and racist modes of thought, derived from imperialist thinking, that will be shown to be repeated in less explicitly imperialist avenues. The following chapter addresses activism against coloured immigration from Commonwealth countries and analyses the imperialist nature of British racism. The third chapter analyses questions of British foreign policy with regards to the Commonwealth and the EEC. This chapter argues that foreign policy expectations in the 1960s were driven by a sense of entitlement, derived from the power and uniqueness that Britain was accustomed to enjoying because of her empire. Finally, the conclusion draws the various examples together, demonstrating how debates over white settlers, race and foreign policy caused disagreements over imperial principles and modes of thought, and exposed the inability of a significant group in Britain to adjust to a post-colonial world.

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<sup>14</sup> Schwarz, 'Memory, Temporality, Modernity', 43.

<sup>15</sup> Howe, 'Internal Decolonization?', 290.

<sup>16</sup> 'Ministers aim to build 'Empire 2.0' with African Commonwealth', *The Times*, 06 March 2017.



## Chapter One – A Constitutional Crisis in Rhodesia

### Macmillan, Macleod and the ‘Wind of Change’

The apparent contemporary political consensus over colonial policy is perhaps the clearest cause of historiographical neglect of political tensions due to the transition into a post-colonial world. In the late 1950s, the Conservative government made repeated appeals to Labour for a bi-partisan colonial policy, making the role of the Opposition somewhat redundant when it came to decolonisation.<sup>17</sup> The policy of eventual self-government had been broadly accepted early in the post-war period, however, by 1960, it was clear that gradualism had been abandoned. Criteria for independence such as ‘harmony among ethnic groups, economic viability, a developed infrastructure of voluntary organisations and demonstrably stable political institutions’, so often stressed by politicians and Colonial Office in the past, were now scarcely heard of, and many were taken aback by this new approach.<sup>18</sup>

This hurried approach to decolonisation was a result of Harold Macmillan’s election in October 1959. Macmillan had initially been chosen as Anthony Eden’s successor, following his resignation in 1957 over the Suez Crisis, largely due to his acceptability to Washington; it was hoped that Macmillan would be able to heal the ‘Special Relationship’ after the Suez debacle. According to Butler, there was enough from Macmillan’s prior record to suggest that he sympathised more with colonial populations than traditionally believed: for example, he had previously proposed that white settler land owners in Kenya be bought out by the state, so that land could be redistributed among African populations.<sup>19</sup> However, in the early years of Macmillan’s leadership colonial policy was an issue which divided the cabinet; Alan Lennox-Boyd, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Alec Douglas-Home, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, had no desire to speed up decolonisation, thus preventing the pursuit of radical policies. This changed in 1959, when Macmillan, armed with a popular mandate, appointed Tory radical Iain Macleod to the Colonial Office. While the broad strokes of policy had been established before Macmillan’s accession to the premiership in 1957, it was Macmillan’s government from 1959 that would make decolonisation a priority. His radical approach, famously articulated in the ‘Wind of Change’ speech on 3 February 1960 in Cape Town, caused alarm within his own political party, and was the direct inspiration for the formation of the Monday Club.

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<sup>17</sup> (House of Commons Debates) *HCD*, vol. 569, cols. 690-1 (06 May 1957); *HCD*, vol. 571, cols. 1115-6 (04 June 1957); *HCD*, vol. 578, cols. 820 & 911-2 (25 November 1957).

<sup>18</sup> Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, 361.

<sup>19</sup> Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 136.

In treating this period of British politics, nominal bipartisanship must therefore not be mistaken for political consensus. As Goldsworthy argued: 'Whatever might be said about relative harmony across the front benches, intra-party conflict remained: only its locus had moved across the floor of the House.'<sup>20</sup> While the Labour Party had suffered divisions over colonial policy in the early 1950s, it was the Tories that were experiencing serious internal tensions a decade later. An issue which riled a significant number of Tories was the government's treatment of white settler communities, Britain's 'kith and kin', in Africa.

Fears that the whites were being abandoned were aroused early on in Macmillan's new premiership, during the Lancaster House Conference chaired by Macleod in Kenya, in January 1960. It was one of several conferences, during which Kenya's constitutional framework and independence were negotiated. While there was ultimately limited agreement at the conference in 1960, Macmillan's proposals to increase African power in both the legislative and executive branches of the colonial Kenyan government were significant. Macmillan had called for the creation of an elected African majority in the Kenyan Legislative Council, in addition to equal representation for Africans and non-Africans on the Executive Council.<sup>21</sup> This signalled a clear break from Whitehall's earlier attempts to protect white settler privilege, providing a stark warning to those concerned about the protection of 'kith and kin'. It certainly rattled Lord Salisbury, a senior Tory peer who had served at the Dominions Office, Colonial Office, and Commonwealth Office throughout his political career. Salisbury, who in 1962 accepted the office of patron of the Monday Club, was a die-hard opponent of British imperial retreat. Having held high offices in government and in the House of Lords, Salisbury was well-respected and well-placed to lead a credible movement to stop, or at least slow down, decolonisation. In March 1961, Salisbury attacked Macleod's colonial policy in the House of Lords, arguing that Macleod had adopted 'especially in his relationship to the white communities of Africa, a most unhappy and an entirely wrong approach. He has been too clever by half.' Referring to proposals that would increase African political power and therefore decrease white political power, Salisbury accused: 'The Europeans found themselves completely outwitted, and they were driven to the conclusion... that it was the nationalist African leaders whom the Colonial Secretary regarded as his partners, and the white community and the loyal Africans that he regarded as his opponents, in the game he was playing.'<sup>22</sup> This trope of playing games and government deception is one that is seen repeatedly in the discussion on treatment of white settlers in Africa.

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<sup>20</sup> Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, 364.

<sup>21</sup> Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 157.

<sup>22</sup> (House of Lords Debates) *HLD*, vol. 229, cols. 307-8 (7 March 1961).

Concessions made in the January 1960 Lancaster House Conference also sparked the formation of the Rhodesia Lobby, just one month later. The group's core was primarily made up of individuals that had consistently lobbied for the protection of imperial interests during controversies in the 1950s such as the Suez Crisis and the Cyprus Emergency; it thus included members such as Salisbury, John Biggs-Davidson, Anthony Fell, Lord Hinchingbrooke, Patrick Wall and Paul Williams.<sup>23</sup> The Lobby advocated against any further constitutional advance in Kenya, and against any self-government in Central Africa until white consent was obtained. Gradualism had been the policy of the British Government towards Africa, certainly since the early post-war period, and the Lobby believed that breaking with this policy would be catastrophic not only for the white minority communities, but also for the black majorities. Crucially, the Rhodesia Lobby sought not to save British Africa from independence, as eventual self-government was British policy from at least as early as 1943, but to save it from the chaos they believed it would descend into, should majority rule come prematurely. For the Lobby, saving British Africa would come down to saving the Conservative Party from its ideological drift away from empire, evident from Macmillan's determination to grant African nations independence. It seemed as though the Conservatives were losing their traditional values, and if the remaining empire was to be saved from disaster, contemporary trends needed to be stopped. The Rhodesia Lobby thus began by focusing its efforts on keeping the Central African Federation (CAF) intact.

#### The Breakdown of the Central African Federation

In the early 1960s, government policy towards the Federation of Nyasaland and Rhodesia, also known as the Central African Federation, again seemed to show disregard for the interest of white communities. The Federation, established in 1953, was an experiment in economic interdependence between Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland; however, despite its economic success, political issues caused Macmillan to call time on the Federation earlier than expected. The Federation had initially been created in the face of opposition from educated Africans in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and significant domestic opposition in Britain; unsurprisingly, therefore, African nationalism in these regions continued to focus its energies against the Federation, and towards a widening of the franchise. African nationalism grew to fever pitch in Nyasaland towards the end of the 1950s; the return of activist, Dr Hastings Banda to the territory in July 1958 was a pivotal event in the nation's history. In the nine months between Banda's return and Westminster's declaration of a state of emergency in March 1959, political agitation intensified to the point of

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<sup>23</sup> Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, 366.

'leading to the virtual collapse of colonial authority in substantial parts of the territory.'<sup>24</sup> In many other African countries, Banda would perhaps have been an acceptable leader to the British; as an articulate, anti-Communist politician, leading a broad popular movement striving to make Nyasaland/Malawi a self-governing nation within the Commonwealth, the British had every reason to view him as a suitable, collaborative leader, had it not been for Banda's staunch opposition to the Federation. Ultimately, Banda's appeals for constitutional advance fell on deaf ears, and the situation continued to deteriorate to the point of the infamous 'bush meeting' of 25 January 1959. Informants claimed that at the meeting, plans were made for the indiscriminate killing of Europeans, Asians, and unsympathetic Africans, which compelled the Governor of Nyasaland, Robert Armitage, to declare a state of emergency on 3 March 1959.<sup>25</sup>

While the research question laid out in this paper does not require a detailed examination of the process of resolving the Nyasaland Emergency, the government's key responses to the crisis were deeply significant for the British Right. Firstly, at the Nyasaland constitutional conference between July-August 1960, Macleod conceded an African majority in the legislature. At a second conference in November 1962, Britain agreed that Nyasaland would receive full self-government, and, crucially, the right to leave the Federation.<sup>26</sup> Banda's election as prime minister in 1963 spelt the end of Nyasaland's involvement in the Federation; by July of the following year, despite resistance from federal prime minister Roy Welensky, Nyasaland had become the Independent State of Malawi.

As the Nyasaland Emergency unfolded, the British Right organised itself in defence of the white-controlled Federation, through resistance to African political advancement in Northern Rhodesia. The federal government had clear links with the Conservative Party in both houses of Parliament; members such as Sir Stephen Hastings, Ronald Bell, Julian Amery and Patrick Wall were 'in constant touch with Rhodesian Federal leaders', in an attempt to coordinate a campaign to save the Federation, by slowing Macleod's plans for political reform in Northern Rhodesia.<sup>27</sup> On 9 February 1961, senior backbencher Robin Turton (Thirsk and Malton) tabled an Early Day Motion (EDM), with the help of Lord Salisbury and John Biggs-Davison, designed to commit Macleod to the principles of a White Paper drafted by the previous colonial secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, in 1958. In practice, this meant restricting the franchise in Northern Rhodesia to 'those who are contributing to the wealth and welfare of the country and who are capable of exercising it with judgement and public spirit,'

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<sup>24</sup> McCracken, *Malawi*, 345.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 350-3.

<sup>26</sup> McIntyre, *British Decolonization*, 51.

<sup>27</sup> Stuart, 'Party in Three', 72.

which would stop Africans from acquiring power too quickly and would maintain power in the hands of the white federal politicians.<sup>28</sup>

Within four days, the motion had 68 signatures, which attracted attention in the press. The *Times* reported that the motion was a stark warning to Macleod, who was 'thought to be forcing the pace of African advancement to political power in Northern Rhodesia dangerously hard.'<sup>29</sup> The phrasing of the motion suggested that publicity was not its principal aim; rather, backbenchers simply sought quiet confirmation from Macleod that his proposals for Northern Rhodesia would be within the framework set out in the 1958 White Paper. However, the issue of interest for the *Times* was the list of names written under the motion, beginning with Robert Turton. Described as a 'backbencher of the most serious and responsible kind', the newspaper's political correspondent clearly felt that Turton's involvement was crucial in attracting the support of men such as Sir Douglas Glover, Sir Spencer Summers, and Sir Gerald Wills. Listing six more moderate Conservative MPs, the article argued that these men were 'typical of those most realistic of Conservatives politicians who quietly see it as a main part of their function to act as the gyroscope that gives stability to the Parliamentary Party... They are, in fact, politicians by commitment neither of the right nor the left, but in an important sense the centre men who slightly shift their weight, when their instinct tells them the need arises.'<sup>30</sup> The motion eventually went on to receive 101 signatures, representing over one third of Conservative backbenchers, affirming that it was more than just the hard-core, imperialist right of the party engaging in another futile attempt to delay decolonisation. Rather, there was a wider feeling, an 'instinct', that something fundamental to the Conservative Party was at stake. One can only speculate what triggered that feeling with regards to Northern Rhodesia; it is likely that many felt that in this case, particularly where the welfare of white settlers in the Federation was at stake, the wind of change was blowing far too quickly for comfort.

The challenge to Macleod over his proposals for Northern Rhodesia ultimately dissolved without significant incident; through skilful presentation of his plans to both the House of Commons, and the Colonial Affairs Committee, Macleod convinced those in the centre of the Tory party that his plans adhered to the principles of Lennox-Boyd's White Paper. In the end, it became clear that if it were to come to a formal parliamentary division, the majority of the Conservative Party would back the Colonial Secretary. While the conclusion of this challenge to the government may arguably suggest that the whole episode was insignificant, this EDM was the only occasion on which the Conservatives

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<sup>28</sup> Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, 368.

<sup>29</sup> 'Warning Shot Across Mr. Macleod's Bows', *The Times*, 13 February 1961.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

witnessed such a significant rebellion against the party leadership on the issue of decolonisation.<sup>31</sup> It was a rare formal expression of backbench concern that the leadership was moving too hastily, and it briefly revealed that a broad section of the parliamentary party had an ‘instinct’ toward the protection of a code tied to imperial policy, that appeared fundamental to Conservative principles. Backbench rebellion against the leadership was rare, perhaps because of repeated emphases on party unity, perhaps due to an unwillingness to embarrass a Conservative government, or perhaps because most of the party was as ‘progressive’ as its leadership. However, it will be shown in this paper that that undefined ‘instinct’, tied to the Conservative Party’s imperial tradition, cropped up time and time again across the various groups that composed the British Right, exposing a discomfort with the transition of becoming postcolonial.

The Central African Federation was officially dissolved in December 1963; however the Federation had suffered its fatal casualty by the 1961 Victoria Falls Conference which granted the right of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland to independence. Crucially, however, Southern Rhodesia, which had long enjoyed high levels of autonomy, was denied this right until certain terms had been fulfilled. In the minds of a number of Conservative MPs and peers, the white settlers in Southern Rhodesia had been deliberately wronged and betrayed, and memory of that betrayal lingered until Smith’s declaration of independence in 1965.

#### Rhodesia: A Declaration of Independence

The escalation of events in Rhodesia caused a serious intensification of political pressure within Britain to protect white settler interests in Africa. The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by the Rhodesian Government, led by Ian Smith, occurred on 11 November 1965; it was condemned as an illegal action by British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, and it presented a major political problem for those on Parliament’s front benches. Southern Rhodesia (also referred to as Rhodesia) had been a self-governing colony since 1923, and a member of the Central African Federation between 1953 and 1963. As a chartered company territory, the region had always been something of an anomaly when considered alongside Britain’s other imperial assets, and, crucially, its white settler minority of around 200,000 in number were unaccustomed to interference by London.<sup>32</sup> The UDI was a culmination of disputes between Britain and Rhodesia concerning the terms of independence, namely ‘majority rule’.

British far-right groups responded emphatically to Rhodesia’s declaration of independence. For example, *Spearhead*, the magazine edited by John Tyndall, leader of the Greater Britain Movement,

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<sup>31</sup> Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, 370.

<sup>32</sup> McIntyre, *British Decolonization*, 60-1.

dedicated numerous articles to the cause. Tyndall was a crucial actor on the British Right; formerly a member of A. K. Chesterton's League of Empire Loyalists, Tyndall was a founder member of the BNP in 1960, the National Socialist Movement in 1962, and the Greater Britain Movement in 1964. He went on to endorse the National Front in 1967, as a means of uniting and strengthening the British Right. In the first *Spearhead* issue following the UDI, Tyndall wrote 'We are passionately and unequivocally for Ian Smith. The present establishment in Britain is, in varying degrees of passion and equivocation, against him... Should history eventually be called upon to record the final fall of British power and civilisation, will it console us to know that at every stage of that fall the principles by which we were guided were absolutely and irrefutably right – right at least as they appeared to us at the time? Or will we be conscious only of the fact that our era has finished; that we have entered our twilight; that we can no longer play a mighty part in the affairs of men?'<sup>33</sup> Tyndall's article referred to several bastions of empire, and cornerstones of Conservative tradition including: history, power, civilisation, principles, loyalty and the Crown. While Tyndall called for Rhodesian independence, he hailed Rhodesia as fundamental to Britain's future influence. Describing the nation as 'glorious', 'wonderful' and 'a monumental national asset', Tyndall projected a rose-tinted vision of what Rhodesia was, and what it could become.<sup>34</sup> In this sense, it was clearly an article written by an individual who had not given up on the imperial mindset that had once made Britain the strongest power in the world.

The League of Empire Loyalists (LEL) also took a pro-Rhodesian position. The LEL was formed in 1954 by Arthur K. Chesterton, a former leading member of the British Union of Fascists, in response to the consensus politics of the 1950s. The *Economist* coined a term for this consensus in February 1954 – Butskellism – combining the names of Hugh Gaitskell, Labour Shadow Chancellor, and R. A. Butler, Tory Chancellor, who were perceived to have converging economic policies.<sup>35</sup> Butler's liberal Conservatism and the increasing number of liberal Tories who were accepting a lesser role for Britain on the world stage created a vacuum on the British Right, which the League hoped to fill.<sup>36</sup> The LEL put up Independent Loyalist candidates for election in the 1964 general election; at this time, Anglo-Rhodesian relations were tense, and a key part of the Loyalists' platform aimed at fighting 'governmental attitudes towards Southern African problems.'<sup>37</sup> Once Rhodesia had declared independence, Chesterton strengthened his organisation's support of Rhodesia, claiming that 'kith

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<sup>33</sup> 'History Will Only Know One Right', *Spearhead*, February/March 1966. Searchlight Archive (SA).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, 118.

<sup>36</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 28-9.

<sup>37</sup> C.6 Candour Interim Report No. 15, September 1964. Arthur Kenneth Chesterton Collection (AKCC).

and kin' were 'being systematically betrayed.'<sup>38</sup> However, the LEL had peaked in mainstream influence due to publicity stunts during the late 1950s, therefore in 1965 the organisation focused on action rather than propaganda. In response to oil sanctions imposed by the British government, Chesterton and his supporters organised the transportation of petrol to Rhodesia.<sup>39</sup> The LEL's practical approach meant that they had an insight into the attitudes of Rhodesians, observing that 'nearly every Rhodesian, though probably himself British, denounces Great Britain' due to sanctions.<sup>40</sup> The LEL therefore was less hopeful than Tyndall's GBM that Rhodesia would play an important part in Britain's future.

On the more moderate right, the Conservative Party was significantly split. These divisions were clear from the disparity between the assertions of the party leadership and members of the Monday Club, even before the UDI. The Monday Club was a thinktank composed of Conservative Party members, which sought to produce 'recommendations and suggestions based on Conservative principles and bearing on current government policies.'<sup>41</sup> Having argued against African political advance in Central Africa, on the grounds that Africans had not 'learned to respect what we call democracy as an equitable method of government' and that the threat to the Federation constituted a threat to the principle of multi-racialism, the Monday Club was clearly positioned on a fine line between extremism and respectability.<sup>42</sup> The Monday Club was strongly linked, due to overlapping membership, to the Anglo-Rhodesian Society, which was formed on 9 September 1965 with the help of funds from Rhodesia. Up until the creation of the Anglo-Rhodesian Society, the Friends of Rhodesia group on the right of the Tory party had caused the Central Office limited concern, because its perceived extremism had deprived it of donations and therefore resources.<sup>43</sup> However, financed by donors in Rhodesia and equipped with the organisational resources and credibility of the Monday Club, the Anglo-Rhodesian Society represented a serious threat to party unity.

On 6 October 1965, over one month before Smith's UDI, two articles in the *Daily Telegraph* highlighted how far the views of the Monday Club were from the party leadership. On the front page, it was reported that Conservative Party leader, Edward Heath, had made a statement affirming that 'there is bi-partisan agreement on the principle of unimpeded progress to the majority rule in Rhodesia and that a unilateral declaration of independence, an illegal act, will no more be

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<sup>38</sup> D.19 'Open Letter to the Queen', *Candour*, March 1966. AKCC.

<sup>39</sup> D.19 'Carrying Petrol to Rhodesia', *Candour*, March 1966. AKCC.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> PUB 117/1 Monday Club, *A Realistic Approach to Present Day Housing* (Pamphlet, c.1960). Conservative Party Archive (CPA).

<sup>42</sup> PUB 117/2 Monday Club Africa Group, *Bury the Hatchet* (Pamphlet, 1962). CPA.

<sup>43</sup> Pitchford, *Conservative Party*, 152.



recognised by a Conservative than by a Labour Government'.<sup>44</sup> However, in a letter to the editor in the same issue of the *Telegraph*, Patrick Wall M.P., friend of Ian Smith and prominent member of the Monday Club, quietly warned those who threatened British retaliation against a UDI. Wall proposed resolution of the dispute on the basis of the 1961 Constitution 'which could be modified to provide for a large increase in the number of voters and, at the same time, to ensure that power does not yet pass to the majority race,' which was clearly at odds with Heath's support for 'unimpeded progress' towards majority rule.<sup>45</sup> Wall's statement was in line with the Monday Club's agreement with the principle of eventual black majority rule. The Monday Club never expressed when this would be a practicable option; indeed, some members within the Monday Club 'made comments that suggested 'eventual' was synonymous with 'never'.'<sup>46</sup>

After the declaration of independence on 11 November was faced with bipartisan accusations of illegality, at least on the front benches, the next logical step was to impose sanctions on the Rhodesian government. On 21 December 1965, an Order in Council was placed to 'implement the embargo of all petroleum products to Rhodesia,' which left Heath in a difficult position.<sup>47</sup> Supporting the oil sanctions would open him up to accusations that Britain's 'kith and kin' had been abandoned, while opposing them would leave Heath vulnerable on account of appearing to endorse a racist white regime's actions. The result of this conflict was an embarrassing three-way split in the Conservative Party; the official party line was abstention, however 31 Tory MPs backed the Labour government, while 50 MPs voted against them. When one considers that this involved 27 per cent of Tories rebelling against their leadership, given that between 1945 and 1974 there were only fifteen occasions on which 10 per cent or more of Tory MPs voted against the front bench, it is clear that this division was extremely abnormal, and therefore represented a deeply significant issue for rebels.<sup>48</sup> As evidence will show, this backbench rebellion proved that a significant section of the Conservative Party was still inclined towards the protection of imperial interests.

In the run up to this vote, Heath had been put under pressure by the right wing of the party to condemn punitive sanctions. The Tory leadership had gone to considerable lengths to prevent a formal vote on the threat of penal sanctions at their party conference in October 1965, in Brighton, and in mid-November, the leadership had called in around a dozen rebels individually to urge them not to force a vote in the Commons on sanctions.<sup>49</sup> However, after receiving unintentional

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<sup>44</sup> 'Tories Warn Rhodesia on Independence', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 October 1965.

<sup>45</sup> 'Chance for Rhodesia', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 October 1965.

<sup>46</sup> Pitchford, *Conservative Party*, 152.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>48</sup> Stuart, 'Party in Three', 52.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-6.

encouragement from Alec-Douglas Home, who had called for dialogue with Ian Smith in an attempt to unite the party, 90 Tory MPs signed a motion of censure on 16 December 1965, 'deploring the Prime Minister's policy of 'unconditional surrender' and welcoming the call for dialogue.<sup>50</sup> By 20 December, 119 MPs had signed the motion, and the key point of interest, as with the Early Day Motion on Northern Rhodesia discussed above, was the spread of the rebellion from the hard core right to moderate, centrist Tory MPs. Ultimately, only 50 of those MPs voted against the Government and the Conservative Party leadership, meaning that around 70 Tories were uncomfortable enough to formally express discontent via a motion of censure, however were conscious enough of party loyalty to vote with the leadership in the division that counted. This group belonged to the political mainstream, and therefore understanding what may have driven them to move against sanctions is key to understanding whether those in mainstream continued to be influenced by an imperialist mode of thought.

The arguments of the Monday Club in opposition to oil sanctions appeared somewhat contradictory; in a speech at a public meeting at Central Hall in February 1966, Biggs-Davison declared 'We deplore the U.D.I., but we understand at least their reasons for it', before stating 'we in the Monday Club opposed sanctions from the start.'<sup>51</sup> Biggs-Davison's almost-condemnation of the UDI was inconsistent with the position on sanctions; it followed logically that if the UDI was accepted as illegal, consequences would have to follow. It is possible that Biggs-Davison felt obliged to publicly 'deplore' the UDI, regardless of his own sentiments and those of the Monday Club crowd who urged Biggs-Davison to call the UDI 'a necessity, forced by Wilson,' in order to protect the respectability of the Monday Club.<sup>52</sup> The Monday Club's credibility would have been seriously shaken if it had supported Smith's illegal action against the Crown.

Those further right on the political spectrum saw Tory divisions over sanctions as petty and meaningless. Tyndall bemoaned that 'when the electorate looked for a Tory lead against Wilson's betrayal of our kinsfolk, the Tory Party let them down; making a half-hearted attempt to quibble over the minor details of Labour treachery.'<sup>53</sup> For Tyndall, condemnation of the UDI itself constituted the betrayal of kith and kin in Rhodesia; this was a more consistent and logical position than that of the Monday Club, given that a condemnation of illegality and sanctions went hand in hand. However, Tyndall's position meant endorsing a regime that had acted against the Crown; regardless of how popular, or otherwise, this view was, sedition and an illegal secession could not be openly

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>51</sup> PUB 117/18 Monday Club, *Rhodesia: A Minority View?* (Pamphlet, 1966). CPA.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> 'The General Election', *Spearhead*, (n.d.) 1966. SA.

supported by anyone vying for a position in government. Why, therefore, did Tyndall ever expect the Tory Party to take this position? It must be considered that the Tories had long been the party of empire. Since the premiership of Benjamin Disraeli in the late nineteenth century, the Conservatives had confidently exuded the ethos of empire, using it to gain political capital over the Liberals and Labour. Organisations such as the Primrose League and Victoria League, which were affiliated to the Conservative Party, spread imperial values and encouraged voluntary work across the Empire and Commonwealth.<sup>54</sup> The Conservatives' reputation as the defenders of empire was self-perpetuated at least until the late 1940s, as was pointed out by the League of Empire Loyalists.

In the 1964 general election, a number of candidates stood as Independent Loyalists on behalf of the LEL; campaign material from the constituency of Petersfield referred to the Tories' imperialist background, highlighting how quickly the Tories had abandoned old views. Citing material published by the Conservative Central Office, merely fifteen years prior, the document read: "The Conservative Party regards the British Empire and Commonwealth as the supreme achievement of the British people... We pledge ourselves whether in power or opposition, to give active support to all measures designed to promote the unity, strength and progress of the British Empire and Commonwealth...The Conservative Party has never supported any decision taken at Geneva, Havana or elsewhere inimical to the general system of Imperial Preference, and we shall take all steps in our power to ensure that in future our liberty in this direction is not impaired."<sup>55</sup> Just eleven years later, Harold Macmillan made clear that these statements were largely invalid under his leadership of the Conservative Party with his speech announcing the 'wind of change' in 1960; this had two key consequences. Firstly, many political outsiders, such as those in the LEL, unwittingly found themselves characterised as extremists while exhibiting views that were thoroughly mainstream little over a decade earlier and had been relatively uncontroversial in the century prior to that. Secondly, many within the rank and file of the Conservative Party, together with some in the parliamentary party, continued to express such pride in the Empire and Commonwealth. It is clear, therefore, despite the views of the Conservative Party leadership, why Tyndall expected Tories to come out in defence of Smith's white minority government in Rhodesia; the Conservatives had long been the party of empire and continued to absorb members who shared pro-empire views. With the Conservative Party encompassing a broad spectrum of ideas across its membership, it is perhaps unsurprising that it suffered the embarrassing divisions it did over political advance in Northern Rhodesia, and sanctions in Southern Rhodesia.

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<sup>54</sup> James, 'Conservative Party and Empire', 514-5.

<sup>55</sup> C.6 'Only Fifteen Years Ago', Petersfield Independent Loyalist Election Leaflet, 1964. AKCC.

### Justifying the Defence of 'Kith and Kin'

How, then, can evidence of concern for the welfare of white settlers in Africa, of varying degrees across the right wing of British politics, be used to show that the British Right clung on to imperial values, resisting the post-colonial order? For some, concern for the protection of white settler interests clearly marked regret for the loss of empire. Defence of the white minority communities in Kenya, the Central African Federation and Southern Rhodesia represented the symbolic defence of what the rest of British Africa could have been, had decolonisation not been hastily pushed through. In the 1960s, Nigeria, Sudan and Congo-Kinshasa underwent civil war, and in almost all of the newly independent states a military coup seemed to be the principal alternative to one-party rule.<sup>56</sup> With independent Africa seemingly descending into chaos, those who had warned against rapid decolonisation felt themselves vindicated. According to Goldsworthy, sympathy was correspondingly generated for Smith's government in Rhodesia, 'a country which seemed to stand as a testimony to what the other settler territories might have become.'<sup>57</sup> This is corroborated by pamphlets published by the Monday Club; in a 1962 publication referring to instability in Kenya, it was argued that the 'British Government must not allow them [European settlers] and their African compatriots to be cast adrift in a newly independent state in which there is no real respect for the law, the rights of the individual, or property.'<sup>58</sup> This was an argument typical of the Monday Club; repeated in a pamphlet which published a collection of speeches from a public meeting at Central Hall in 1966, the Club outwardly pressed that they were not opposed to the principle of self-government in Africa, but rather the speed of the decolonisation process because it compromised law and order. Patrick Wall MP argued that his criticism of rapid decolonisation was 'valid, when we know that in the last few months there have been no less than four military revolutions in independent African countries.'<sup>59</sup> For the Monday Club, a respectable group within the Conservative Party, the condemnation of decolonisation on principle would have been political suicide. Eventual self-government had been a long-established bi-partisan colonial policy, and it was necessary if Britain were to maintain moral authority as custodians of civilisation and democracy. Criticising the speed of the process in the name of law and order, therefore, was the principal, and perhaps only, way in which the Monday Club could oppose further decolonisation and maintain its political credibility.

Focusing on the defence of white minority regimes, however, exposed those on the right to accusations of racism, and threatened the respectability of the Monday Club. Groups on the right

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<sup>56</sup> Young, *Post-Colonial State in Africa*, 122.

<sup>57</sup> Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, 371.

<sup>58</sup> PUB 117/3 Monday Club Africa Group, *A Clear & Solemn Duty* (Pamphlet, 1962). CPA.

<sup>59</sup> PUB 117/18 Monday Club, *Rhodesia: A Minority View?* (Pamphlet, 1966). CPA.

thus tended to prefer use of the term 'kith and kin' rather than 'whites'. Across the right wing, some believed in white superiority, while others in British superiority; this distinction becomes clearer in discerning attitudes towards Europe, which is analysed in depth in the third chapter of this paper. In the context of British Africa, however, the distinction between 'whites' and 'kith and kin' was largely an issue of semantics. The term 'kith and kin' was a sentimental one; it was a term of affection used by those who were sympathetic towards the formulation of white British society abroad, such as that which had developed in Rhodesia. More importantly, however, Britain's 'kith and kin' were believed by many on the Right to be continuing the imperial mission of the late Victorian era; according to Mark Stuart, it was believed across the Friends of Rhodesia group and much of the Conservative Party rank and file that Britain's 'kith and kin' in Rhodesia were upholding Christian principles and bringing civilisation to Africa.<sup>60</sup> The defence of 'kith and kin' can therefore be understood as continued belief in Britain's civilizational superiority and her moral duty to 'teach' Africans the Christian way of life.

One must allow for nuance; it is likely that many who defended 'kith and kin', for example within the readership of *Spearhead* and *Candour*, a magazine edited by A. K. Chesterton, simply believed in white supremacy, and did not support eventual black majority rule. For those who truly believed in the rhetoric of the British Empire, black majority rule was the natural culmination of a policy which saw Britain 'guiding' Africans toward civilisation and democracy; this was not the case for many extremists who envisioned indefinite British hegemony. This suggests that support for 'kith and kin', as found in *Spearhead* and *Candour* by no means indicated belief in Britain's moral duty to guide Africans towards civilisation. However, it was certainly the case among much of the Conservative Party; this sentiment was expressed emphatically by Lord Salisbury at the October 1965 Conservative Party Conference in Brighton. He argued that the government was abandoning 'our friends and kith and kin to the tender mercies of men who, the Government must know... are *as yet* totally unfitted to conduct any free form of government at all.'<sup>61</sup> Salisbury's loyalty towards Britain's 'kith and kin' overseas was matched by a conviction that the African majority in Rhodesia was not *yet* ready for self-government, thus ceding to the principle of eventual self-government. Salisbury thus remained in line with the old core of imperial thought, which conceded eventual independence as the culmination of British duty and achievement, but saw that as a distant reality.

While activity and rhetoric in defence of white minority interests in Africa varied in intensity across the right wing, they shared the paternalist and white supremacist instinct which had characterised

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<sup>60</sup> Stuart, 'Party in Three', 77.

<sup>61</sup> Italics added for emphasis; NUA 2/1/70 Lord Salisbury, 'Platform Speech', 83rd Annual Conservative Party Conference, 1965. CPA.

British imperial thought. Political crises, such as the UDI in Rhodesia, brought various groups, which differed in aims, ideas and methods, together in defence of this instinct. For example, when independence was declared by Ian Smith in November 1965, the Monday Club was quick to act. Within a week, they convened the 'Rhodesia Emergency Committee', where they planned a large public meeting at Caxton Hall on 22 November. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, there were up to 600 attendees, including twelve Conservative MPs; this was a significant number for a meeting arranged at such short notice.<sup>62</sup> Monday Club meetings on Rhodesia, however, not only attracted respectable MPs and peers, but also members of organisations such as the Greater Britain Movement and the British National Party, who were more extreme in their views. Commenting on a large Rhodesia rally held by the Club at the Albert Hall in 1966, Tyndall was critical of most speakers who both failed to condemn the British government's position on Smith's UDI, and to condemn decolonisation, or 'White surrender' – as termed by Tyndall – on principle. However, Tyndall also reported that: 'There was no doubt at all that the great majority of the five-thousand crowd had come to show their unflinching support for Ian Smith and the White Rhodesians.'<sup>63</sup> What had drawn these five thousand people together from across the broad right wing of the political spectrum, was a number of factors, several of which were drawn from imperialist thinking: economic and political paternalism, and British civilizational superiority.

At this stage, one must allow that there may have been other reasons for actions in support of white minorities in Africa. For example, parliamentary Conservative opposition to oil sanctions against Rhodesia was largely practical. Around 20 out of 50 MPs that voted against oil sanctions were members of Friends of Rhodesia, meaning they actively supported the Smith regime. According to Stuart, the other c.30 Tory rebels who voted against oil sanctions did so on a level of practicality, rather than ideology.<sup>64</sup> They believed that sanctions were not an effective policy, and that it would simply strengthen the resolve of Rhodesians rather than force them into submission, which was the stated aim of the government's policy. This was an argument against sanctions that was not confined to the imperialist right; for example, Iain Macleod, the famously progressive Colonial Secretary who was instrumental in forcing the pace of decolonisation in Africa, opposed sanctions on grounds of efficacy. Another example was Nigel Lawson, editor of the *Spectator* from January 1966 and liberal Conservative, who argued that sanctions were impractical because there was no alternative regime-in-waiting in Rhodesia; this rendered the hope that a suffering population would turn away from Smith and towards a more moderate replacement moot.<sup>65</sup> Ultimately, Prime

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<sup>62</sup> Tory Cheers for Ian Smith', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 November 1965.

<sup>63</sup> 'Chicken-Hearted Compromise', *Spearhead*, November-December 1966. SA.

<sup>64</sup> Stuart, 'Party in Three', 66.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

Minister Harold Wilson's statement to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in January 1966, asserting that economic sanctions would bring about the capitulation of the illegal regime within 'weeks rather than months' was proven to be wildly wrong.<sup>66</sup> Those who voted against sanctions based on grounds of inefficacy had good reason to do so, showing that, certainly at a parliamentary level, numbers indicating activity in favour of white minority communities cannot be taken at face value to represent imperialist sentiment or thinking. In the case of the parliamentary division on oil sanctions against Rhodesia, there are strong indicators that many rebel MPs were motivated by practicality rather than imperial fervour.

With that said, one cannot discount the possible influence of imperial thinking for the thirty Tory MPs who voted against oil sanctions but were not members of Friends of Rhodesia. Given that 27 per cent of the Conservative Party rebelled against the leadership, it was an extremely abnormal division. It was a significant affair for 50 MPs to vote against sanctions, particularly when they could have taken the party line and abstained - an option which would have neither shown support for sanctions, nor embarrassed the new party leader, Edward Heath. The rarity of such a parliamentary rebellion, and its occurrence when the Conservative Party was in opposition and therefore unlikely to affect the government's actions, suggests there was something more fundamental at stake. While no assumptions can be made regarding the motivations of each individual parliamentary rebel, the scale of rebellion, and the participants' assumed knowledge that their actions would gravely undermine the authority of their leader, suggests that there were wider considerations than practicality, such as imperialist paternalism and a concern for 'kith and kin'.

Another alternative cause of concern for the wellbeing of white settler communities was grounded in personal financial interests. Goldsworthy notes that the Rhodesia Lobby gained impetus when Congo, a neighbouring state of the Federation, descended into chaos in 1960, seemingly proving its premature decolonisation. This presented a threat to several major companies whose investments, particularly in copper, straddled the Katanga-Northern Rhodesia border. Around fifty Tory company directors at Westminster, including Lord Salisbury who was a director of the British South Africa Company, thus had tangible personal financial interests in the political future of Central Africa.<sup>67</sup> Given the political volatility of newly independent African states, shareholders in such companies were perhaps likely to favour the comparative stability of British rule in Central Africa. However, Goldsworthy neglects to mention that many of these MPs and peers were no longer company directors in the region of Central Africa by 1965, weakening the above implication that many Tories

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<sup>66</sup> Wilkinson, 'Impact of War', 110.

<sup>67</sup> Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues*, 367.

who were sympathetic towards Rhodesia voted according to their own financial interest rather than according to any imperialist principle.<sup>68</sup> Even though some MPs maintained commercial interests in the region, it is difficult to prove that those who supported Rhodesia did so for commercial reasons. The British Empire has historically been tied to commerce, making it impossible to separate the two as voting impulses. One could argue that men such as Salisbury saw themselves as having responsibilities rather than interests in Central Africa; commerce could be seen as a form of fulfilling Britain's duty to spread civilisation to Africa but via economic rather than political advance. In this interpretation, commercial interests would simply be a reflection of imperial ideology.

How far, then, did political pressure concerning the rights of white settlers in central and southern Africa by those on the right of British politics reflect a wider inability in Britain to come to terms with the loss of empire? As Chesterton recognised, politics was about winning elections, and Rhodesia was not an issue that resonated with the public as a crucial electoral issue. He wrote in *Candour*: 'Rhodesia is five thousand miles away from the United Kingdom and the British people would not be significantly swayed by governmental policies towards Rhodesia (except perhaps if military means were used) to cast or withhold votes because of them.'<sup>69</sup> However, Chesterton wrote this as criticism against Prime Minister Harold Wilson and what Chesterton regarded as Wilson's shameless pursuit of votes over good government, rather than the general public. Imperial affairs, even at the height of the British Empire, were never the primary concern of ordinary Britons; directing empire had always been the pursuit of the upper- and middle-classes. This is the argument of Bernard Porter, who convincingly asserts that even at the zenith of the Empire in the late Victorian period, the majority of Britons were unaffected by colonial debates.<sup>70</sup>

However, controversies surrounding the Central African Federation did cause empire to resonate as a more popular issue than usual. Not only were there indications that the rank and file of the Conservative Party were becoming unsettled, but popular opinion also shifted to show concern for empire. Gallup polling shows that the controversy over Turton's Early Day Motion on Northern Rhodesia in February 1961 provided a major breakthrough in attracting support for colonial issues from the British public. Between 1960 and 1964, respondents were asked what they perceived to be the most important problem facing the country, out of twelve possible responses including 'colonial affairs'. During this period, 'colonial affairs' was selected consistently by 1-6 per cent of respondents. However, between January and April 1961, concern for colonial affairs jumped to 18 per cent.<sup>71</sup> This

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<sup>68</sup> Stuart, 'Party in Three', 77.

<sup>69</sup> 'The Twentieth Century Plague', *Candour*, January 1966. AKCC.

<sup>70</sup> Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Cohen, *Politics and Economics of Decolonisation*, 162.



suggests that almost a fifth of people were concerned either by the speed of political reform, or by the potential damage being done to the interests of white settlers in Central Africa. Either way it showed that there was a small group that reacted when empire was threatened, and resisted Britain's transition into a post-colonial world.

Active popular resistance came in the form of local Conservative constituency associations, many of whom backed Smith's government in Rhodesia. An analysis of local newspapers indicated that various Tory MPs, including Patrick Jenkin, Martin Maddan, Anthony Meyer and Angus Maude, came under pressure from members of their local Conservative associations due to their voting stance in favour of oil sanctions in Rhodesia.<sup>72</sup> It is difficult to determine what drove the actions of local branch and executive members that protested against pro-sanction Tories. They may have been angry that their representative voted with a Labour government instead of following the Tory party leader. Alternatively, they may have acted in defence of Britain's 'kith and kin' in Rhodesia, perhaps individually or perhaps as part of an organised campaign coordinated by the Anglo-Rhodesian Society. The Society was active in the constituencies which saw local protests against pro-sanction Tories, however it is difficult to prove that these protests were part of an organised campaign. That leaves us to speculate; it is the contention of this paper that this small group of protestors were moved to act by the same instinct that drove moderate Tory MPs to vote in defence of white minority interests.

Overall, to use the observations of a contemporary article in the *Spectator*, the 'rump of the Central African lobby, the can't-let-down-our-kith-and-kin' brigade and in general the right wing of the [Tory] party' were clearly still guided by imperialist impulses.<sup>73</sup> Openly agitating to slow the pace of decolonisation, this group clearly showed an inability to come to terms with the new post-colonial order that Macmillan and Macleod were striving to bring about. On the opposite side of the party were the 'younger progressives' who believed in the 'doctrine that bloodshed and chaos will certainly follow where self-government is granted to those who do not command the support of the majority of their populations.'<sup>74</sup> This strand of the party sought to realign the party, shifting away from the Conservatives' imperial past, towards a post-colonial, internationalist future. Between these two groups, in the middle, was 'the great mass of Tory MPs who are torn between vague feelings of guilt about the Central African Federation and acute anxieties for the future of the Commonwealth and the monarchy.'<sup>75</sup> The actions of this group, from agitating for slower political

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<sup>72</sup> Stuart, 'Party in Three', 53.

<sup>73</sup> 'The Unwelcome Choice', *The Spectator*, 14 February 1964.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

advancement in Northern Rhodesia to the condemnation of oil sanctions in Southern Rhodesia, showed that there existed an instinct to protect imperial interests across much of the Conservative Party. While decolonisation was generally accepted as British policy, the rush to protect white settler interests showed that there remained certain devolutions of power that were unacceptable to many Conservatives; in this way, resistance to moving Britain into a post-colonial world was articulated in mainstream politics.

## Chapter Two - Commonwealth Immigration and the Race Issue

### The Beginnings of Multi-Racial Britain

Though concern for the welfare of white settler communities was largely confined to politicians and activists, immigration exposed the residual effects of empire across a much wider section of the population. While empire and Commonwealth migration to the UK had existed long before the post-war era, the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* in June 1948 at Tilbury Dock, Essex, is considered the symbolic beginning of the unprecedented scale of non-white immigration that occurred in the 25 years that followed.<sup>76</sup> The ship which carried 492 passengers, largely Afro-Caribbean ex-servicemen, has been memorialised as ‘the originary moment of postcolonial diaspora’, or, in other words, the beginning of multi-racial Britain as can be seen today.<sup>77</sup> According to a Cabinet Memorandum circulated by Arthur Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies in Labour’s post-war government, the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* was ‘a spontaneous movement by Jamaicans who have saved up enough money to pay for their own passage to England, on the chance of finding employment.’<sup>78</sup> Commonwealth immigrants were entitled passage and residence in the UK under the 1948 British Nationality Act; the statute created the status of ‘Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies’, and reaffirmed the principle that as British subjects, Commonwealth citizens faced no immigration control and had full citizenship rights.<sup>79</sup>

The question of whether the British government actively solicited migrant labour in order to help rebuild Britain after the war is disputed. According to Creech Jones, immigration ‘was certainly not organised or encouraged by the Colonial Office or the Jamaica Government’, but rather it was a consequence of economic difficulty in the colonies.<sup>80</sup> However, according to a Report from the Royal Commission on Population in 1949, immigrants of ‘good stock’ would be welcomed ‘without reserve’, indicating a need in the British labour market for a significant supply of workers.<sup>81</sup> Those on the *Empire Windrush* were certainly welcomed by the *Evening Standard* who sent a plane to greet and welcome ‘the 400 sons of Empire’ that were arriving in London.<sup>82</sup> Regardless of Creech Jones’ assertion, potential newcomers from across the Commonwealth heard of lucrative job opportunities in the UK, which led to a surge in immigration. According to Office for National Statistics (ONS), the non-UK born population of Britain rose from 1.9 million to 3.1 million between 1951 and 1971. While

<sup>76</sup> Kushner, *Battle of Britishness*, 166.

<sup>77</sup> Mead, ‘Empire Windrush’, 137.

<sup>78</sup> CAB 129/28/4, ‘Arrival in the United Kingdom of Jamaican Unemployed’, 18 June 1948. UK National Archives (UKNA).

<sup>79</sup> British Nationality Act 1948.

<sup>80</sup> CAB 129/28/4, ‘Arrival in the United Kingdom of Jamaican Unemployed’, 18 June 1948. UKNA.

<sup>81</sup> Royal Commission on Population Report, June 1949, 130.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Welcome Home!’, *Evening Standard*, 21 June 1948.

Ireland consistently remained by far the largest source of non-UK born residents, the scale of Commonwealth immigration rose significantly, particularly from India, Jamaica and Pakistan. For example, the number of non-UK born Indians in Britain rose from 111,000 in 1951 to 313,000 in 1971. The proportion of non-UK born Jamaicans in 1951 was so low that it fell beyond the scope of the ONS infographic, which looked at the top ten non-UK countries of birth, however by 1971 there were 171,000 non-UK born Jamaicans living in the UK.<sup>83</sup> It must also be remembered that size of coloured populations was higher than these figures indicated, as these statistics did not count second-generation immigrants, meaning the UK-born children of those immigrants included in the analysis.

The British government was entirely unprepared for the consequences of Commonwealth immigration. While Creech Jones' Memorandum on the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* foresaw the potential short-term difficulties, with regards to employment and housing, that would be faced by the immigrant community, the government failed to foresee the long-term social difficulties that large-scale immigration would cause.<sup>84</sup> The influx of immigrants caused major social instability in the UK. The first major manifestations of racial tensions were the Nottingham and Notting Hill race riots in 1958; however, it was not until ten years later, in 1968, that a mainstream, national discussion of race relations was provoked by Enoch Powell's inflammatory speech on immigration.

#### Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood'

John Enoch Powell, Conservative MP, had not always shown extreme views towards race; indeed, as Minister for Health between 1960-1963, he had encouraged the incorporation of coloured staff into the understaffed National Health Service.<sup>85</sup> However, by 1965, Powell's attitudes towards immigration were hardening and he began to talk about immigration controls and repatriation. In 1967, Powell wrote an article in the *Sunday Express* entitled 'Can we afford to let our Race Problem Explode?', and in the same year he wrote various letters, including one to party leader, Edward Heath, warning of the deterioration of race relations.<sup>86</sup> Powell's warnings culminated in an explosive speech on immigration on 20 April 1968, to the Annual General Meeting of the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre, in Birmingham. The speech, delivered as the Race Relations Bill was being discussed in Parliament, warned of the dangers of immigration. Recounting the experiences of his constituents, Powell argued that immigration was transforming communities beyond recognition,

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<sup>83</sup> ONS, 'Non-UK Born Census Populations 1951-2011.' UKNA.

<sup>84</sup> CAB 129/28/4, 'Arrival in the United Kingdom of Jamaican Unemployed', 18 June 1948. UKNA.

<sup>85</sup> Senker, *Debate About Immigration*, 12.

<sup>86</sup> 'Can we afford to let our Race Problem Explode?', *Sunday Express*, 9 July 1967; POLL 3/2/1/7 Letter from JEP, 7 August 1967. Churchill Archives Centre (CAC); POLL 3/2/1/7 Letter from Heath to JEP, 28 July 1967. CAC.

and that if immigration continued at the current rate, whites would soon become a persecuted minority in their own country.

The speech, which resulted in Powell's dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet, was extremely significant because it represented a marked departure from political convention. Powell was Shadow Secretary of State for Defence at the time, and it was unheard of for a politician of ministerial rank to use such sensational language. For example, Powell warned 'in fifteen or twenty years [sic] time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man.'<sup>87</sup> This type of rhetoric had hitherto been the reserve of those excluded from the political mainstream, certainly at a national level. It was Powell's provocative use of language that forced Heath to dismiss him; the policies that Powell had promulgated in his speech were in line with Conservative Party policy, however his language was deemed irresponsible as a member of the Shadow Cabinet. The Birmingham speech was also significant due to its inclusion of stories of vulnerable, old women being victimised by immigrants; Powell gave credibility to the kind of anti-immigrant hearsay that until then had simply been pub chatter. Powell's own political ideas were not entirely coherent; his ideology combined 'economic laissez-faire, Little England, social discipline, trade before aid, loyalty to Ulster, and racism.'<sup>88</sup> Yet, as shown by the reception of what became Powell's career-defining speech, coherence and accuracy was largely irrelevant. Powell stirred the consciousness of the nation with emotive, patriotic language. For example, he criticised those who 'knowingly shirk' the discussion of immigration; the reference to 'shirking' was deliberate, as it denoted those who neglected their patriotic responsibility and thus betrayed their nation in the world wars.<sup>89</sup> Shirkers had been derided in the press and in the streets during wartime; Powell's speech thus played on wartime notions of patriotism and betrayal, causing it to connect to ordinary people who had participated in the war efforts.<sup>90</sup> Powell combined this with the use of classical language, for example by making a reference to Virgil's *Aeneid*; Powell said 'Like the Roman, I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood."<sup>91</sup> (It was this reference that caused Powell's speech to later become known as the 'Rivers of Blood' speech.) Such language made the speech appear intellectual, giving it a sense of legitimacy. With the Birmingham speech therefore, Powell connected with a vast audience, stirring the emotions of the nation. The speech transformed the nature of immigration as a political issue, making it *the* issue which was to dominate politics and popular media, and it established Powell as defender of the English people and a credible leader of the anti-immigration movement.

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<sup>87</sup> POLL 4/1/3 JEP speech to West Midlands Area CPC AGM, Birmingham, 20 April 1968. CAC.

<sup>88</sup> Nairn, *Break-Up of Britain*, 260.

<sup>89</sup> POLL 4/1/3 JEP speech to West Midlands Area CPC AGM, Birmingham, 20 April 1968. CAC.

<sup>90</sup> Pattinson, "Shirkers', 'Scrimjacks' and Scrimshanks'?", 710.

<sup>91</sup> POLL 4/1/3 JEP speech to West Midlands Area CPC AGM, Birmingham, 20 April 1968. CAC.

The speech quickly gained national traction. Within days of Powell's dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet on 21 April 1968, hundreds of London dockers and Smithfield meat porters marched on the House of Commons to protest his removal. On 23 April, 250 workers at the West India Dock voted independently of their union leadership in support of an immediate protest, and within an hour 1,279 of 1,300 West India Dock workers were on strike. By that very afternoon, c.4000 dockers and porters across London had walked off their jobs in order to protest at Westminster against immigration and the Race Relations Bill.<sup>92</sup> Within two weeks of the Birmingham speech, Powell received 110,000 letters containing 180,000 signatures; only around 2,000 letters did not express support for his ideas.<sup>93</sup> This was spontaneous direct action from members of the public, without any organisation by a political party or trade union; significantly, many – such as the dockers and meat porters – were traditional Labour Party supporters, indicating a body of discontent that transcended normal political boundaries. Powell's personal popularity soared after the speech, among Conservative and Labour supporters alike; according to an academic analysis of two Gallup polls, the proportion of people who supported Powell as the choice to succeed Edward Heath as party leader going into the next general election went from 1 per cent before the speech, to 24 per cent immediately after it.<sup>94</sup>

Many within right-wing groups, such as the National Front, sought to capitalise on the attention and support gathered by Powell after the speech. The National Front (NF) was formed on 7 February 1967, in response to the convergence of Labour and Tory policy on immigration in the 1966 general election, with both parties stressing a need for combining immigration control with policies to aid integration. The formation of the NF was an attempt to unite and strengthen right-wing nationalists, so as to present a stronger challenge to mainstream politics. Thus, in February 1967, A. K. Chesterton's League of Empire Loyalists and Andrew Fountaine's BNP merged to form the NF, with Tyndall's Greater Britain Movement joining later that year.<sup>95</sup> NF activists recognised that Powell's popularity represented an opportunity. In 1970, the NF Action Committee wrote a letter outlining their complaints regarding Chesterton's leadership of the NF; Chesterton opposed supporting Powell because of the divergence in their economic views. However, the letter showed that activists were eager to capitalise on Powell's popularity – it argued: 'Rightly or wrongly he is respected by a huge majority of the British people and to attack him incurs the hostility of that majority.'<sup>96</sup> Powell's speech did appear to have some positive impact on the NF. In summer 1969 Robert Taylor, organiser

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<sup>92</sup> Schofield, *Enoch Powell*, 209.

<sup>93</sup> Lorimer & Scannell, *Mass Communications*, 220.

<sup>94</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 111.

<sup>95</sup> Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain*, 278.

<sup>96</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 94.

for the NF in Huddersfield, described the effect of the Powell's prominence: 'Powell's speeches gave our membership and morale a tremendous boost. Before Powell spoke, we were only getting cranks and perverts. After his speeches we started to attract, in a secret sort of way, the right-wing members of the Tory organisations.'<sup>97</sup> Interaction and overlap between NF and Tory members tended to occur at a local rather than national level, but it was significant nonetheless.

The Monday Club also threw its support behind Powell after his Birmingham speech; according to the *Daily Telegraph*, Powell received a telegram from the Monday Club stating, 'You are not alone: the majority of the people inside and outside the Tory Party support you on this issue.'<sup>98</sup> Powell was not a member of the Monday Club though he was often present at their fundraisers and dinners. The Monday Club denied that Powell had become leader of the British Right, particularly given his views on a 'little England' role for Britain, however it praised Powell's ability to arouse a popular political consciousness. In a Club magazine it was written: 'In a decade of increasing political sterility and bluntness of purpose Mr. Powell has sharpened the political wits of the electorate. Here lies his real value... indications are that changes will come and by no means entirely at the instigation of the Conservative Parliamentary Party.'<sup>99</sup> It was clear that many in the Conservative rank and file opposed Heath's decision to dismiss Powell from the Shadow Cabinet. The Monday Club recognised that Powell's incitement of passions would make it difficult for the Conservative Party leadership to control the party, particularly at local level, and the pace of any political change on immigration.

Powell's popularity also meant that several prominent Tories in Parliament came out in support of him, less afraid of retribution due to popular support for anti-immigration rhetoric. For example, within days of the Birmingham speech Geoffrey Rippon, Shadow Housing Minister, demanded a probationary period be served by all immigrants, that Britain reserve indefinitely the right of repatriation, and that no illegal immigrant be allowed permanent residency, regardless of how long they had spent in the UK. Significantly, the *Sun* reported that 'Mr. Rippon's proposals may annoy some of his colleagues, but Mr. Heath will avoid any worsening of his party's present open splits.'<sup>100</sup> Heath was in a difficult position; he could not condone hate speech as the leader of a major political party, but open opposition to what were evidently widely-held views would also be political suicide. This dichotomy between insisting on tolerance and respectability, and accepting that many in Britain held racist views towards non-white immigrants, represented a contradiction that was at the heart

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<sup>97</sup> Taylor, *National Front*, 21.

<sup>98</sup> 'Young Tory Wave of Protest', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 April 1968

<sup>99</sup> PUB 149/1 'What is the importance of Mr. Enoch Powell', *Monday World*, Spring/Summer 1968. CAC.

<sup>100</sup> POLL 3/2/1/7 'Tories take sides over Powell's speech', *The Sun*, 27 April 1968. CAC.

of Britain's attitudes towards race – this was a contradiction inherited from the days of the British Empire.

### The Kenyan & Ugandan Asian Controversies

The tension between needing to uphold traditional values of British tolerance and morality, while pacifying popular racist sentiment was also evident in how east African Asians were treated. Around 1968 and 1972, there were two significant waves of migration from east Africa to the United Kingdom; the first was from Kenya, and the second from Uganda. The Kenyan Asian episode, which occurred the same year as Enoch Powell's Birmingham speech, was a result of Africanisation policies pursued by President Jomo Kenyatta's government. Africanisation, which referred to the 'practice of positive discrimination and the replacement of as many non-Africans by Africans as possible', was enforced most radically through the 1967 Immigration Act and the 1968 Trade Licensing Act.<sup>101</sup> The Immigration Act, which primarily targeted semi-skilled clerical and manual jobs, changed work permit requirements so that Asians were forced out of their jobs unless they obtained Kenyan citizenship, while also establishing a Kenyanisation Bureau which prevented the employment of foreigners in jobs which Kenyans could do. The Trade Licensing Act targeted the distribution trade, previously dominated by Asians, by progressively excluding non-citizens from trading specific items in specific areas. Combined with other pro-African policies, the result was gradual Asian emigration from Kenya; between Kenyan independence in 1964 and 1969, at least 50,000 Asians left the country.<sup>102</sup>

At a time when racial tensions were running particularly high, the British government was concerned about the possibility of mass Kenyan Asian immigration, and its effects on social harmony; this is what led to the rapid passage of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which received Royal Assent on 1 March 1968. The statute ended the Asians' unqualified right to enter the UK, provoking a fierce debate over British commitment to ex-colonial subjects left without local citizenship. In order to understand the argument in favour of Britain's moral responsibility to protect the rights of Kenyan Asians, it is necessary to examine the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. Contrary to popular belief, east African Asians were not *de jure* exempted from immigration restrictions in the 1962 statute, however it was widely accepted by civil servants and cabinet ministers that Asian minorities in Africa were entitled to British citizenship and residency.<sup>103</sup> A pledge was allegedly made by the Tory government during negotiations for Kenyan independence in 1963, making a commitment to

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<sup>101</sup> Hornsby, *Kenya*, 197.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>103</sup> Hansen, 'The Kenyan Asians', 814.



minority communities to protect their British citizenship after Kenyan independence.<sup>104</sup> This pledge was disregarded by the Labour government in 1968 on two grounds. Firstly, even if it were enshrined in legislation, no parliament can bind its successor. Secondly, Labour Home Secretary James Callaghan argued that British obligation to Kenyan Asians changed when Asian residents were guaranteed the right to Kenyan citizenship given they applied within two years. His opponents, however, argued that the Tory pledge of British citizenship was the very reason that many Asians saw no need to acquire Kenyan citizenship, therefore to refuse British citizenship the moment that Asians with no local citizenship were facing persecution would be highly immoral.<sup>105</sup>

The Kenyan Asian issue and the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act were extremely divisive. For some, the statute was the ultimate appeasement of racial hysteria and a shameful piece of legislation. The *Times* reported from a perspective sympathetic to the plight of Kenyan Asians; for example, it reported that at 'Birmingham cathedral a single bell tolled at midnight to announce the "shame" of Britain... Inside the cathedral 25 people knelt in silent prayer in an hour-long vigil of atonement for Britain's "broken promises" to the Kenya Asians.'<sup>106</sup> The newspaper launched a vicious attack on the Labour government, arguing: 'The Labour Party now has a new ideology. It does not any longer profess to believe in the equality of man. It does not even believe in the equality of British citizens. It believes in the equality of white British citizens.'<sup>107</sup> Racism was a powerful accusation that mainstream politicians attempted to distance themselves from; hence Callaghan's eagerness to emphasise that the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Bill 'must be considered at the same time, and in accordance with, the proposal of the Government to introduce a Race Relations Bill which will establish in this country equality of treatment in the very sensitive areas of housing and of jobs... Both these Bills are, in my view and my judgment, essentially parts of a fair and balanced policy on this matter of race relations'<sup>108</sup>

However, many in Britain celebrated precisely that discriminatory nature of the new legislation. From this perspective, the statute proved the Labour party to be efficient and decisive in the face of high pressure, and 'at last in touch with the working- and lower-middle-class voters to whom the government owed its office.'<sup>109</sup> Enoch Powell and Duncan Sandys had campaigned on the issue from a distinctly racial perspective, receiving a positive reaction from the public. According to Walker, Powell's stand on Kenyan Asians and his speech at Walsall in February 1968, in which he conveyed

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 811.

<sup>105</sup> *HCD*, vol. 759, col. 1250 (27 February 1968).

<sup>106</sup> 'Asians told: You cannot leave', *The Times*, 02 March 1968.

<sup>107</sup> 'A new ideology', *The Times*, 02 March 1968.

<sup>108</sup> *HCD*, vol. 759, col. 1242 (27 February 1968).

<sup>109</sup> Hansen, 'The Kenyan Asians', 810.

his 'sense of hopelessness and helplessness' at the flow of immigrants, got him 'the largest public response of his career.'<sup>110</sup> The divided reception of Kenyan immigrants and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act highlighted the disparity between those who maintained 'traditional' British morals and ideals, and the reality of popular racism. For much of the twentieth century, the British Empire was justified by the notion of trusteeship, which purported that Britain was burdened with the responsibility of leading less capable or developed peoples towards Christian civilisation. British politics had thus long been underpinned by high moral expectations, combined with a paternalism that necessarily viewed (ex-)colonial subjects as inferior. These two conflicting underpinnings were brought into the open as British society, previously untouched by empire, struggled to respond to the Kenyan Asian problem.

By the time the Ugandan Asian episode occurred four years later, another Immigration Act had been placed on the British statute books. This required immigrants to demonstrate a 'close connection' to the UK either by birth or via parents and grandparents. This put Ugandan Asians in a difficult position when in August 1972, Idi Amin, President of Uganda, announced that all Ugandan Asians had ninety days to leave the country. Around 50,000 of those affected, roughly half of all Ugandan Asians, were British passport-holders and hoped to gain entry to the UK.<sup>111</sup> The response of the British government to Ugandan Asians was much more sympathetic than that afforded to Kenyan Asians four years prior. The government promptly set up the Ugandan Resettlement Board to direct the integration of refugees, and between 1972-4, 28,600 Ugandan refugees were resettled in the UK. The purpose of the Board was to minimise public discontent, and to therefore resettle refugees with as little attention and funding possible. The Board drew heavily on the experience of returned administrators from the ex-colonies; interestingly, while the Board answered to the Home Office, it was the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that provided initial advice on the employment of civil servants and administrative staff. Colonial or military experience was taken as a proxy for general administrative competence, which is likely to have had an impact on the mindset of many Britons: 'implicitly, if not explicitly, it sent a signal that the Ugandan Resettlement Board was treating the matter as a quasi-military 'colonial' problem brought home.'<sup>112</sup>

Britain's legal responsibility for the displaced Ugandan Asians, under both national and international law, was ambiguous. The colonial connection was clear; these Asians were there largely because of labour demands by the British Administration of the Uganda Protectorate, and the terms of

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<sup>110</sup> POLL 4/1/3 JEP speech to Walsall South Conservative Association, 09 February 1968. CAC; Walker, *National Front*, 109.

<sup>111</sup> Taylor, 'Good Citizens', 122.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

decolonisation in India, Pakistan, and Uganda meant that these Asians' rights derived from being British citizens.<sup>113</sup> However, British legislation in 1968 and 1971 had put strict limits on immigration and required prospective immigrants to demonstrate a 'close connection' to the UK. Both Uganda and India/Pakistan were independent, and Ugandan Asians had been afforded the opportunity, like Kenyan Asians, to acquire local citizenship rights. However, when the terms of independence were negotiated, Britain made a crucial concession. Given that Uganda refused to give resident Asians automatic citizenship rights, and that under the 1950 Indian constitution, persons not domiciled in India were prohibited from claiming Indian citizenship, Britain agreed that those east African Asians that did not adopt local nationality would retain the rights of citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies.<sup>114</sup> In 1968, prior to the enactment of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, Callaghan made assurances in Parliament that any Asian citizen who was compelled to leave the territory in which they resided, would be accepted in Britain. However, this promise was not enshrined in law. Ultimately, the British government took primary responsibility for the resettlement of Ugandan refugees, stating: 'we accept an obligation for these people. This country can in no way be accused of doing other than giving the most generous treatment to these unfortunate people.'<sup>115</sup> Not all in Britain, however, agreed with this position, and there was a sizeable campaign from the Right against the settlement of Ugandan refugees in Britain.

The Monday Club ran a highly publicised campaign against the entry of Ugandan Asians. Despite internal divisions over control and action, the Club's press coverage in the latter half of 1973 was 400 per cent higher than it had been the previous year, largely due to their Ugandan Asian campaign.<sup>116</sup> The influx of refugees had led to the biggest wave of popular discontent since Powell's Birmingham speech, making the public receptive to anti-immigrant campaigns. The National Front capitalised on this discontent and divisions within the Monday Club, leading to 'the most hectic and successful six months the party had ever known.'<sup>117</sup> The NF campaign focused on three key points: firstly, it attacked President Amin as the ugly culmination of black nationalism, thus 'proving' the unfitness of blacks to rule themselves. Secondly, the campaign opposed coloured immigration, warning of the oncoming of a race war in Britain.<sup>118</sup> Thirdly, the NF attacked the weakness of the Heath Government, crucial to attracting disillusioned Tories; the party absorbed a significant number of such Tories who were alienated by the decision of the party leadership to help Ugandan refugees

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<sup>113</sup> Uche, 'The British Government', 821.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 824.

<sup>115</sup> *HCD*, vol. 842, col. 1263 (07 August 1972).

<sup>116</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 129.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>118</sup> 'Government prepares for Race War', *Spearhead*, February 1973. SA.

with British passports. The National Front organised itself quickly in response to the refugee crisis. Within 24 hours of receiving the news from Uganda, they had organised a 100-strong picket to 10 Downing Street, before returning to deliver a petition that evening. Within days, the NF organised protest marches to Uganda House and the Home Office, demonstrations at airports where refugees were landing, a leafleting campaign, protest statements in local council meetings, and other rallies and marches in collaboration with organisations such as the Monday Club. Between September-December 1972, the NF's membership grew by over 800 members, which was sizeable considering the NF's total membership just five years earlier was around 2,500.<sup>119</sup> This showed not only the success of their campaign, but the willingness of many to actively campaign on their behalf.

Enoch Powell was also active in speaking out against the entry of Ugandan refugees; by 1970, Powell had little influence in the Conservative Party, but he maintained a high profile by campaigning against the EEC and the entry of Ugandan Asians. Examining three separate speeches given in August, October and November 1972, it is clear that Powell took particular issue with the government's assertion that Britain had an obligation, moral or legal, towards Ugandan Asians. Powell argued that the intake of refugees 'was a purely discretionary and political decision' and that 'it was dishonest to present that decision to the public as a legal obligation.'<sup>120</sup> The legal obligation was indeed ambiguous and given the British government's reaction to the (less severe, but still significant) persecution of Kenyan Asians, there was good precedent for ignoring the refugees' call for help, regardless of whether they held British passports. However, in the Ugandan case, Amin's ruthless personality, backed by statements such as his declaration of support for Hitler, drew much public sympathy for the Ugandan refugees in Britain.<sup>121</sup> This was reflected in the crucial work of volunteers on the Ugandan Resettlement Board, and in external voluntary associations supporting the integration of refugees in Britain.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, the decision to admit Ugandan refugees was presented as a mixture between legal and moral responsibility. As articulated by Tory Home Secretary, Robert Carr, at the Conservative Party Conference, refugees were represented as 'part of our Imperial heritage' and 'part of our Imperial responsibility', 'passportholders of ours' who had become 'refugees with no other country to go to.'<sup>123</sup> Powell completely rejected the notion that Britain had legal responsibility towards passport-holders, which was true according to the various immigration acts that had curtailed Commonwealth immigration. Interestingly, however, Powell did not completely reject the idea that Britain had a moral responsibility towards refugees, rather he

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<sup>119</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 67.

<sup>120</sup> POLL 3/2/1/20 JEP Speech to the Monday Club Universities Group, Oxford, 18 November 1972. CAC.

<sup>121</sup> Winder, *Bloody Foreigners*, 293.

<sup>122</sup> Taylor, 'Good Citizens', 122-5.

<sup>123</sup> POLL 3/2/1/20 JEP speech to the Monday Club Universities Group, Oxford, 18 November 1972. CAC.

refuted that Britain had greater moral responsibility because it was once the dominating power. He argued: 'our obligation to the Ugandan Asians is the moral one we share no more than equally with all other nations, and much less than equally with their true home countries, notably India.'<sup>124</sup>

Powell, unlike the British government, clearly denied any 'hangover' of imperial responsibility.

The consideration of legal responsibility, moral responsibility, and public reaction in determining the British response to the end of empire, was particularly complex with regards to Kenyan and Ugandan Asian immigration. As shown above, Britain's legal responsibility was ambiguous, and was therefore moulded to fit government policy in both cases. Moral responsibility was also ambiguous; both Kenyan and Ugandan Asians had received assurances from a previous British government, guaranteeing the security of their rights as British citizens. However, while some felt free to disregard those assurances, regardless of whether they were enshrined in law, others clung onto a sense of imperial responsibility, emphasising the British values of duty and benevolence towards (ex)-colonial peoples. The public response to the two waves of immigration was divided; while some felt threatened by the influx of coloured populations, others engaged in voluntary work comparable to that of the Victoria League in the early twentieth century. These considerations and divisions were all at work when Britain was administering its empire. However, these two episodes brought the Empire home, to more Britons than had ever before been exposed to empire. This exposure magnified these ambiguities onto the British political scene, causing ordinary Britons to struggle to come to terms with the considerations of an empire that, while it was in existence, rarely caused them concern.

#### From Grassroots Campaign to National Policy

The impact of the Empire coming home, in the form of Commonwealth immigration, caused many ordinary Britons to turn to local anti-immigration activism. This occurred primarily in areas with immigrant-dense populations such as Southall, Walsall and Birmingham. For example, in Southall, anti-immigration activism began in August 1963 with the formation of the Southall Residents' Association (SRA), a community pressure group that sought to influence the local council. That year, the SRA chairman and treasurer stood as BNP candidates in the local election, beating the Tories to come second to Labour. Understanding the significance of these local election results, Southall's Labour MP, George Pargiter, risked condemnation from his own party by responding to the result with a call for 'a complete ban on immigration to Southall.'<sup>125</sup> Here, one can begin to observe how immigration caused local representation of political parties to regroup along new lines. In 1966 the

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<sup>124</sup> POLL 3/2/1/20 JEP Speech at Conservative Party Conference, Blackpool, 12 October 1972. CAC.

<sup>125</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 51-2.

Tories on the local council began calling for a fifteen-year qualification period before immigrant families could join council house waiting lists; two Labour councillors were expelled from their party for voting with the Tories on this measure.<sup>126</sup> It was not uncommon for party lines to blur, when it came to a vote on immigration issues.

By 1964, local anti-immigration activism was beginning to have an impact on national politics. In the 1964 general election, there was a major national upset in the constituency of Smethwick, a seat held continuously by Labour for twenty years. Here, a relatively unknown Tory named Peter Griffiths beat Labour Shadow Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon-Walker, in a shock win. The slogan associated with Griffiths' election campaign was: 'If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Liberal or Labour.'<sup>127</sup> While Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson declared that Griffiths' explicitly racist campaign would make him a 'parliamentary leper', the Tory parliamentary party warmed to Griffiths, who had somehow swung a significant number of voters from Labour to Tory, in an election where the trend had generally gone in the opposite direction.<sup>128</sup> Smethwick was hereafter held up as an example of the power of the 'race card' in gaining an electoral advantage.

Political parties at the national level began to shift in response to mounting anti-immigration pressure from below. The Labour Party had attacked the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, passed by Macmillan's Tory government, as 'cruel and brutal anti-colour legislation' that targeted immigrants from the coloured Commonwealth, while allowing the unrestricted entry of unskilled Irish labour.<sup>129</sup> However, despite promising to repeal that statute if Labour came to power, the Labour government, elected in 1964, renewed the legislation and maintained immigration controls that were biased against coloured peoples.<sup>130</sup> By 1965, Ray Gunter, Minister of Labour, confirmed the almost total ban on vouchers allowing entry for unskilled immigrants, and Sir Frank Soskice, Home Secretary, committed to the repatriation of illegal immigrants. Therefore, it had taken three years of political pressure in urban centres across the UK to 'transform the Parliamentary Labour Party's policy from staunch and principled opposition, to full-hearted enforcement of the Immigration laws.'<sup>131</sup> The 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was arguably a culmination of this transformation. In 1967, the Labour called the Commonwealth 'the greatest multi-racial association the world has ever known'; yet by passing the 1968 statute, the government stripped British subjects

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration*, 132.

<sup>128</sup> *HCD*, vol. 701, col. 71 (03 November 1964).

<sup>129</sup> Pearce & Stewart, *British Political History*, 483.

<sup>130</sup> *HCD*, vol. 707, col. 1134 (02 March 1965).

<sup>131</sup> Walker, *The National Front*, 56.

possessing Commonwealth citizenship of the fundamental rights associated with that citizenship.<sup>132</sup> This rapid realignment by Labour was a clear reaction to grassroots activism and public sensitivity over immigration.

The Tories also hardened immigration policy in response to public pressure. In the 1950s, the Conservative governments led by Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan had 'agonised over the adverse effects' of limiting Commonwealth immigration.<sup>133</sup> Conservative MP Cyril Osborne had been campaigning for immigration control from as early as 1952, however even by 1961, the party leadership's reaction to Osborne 'was fervently (but vainly) to wish, as it had wished throughout the 1950s, that he would go away.'<sup>134</sup> Yet, just one year later, Macmillan's Tory government passed the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act, and Osborne had received a knighthood.<sup>135</sup> Enoch Powell's Birmingham speech in 1968 was instrumental to the further hardening of Tory policy. While Powell's speech did not advocate any measure that was not already official party policy, the reception to his speech made clear that many of his supporters were in favour of more stringent policy. Realising the extent of Powell's popular support, in September 1968 Heath announced that Commonwealth immigrants should not receive any special status, meaning that they should be allowed to enter only on the same conditions as aliens, while also arguing that dependents should be subject to stricter controls.<sup>136</sup>

In order to assess the ideas of Powell's supporters among the Conservative rank and file, the Conservative Political Centre conducted a confidential survey in December 1968 across 412 constituency groups. The findings indicated that 327 groups wanted to call an indefinite halt to all immigration, while a further 55 groups wanted a five-year stop to immigration combined with strict limits on the arrival of dependents. Some of the more extreme suggestions that were made included an apartheid-style system for organising housing, and permanent camps for immigrants.<sup>137</sup> This clearly indicated that the majority of local Tory activists and councillors held much harsher attitudes than the party leadership over immigration. In response to this, and also to continued agitation by Powell over an immigration freeze and repatriation, Heath called for the toughest measures yet adopted by a major party in January 1969. He demanded that the government stop all further immigration within nine months, calling for the system to be changed to a permit-based system

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<sup>132</sup> Hansen, 'The Kenyan Asians', 811.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration*, 108.

<sup>135</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 32.

<sup>136</sup> Pitchford, *The Conservative Party*, 168.

<sup>137</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 111.

allowing immigration only for specific jobs, cities and time periods, and with no dependents.<sup>138</sup> However, while these policies indicated a significant hardening of official Tory policy, evidence suggests that the leadership remained reluctant to act upon its demands. On 11 February 1969, Duncan Sandys introduced a bill to the Commons containing the demands outlined by Heath less than a month prior. Despite Heath's outward support for the proposed measures, he abstained on the vote. 126 Conservative MPs voted for Sandys' motion including prominent members such as Shadow Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home, and Tory chief whip, William Whitelaw.<sup>139</sup> This incident showing the inconsistency and lack of agreement among the party leadership was not unique. For example, in 1962 Douglas-Home adopted a policy of assisted repatriation and resettlement. However, when Powell suggested the creation of a Ministry of Repatriation to execute this policy, he was shut down by Heath.<sup>140</sup> The vote on Sandys' bill showed that there was a considerable body of opinion in the Conservative Party that had strict views towards immigration. While it is difficult to ascertain how, when and why these views developed, it is clear that supporters of immigration control were able and willing to be increasingly assertive due to the growing popularity of such ideas. However, the Tory leadership faced the dilemma between capitalising on the electoral popularity of immigration control and the need to maintain a distance from racism, inflammatory rhetoric, and the incitement of race hatred.

#### British Racism and its Imperial Connection

So far, this chapter has highlighted how anti-immigrant, and often racist, rhetoric gained traction in Britain in response to post-war immigration from the Commonwealth. Many argued that racial tensions were an entirely new phenomenon in Britain, unheard of before the Second World War. For example, an election leaflet from an Independent Loyalist (standing on behalf of the League of Empire Loyalists) in the 1964 general election argued: 'By far the most damnable betrayal [of British interests] is the flooding of the United Kingdom with hundreds of thousands of people who have created a colour problem in a realm where no colour problem has ever before existed.'<sup>141</sup> It would be accurate to argue that Britain's 'colour problem' only became a salient issue in mainstream politics and media for the first time, when the majority of Britons were directly confronted by a legacy of empire, Commonwealth immigration, for the first time. Until then, imperial administration had been largely confined to the upper and middle classes, meaning the majority of Britons were generally unaffected in their daily lives by empire.<sup>142</sup> However, it would be inaccurate to argue that

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>139</sup> *HCD*, vol. 777, cols. 1127-36 (11 February 1969).

<sup>140</sup> PUB 117/24 Monday Club, *Who Goes Home? Immigration and Repatriation* (Pamphlet, May 1969). CPA.

<sup>141</sup> C.6 De Bounevielle Election Leaflet, 1964. AKCC.

<sup>142</sup> Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 39-40.



societal attitudes, specifically attitudes towards race, were unaffected by empire during its existence. Britain's attitude towards race had been problematic long before the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in 1948, and as evidence will show, it was derived directly from her imperial past.

The relationship between the British Empire and race was complex. Racism was one of various strands, together with, for example, patriotism, liberalism, chauvinism and adventurism, that formed British imperial culture. None of these strands were inherently imperialistic or fundamentally linked together; a nation did not need to be an imperial nation in order to exhibit some or all of these characteristics. It is therefore the argument of some historians, such as Bernard Porter, that 'imperialism has furnished a convenient scapegoat in recent years to explain racism', when in reality, imperial Britain held less racist views than her European counterparts.<sup>143</sup> This nuanced version of British racism is explored in further detail by David Cannadine, who convincingly argues that Britain unified its overseas empire in the image of its domestic, social hierarchy. He argued that the British Empire 'was in large part about the domestication of the exotic – the comprehending and the reordering of the foreign in parallel, analogous, equivalent, resemblant terms.'<sup>144</sup> While Edward Said would argue that this created a 'coercive framework, by which a modern 'coloured' man is chained irrevocably to the general truths formulated about his prototypical linguistic, anthropological, and doctrinal forebears by a white European scholar', Cannadine's conclusions were more balanced.<sup>145</sup> Cannadine did not deny the importance of Enlightenment notions of race, but argued instead that the British Empire was not 'exclusively about race or colour, but was also about class and status.'<sup>146</sup> Particularly after the Enlightenment, when looking at coloured groups collectively, Britons placed themselves at the top of the civilizational scale and ranked all other races according to their relative merits. However, Cannadine argues that this 'did not subvert the earlier, individualistic, analogical way of thinking, based on the observation of status similarities and the cultivation of affinities', which explained Britain's respect for chiefs, emirs, sultans and nawabs.<sup>147</sup> British racism was thus more complex than one that unquestionably declared the white man's superiority over the coloured man.

Another key characteristic of British treatment of coloured peoples was paternalism. It was widely assumed that the British Empire 'uniquely stood for and promoted values of democracy, good governance, mutual tolerance, and respect for the individual; that 'Britishness' was not so much a matter of race and ethnicity as of cultural values, exported to the self-governing colonies through

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 5, 77.

<sup>144</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, xix.

<sup>145</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 237.

<sup>146</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 126.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 5-8.

British settlers but also to the 'dependent' Empire through example and education.'<sup>148</sup> The notion of trusteeship, adopted by Britain around the interwar period, pushed the idea that the spread of civilisation and 'Britishness' would take at least several decades, and, until the colonies had been remoulded in Britain's image, it was Britain's moral duty to continue guiding lesser developed peoples. Clearly, much of this rhetoric was spun in order to provide outward moral justification for the Empire. However, Britain was misjudged in assuming that it could control how the limits of deliberately vague concepts such as trusteeship and eventual self-government were interpreted outside of Whitehall. The appearance of legitimacy mattered to the British government, both domestically and internationally, as Britain prided itself upon being a liberal, democratic nation. Certainly, with regards to most of British Africa, Britain's need to maintain the appearance of legitimacy, coupled with the realisation that swift decolonisation was in line with the economic and strategic realities of Britain's new position in the world, was what caused her premature departure from Africa.

The need to maintain legitimacy and the moral high ground had implications for Britain's policy towards race. The British government and its imperial supporters went out of their way to stress their belief in multi-racialism across the Empire, for example in the case of the Central African Federation. According to a pamphlet published by the Monday Club, keen defenders of the Federation, the aim of the CAF was to 'provide an example of multi-racialism that can convince the rest of the world that the idea is workable.'<sup>149</sup> This reinforced the self-perception of Britain's role as teacher and guide towards a higher form of civilisation. The article explicitly compared the aims of the Federation to South Africa's apartheid policy; in doing so, the Monday Club sought to emphasise the apparent moral superiority of the British Empire in comparison to alternative regimes. The pamphlet continued, arguing: 'The Federation by showing itself in practice to be truly multi-racial, with its firm, progressive government, great natural resources (and therefore capital), also has the stability and moral authority to entitle it to the leadership of Africa.'<sup>150</sup> From this statement it is clear how moral legitimacy was tied to Britain's authority to govern in Africa. Britain justified its empire in the twentieth century using the rhetoric of morality; in turn, Britain was thus bound to acting upon its moral rhetoric if it was to maintain the outward legitimacy necessary to hold the Empire. In the context of race, Britain's stated commitment to multi-racialism meant that the government had no choice but to condemn the racist governments of South Africa and Rhodesia, regardless of the backlash it would face at home for doing so.

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<sup>148</sup> May, 'Empire Loyalists', 41.

<sup>149</sup> PUB 117/2 Monday Club Africa Group, *Bury the Hatchet* (Pamphlet, 1962). CPA.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

Britain's stated belief in multi-racialism became particularly problematic when the Empire came home via Commonwealth immigration. The Enlightenment notions of race that underpinned the Empire were vocalised by an increasing number of Britons as they came face to face with large numbers of ex-colonial subjects. At the more extreme end of the spectrum, Tyndall's Greater Britain Movement described the immigrants as 'sub-human', and as 'bringing with them the same crime, disease, and filth by which their society is stamped in Africa.'<sup>151</sup> However, while this demonstrates the perceived inferiority of coloured peoples by certain individuals in Britain, Tyndall's followers were never exponents of multi-racialism. More telling of the contradiction within attitudes towards race, therefore, are the views of the Monday Club, which superficially continued to promote racial harmony, while thinly veiling beliefs in white superiority. For example, a Club memorandum on immigration affirmed: 'We believe prejudice is dangerous, discrimination intolerable. Disillusionment caused by our prejudice dishonours the British tradition of tolerance and forbearance.'<sup>152</sup> Here, the Club reaffirmed its opposition to racial discrimination, while acknowledging that 'disillusionment' with coloured immigration was indeed occurring. However, the memorandum went on to argue: 'British society can validly demand from a newcomer a certain level of hygiene and social behaviour.'<sup>153</sup> This clearly implied that a significant number of newcomers, in their opinion, were not complying to certain levels of hygiene and social behaviour, echoing (in kinder terms) the rhetoric of 'crime, disease, and filth' used in *Spearhead*.

For some within the Monday Club, the influx of immigrants led to a reevaluation of the liberal rhetoric that had sustained the Empire for so long. Now that social liberalism and morality were no longer convenient to British interests and it was time to discard them. According to George K. Young, a Tory radical who associated with the National Front: 'The liberal's comfortable self-projection of himself as "Man" on to all mankind seemed to work so long as his cult objects were distant or harmless, such as heathen to be converted, the poor to be lavished with soup and good advice, the oppressed to be "liberated" at somebody else's expense... In an increasingly illiberal world where human diversity is reasserting itself this attitude is increasingly difficult to maintain.'<sup>154</sup> This suggests that Young believed in liberal interventionism only insofar as it did not intervene at home. Now that previously vulnerable groups, citizens of ex-colonies, were asserting their agency and taking actions that their former imperial overlords could not control, it was time to discard the 'liberal-humanitarian' outlook.

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<sup>151</sup> 'Global Race War Looms Nearer', *Spearhead*, August-September 1964. SA.

<sup>152</sup> PUB 117/10 Monday Club Memorandum on Immigration into the U.K., 15 February 1965. CPA.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> PUB 117/24 Monday Club, *Who Goes Home? Immigration and Repatriation* (Pamphlet, May 1969). CPA.

Not all agreed with this position, however; the 'liberal-humanitarian' outlook scorned by Young was the direct inspiration for the Race Relations Acts in 1965 and 1968. The 1965 statute was a landmark in that it marked the first legislation in the UK to address racial discrimination, however its provisions for enforcement were weak. The 1968 statute was more rigorous; due to provisions making the refusal of housing, employment or services on the grounds of race illegal, this statute was seen as an attack on personal (white) freedoms. Debates on the 1968 Race Relations Bill were filled with the language of morality. For example, Baroness Asquith of Yarnbury, daughter of former Prime Minister H. H. Asquith, insisted that the issue the bill was concerned with was 'above all else, a human issue, it is a moral issue, and an international issue.'<sup>155</sup> In the Commons, on the Bill's second reading, Home Secretary James Callaghan used the lexicon of 'freedom', 'peace', 'responsibility', 'leadership' and 'nobility'.<sup>156</sup> In doing so, he was calling upon a long British tradition of appealing to a higher moral duty; British democracy, based on the representation of interests, was rooted in paternalistic ideas. Whether it was for the poor, working classes, or disadvantaged immigrants, it was Parliament's duty to legislate benevolently on behalf of those less fortunate, and unrepresented in the Commons. In the case of the Race Relations Bill, the argument of moral duty won over the argument for personal freedoms, and the statute was passed.

However, it must be remembered that the Race Relations Acts were part of a two-pronged strategy to deal with the discord caused by the arrival of coloured immigrants; the other half of the strategy was stringent immigration control, with funds for repatriation. This two-sided approach was a manifestation of a tension that had long existed in the British imperial state but had remained largely obscured until the 1960s. Until then, Britain had continued to project an illusion of imperial power grounded in liberalism, even reflected in the spectacle and pageantry of its decolonisation. However, with the loss of the African empire and the growing significance of domestic racial tensions, two conflicting notions, inherent in the Empire, came to a head. The Empire had long been grounded in British superiority, before it was transformed by social Darwinist ideas into a belief in white superiority. However, the Empire had also long been shrouded in the rhetoric of liberalism, morality and responsibility. In the 1960s, these conflicting impulses produced legislation that both restricted coloured immigration, and outlawed racial discrimination. The indecision of the British government and the division of not only the Conservatives but also British society showed that a broad section of society struggled to adjust to the reality of a post-colonial order where racial equality was the accepted international norm. While countless other countries suffered, and

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<sup>155</sup> *HLD*, vol. 295, col. 72 (15 July 1968).

<sup>156</sup> *HCD*, vol. 763, col. 53 (23 April 1968).

continue to suffer, issues of racial disharmony, Britain's case was unique in that it was derived from her unique experience as an imperial power.

The deep social divisions in Britain in response to the Kenyan and Ugandan Asian crises, and the inflammatory rhetoric of Enoch Powell clearly show that British society was struggling to adjust to the new post-colonial order. Powell emerged as an active challenge to the political consensus that had been developed up to the mid-1960s; his popularity was a testament to the decay of the consensus itself. Britain was 'imprisoned within her dying imperialism', a crisis which tapped into 'the submerged nationalism of the English, trying at least to give a reactionary content to its uncertainty, and appeal to the (...) national feeling of frustration and anger.'<sup>157</sup> The uncertainty of the post-colonial transition divided both the Conservatives, and Britain at large, with some inclined towards the anger and resentment propounded by Powell, and others towards the spirit of internationalism and Europeanism, markers of the new world order.

Having considered the arguments laid out in this chapter, it is less surprising than one may initially believe that racism acquired the degree of power it did over mainstream politics and debate in the 1960s. As argued by Tom Nairn: 'Once divorced from the powerful liberalism-from-above that previously regulated it, it [British consciousness] displays obvious affinities with the old fantasies of the white man's blood and genetic aptitude for civilisation.'<sup>158</sup> However, what Nairn failed to appreciate was that the 'liberalism-from-above' was maintained to a large extent at the parliamentary level, hence the passage of the Race Relations Acts and reluctance for party leaders to use racist rhetoric despite its evident popularity. In contrast, at a local level, where most were engaging with the legacy of empire for the first time, many were unable to face the realities of a multi-racial society, despite the traditionally-professed British values of tolerance and respect. Overall, the complex British reaction to race and immigration between 1960-73 showed that there was a wider inability, that extended beyond the British Right, to come to terms with the legacy of empire; in the case of dealing with race, right-wing discomfort was symptomatic of a contradiction in mainstream attitudes that indicated a difficulty to adjust to the post-colonial order.

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<sup>157</sup> Nairn, *Break-Up of Britain*, 287.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

## Chapter Three – Foreign Policy in a Globalising World

### British Foreign Policy in the Post-War Era

In 1945, it was widely believed in Britain that victory and sacrifice in the Second World War, which had demonstrated both military strength and moral leadership, entitled Britain to a strong voice in world affairs. There was a pervasive belief across the political spectrum that 'Britain derived her uniqueness, as well as cultural, economic and political benefits, from her maritime and imperial contacts around the world; and that her independence and even survival were bound up with their preservation.'<sup>159</sup> Despite granting independence to India and Pakistan in 1947, Britain's Labour government showed no indication of relinquishing the Empire that was the source of British uniqueness and power. Rather, the Empire was to be reinvigorated through Britain's development policy, which sought to combine limited political advance in the colonies with investment in socio-economic development. Britain's motives were clear; by channelling growing nationalist activism into local politics, Britain hoped to continue controlling her strategic geo-political interests, while encouraging an increased production of raw materials that would reduce Britain's dependency on the dollar market. By establishing a revitalised empire, and cooperating with Western Europe, Labour Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin hoped to create a British-led grouping that would rival the power of the US and the Soviet Union.<sup>160</sup>

However, it soon became clear that Britain's plans for development were not to come to fruition. Agitation in the colonies caused the acceleration of political reform, and poor planning led to the failure of socio-economic development; this, in crudely simple terms, led to Britain's decolonisation of Africa. Britain's hope of leading a powerful bloc shaped around the Empire thus disintegrated, and Britain began to seek a new world role. In the 1950s, as it became increasingly evident that rapid decolonisation was inevitable, Britain's growing economic weakness, which constrained her military capability, eroded her status as a world power. Britain had become dependent on the USA for financial aid and technology; this led to political vulnerability, evident during the 1956 Suez crisis. The crisis occurred in October-November 1956 when Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal. The canal had long been crucial to British interests; Britain, along with Israel and France, therefore sought to regain Western control of the canal and overthrow President Nasser. However, following political pressure from the US and the United Nations, Britain was forced into a humiliating withdrawal, culminating in the resignation of British Prime Minister, Anthony Eden. According to Darwin, 'Eden's fall was a grim lesson in the unpredictable consequences of a

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<sup>159</sup> Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 72-3.

<sup>160</sup> Evans, 'Colonial Fantasies', 489.

prolonged international confrontation both for the authority of the government and the loyalty and confidence of its supporters – especially under a barrage of international criticism.<sup>161</sup> The Suez Crisis had demonstrated Britain's vulnerability, and reiterated that acting without the support of a large group could leave Britain friendless and isolated on the world stage.

What, then, were Britain's options? According to a Monday Club pamphlet published in 1963, there were three feasible alliances that Britain could make in order to strengthen her voice in international affairs. The first option utilised Britain's old imperial links by merging the Commonwealth, the sterling area and possibly the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) into an economic and political grouping that could later make agreements with either the US or the European Economic Community (EEC). The second option was to join the EEC, knowing that it was moving towards a federal Europe. The third option was to align closely with the US and the old white dominions (which referred to South Africa, New Zealand, Canada, Australia and the Irish Free State), a grouping that could later make agreements with the EEC.<sup>162</sup> The debates that occurred in the 1960s over Britain's foreign policy direction were implicitly about the kind of relationship that Britain wanted with her imperial past. As the above options indicate, Britain could choose to align with the new multi-cultural Commonwealth, the old (white) Commonwealth, or reject her imperial heritage by joining the EEC. It will be shown in this chapter that there was significant disagreement across the Right over Britain's foreign policy direction. Some on the Right continued to believe in the historical connections forged by empire, while others completely rejected them, disillusioned by decolonisation. In an exploration of attitudes towards the Commonwealth and the EEC, a common theme emerges; generally agreed was the principle British uniqueness and great power status, a belief derived indirectly from empire and fundamental to guiding Britain's foreign policy.

### A Commonwealth of Equals

The term 'Commonwealth' was officially adopted as the name for the group comprised of Britain and the dominions in the Balfour Declaration, agreed at the 1926 Imperial Conference. The Declaration stipulated that Britain and the self-governing dominions were: 'autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.'<sup>163</sup> These sentiments were codified in Section 4 of the 1931 Statute of Westminster, which established legislative equality

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<sup>161</sup> Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 230.

<sup>162</sup> PUB 117/8 Monday Club, *Conservatism Lost? Conservatism Regained* (Pamphlet, 1963). CPA.

<sup>163</sup> Hall, *Commonwealth*, 634-5.

between the dominions and the UK. In 1949, at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, the London Declaration was issued; this Declaration made two changes to the Balfour Declaration in order to accommodate India, which voted in 1949 to reject the British monarchy and adopt a republican constitution. Firstly, the term 'dominion' was dropped in favour of 'sovereign states', and, secondly, the Declaration recognised King George VI as the head of the Commonwealth, in a position that was, in theory, separate from the monarchy. India was thus able to accept the 'King as the symbol of the free association of its independent member nations and as such the Head of the Commonwealth', without having to swear allegiance to the King as its sovereign.<sup>164</sup> The 1949 Declaration thus marked the beginning of the multi-racial, politically diverse Commonwealth, as it can be recognised today.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Commonwealth softened the image of British imperialism, making it more palatable to anti-colonial critics. It was presented as the culmination of a benevolent British imperialism – a voluntary union of free and equal nations. This image was strengthened by the joining of India, one of the most populated and prominent anti-colonial countries in the world; India's membership did much to blunt anti-colonial criticism and it showcased British tolerance by including India in its group of equal nations. Extending the paternalist attitude which characterised imperial Britain, the Round Table pronounced in 1960 that, similar to the Roman Empire which neither declined nor fell, 'the British Empire has likewise not ended, but its children have grown into adult nations, preserving family ties without family discipline.'<sup>165</sup> The 'family ties' referred to common values and institutions which the British Empire was believed to have spread such as democracy and good government, however, from 1948 onwards these bonds began to loosen as Commonwealth nations began to assert their autonomy. India's republican constitution, approved in 1948, represented the first blow as it rejected the shared monarchy that had been 'the only constitutional bond uniting the Empire/Commonwealth after 1932.'<sup>166</sup> Britain was outwardly proud to lead a group of free and equal nations, however, as the Commonwealth became increasingly diverse, it became evident that the transition from Empire to Commonwealth would be more problematic than the British had previously assumed.

As international politics became dominated by two superpowers, some Britons looked to the Commonwealth as a way of maintaining global influence. According to former Indian Foreign Secretary Krishnan Srinivasan, the Commonwealth was 'designed by the British political establishment to compensate those in Britain who mourned the loss of the Empire, and to provide a

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 640.

<sup>165</sup> Jubilee of the Round Table, 'The Commonwealth', 339.

<sup>166</sup> May, 'Empire Loyalists', 47.



surrogate for colonial rule.<sup>167</sup> Given that the Commonwealth was created in 1926, when the Empire was still strong, Srinivasan's assumptions concerning the foresight of British politicians are likely to be an overstatement. However, the fact that so many ex-colonies chose to join the Commonwealth did indeed persuade some imperialists that British imperial power could be extended into the post-colonial age. It was a popular view among some prominent Conservatives, such as Leopold Amery, former Colonial Secretary, who famously wrote in 1953: 'other nations now outside [the Commonwealth] may well decide to join it in course of time... Who knows but what it may become a nucleus round which a future world order will crystallise?'<sup>168</sup> Though Amery's speculations never came to pass, perspectives on the presumed potential of the Commonwealth are useful in determining how far Britain was committed to its imperial past, and what it hoped to gain by embracing or rejecting its old colonial partners.

### Commonwealth Hopes & Expectations

Ideas on how to restructure the Commonwealth were seldom agreed upon within and between groups across the Right, therefore the projection of generalised views onto individual groups is of little value. Specific names and organisations will be ascribed to ideas where possible, however, it must be recognised that limited evidence prevents us from knowing how much support there was for any given theory. Controversial issues, such as immigration, tended to generate more leaflets, speeches and articles, while also forcing prominent figures to take a clear public stance on the issues. However, debates on the Commonwealth were much less open and controversial, limiting our ability to gauge the impact of ideas regarding its expansion or reinvigoration. This section therefore places emphasis on the scope of ideas, demonstrating the variety of methods proposed to strengthen the Commonwealth and the extent to which these proposals were grounded in views derived from the British Empire. The range of conflicting ideas will be used to show the inability of the Right to accept what the Commonwealth had evolved into, culminating in a conviction that if the Commonwealth nations could not be returned to their subordinate status, the organisation had outlived its usefulness to Britain.

As it was a heterogenous, voluntary association of states, some sought to cement Commonwealth ties in order to form a stronger, more cohesive group, that would better resemble the power blocs of the US and the USSR. Two clear possibilities were suggested: a modified form of Imperial Preference, and the Commonwealth as the basis for a new citizenship. Imperial preference was a system of preferential tariffs, negotiated at the Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa in 1932,

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<sup>167</sup> Srinivasan, 'Nobody's Commonwealth', 257.

<sup>168</sup> Amery, *My Political Life*, 16.

through which Britain gave highest trade preference to domestic producers, second preference to imperial/Commonwealth producers, and put foreign trade last. It was possible that if such trade preferences were maintained after independence was granted to colonies, economic ties could unify the Commonwealth. However, in the 1930s, the dominions that enjoyed imperial preference were 'accustomed to treating Britain as a bottomless market for their produce and as an endless source of capital and migrants'; by 1960, Britain did not have the economic strength to fulfil that role, meaning Commonwealth nations turned elsewhere for trade, and thus weakened the economic ties binding the Commonwealth.<sup>169</sup>

The second way of cementing Commonwealth ties was the creation of a common nationality. Common citizenship was supposed to 'symbolise the continuing unity, and hence strength of the 'Empire-Commonwealth'.<sup>170</sup> In the early twentieth century, citizenship of the Commonwealth was a matter of convention rather than legal status. No serious attempt was made to legally codify this common nationality, until post-war changes in Canadian law defined Canadian nationality by Canadian citizenship, rather than British subjecthood; this undermined the assumed universal bond of subjecthood, and prompted Westminster to pass the 1948 British Nationality Act. The statute created the citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies, specifying that it was 'to be held by persons born in any of these countries [colonies], or were offspring of a father born in any of these countries or by registration.'<sup>171</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, this led to the arrival of an unprecedented number of Commonwealth immigrants in Britain; mass immigration prompted the enactment of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, thus marking the end of the Common nationality. It was ironic that 'those Britons on the political right, while tempted at one stage to put high hopes on to the new Commonwealth, were also often the most strident opponents of unrestricted immigration.'<sup>172</sup> It spoke to an imperial idealism that was fused with the contradiction that Britain expressed over race. The vision for a shared Commonwealth nationality was proven to be hollow; it was an empty profession of shared values, which, as later became evident, few in Britain truly believed in. Despite decades, and in some cases centuries, of imperial rule which had projected British culture onto colonial subjects, by the 1960s many Britons expressed the view that: 'The English have nothing in common with the Asian or Negro, they are completely out of character and alien to our way of life in every aspect.'<sup>173</sup> By 1962, therefore, any ideal of a common nationality had been shattered by the reaction to mass immigration in Britain.

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<sup>169</sup> Cain & Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 519.

<sup>170</sup> Porter, *The Lion's Share*, 336.

<sup>171</sup> Heater, *Citizenship in Britain*, 163.

<sup>172</sup> Judd & Slinn, *Evolution of the Modern Commonwealth*, 108.

<sup>173</sup> POLL 3/2/1/7 Letter from Barley to Dollond, 12 December 1968. CAC.

However, the end of the common nationality idea was only with regards to the new, multi-racial Commonwealth. John Tyndall's vision for securing Britain's global position was based on the old, white Commonwealth, made up of members of the 'British race' (referring to descendants of British settlers, or 'kith and kin'). Tyndall argued: 'In the boundless lands of Empire and Commonwealth lie all the ingredients of modern power, waiting only for a determined national policy aiming at their full coordination and development in the service of the British future.'<sup>174</sup> However, the (ex-)dependent empire, or the (re)conquering of territories featured little in Tyndall's plans; arguably in the spirit of the new, anti-colonial world order, Tyndall focused on voluntary cooperation between the ex-dominions rather than coercion elsewhere. His proposals included: preferential trade agreements, alignment of defence strategies, British reconciliation with South Africa (estranged due to apartheid) and Rhodesia, and British emigration to ex-dominions to ease overcrowding. According to Tyndall, such a partnership would result in 'the makings of a civilisation that could surpass in its splendour anything yet achieved in the history of man.'<sup>175</sup> These references were clearly made in a spirit of, what John Darwin terms, 'Britannic nationalism', which amounted to 'an aggressive sense of cultural superiority as the representatives of global civilisation then at the height of its prestige' - an attitude that underpinned the British Empire.<sup>176</sup>

While Tyndall's imperialist rhetoric had been left behind by mainstream political leaders by the 1960s, the proposal itself was not necessarily unworkable. The dominions had been free of British control from the early twentieth century, and yet chose voluntarily to continue associating themselves with Britain, coordinating trade and foreign policy. Dominion loyalty to Britain was exemplified by their contribution to the war efforts, not only in terms of manpower but also economic resources and political loyalty. There was therefore some reason to believe that Britain's 'kith and kin' abroad could form a strong political unit voluntarily, as it had shown loyalty for decades after achieving self-government. However, the Second World War transformed Britain's economic position, and thus fundamentally affected the basis of these strong Commonwealth relations. Firstly, as the Empire broke apart, Britain could no longer offer a strategic umbrella to its member states; this meant that Britain could no longer control the members' external commitments, which was crucial to Britain's global influence. Secondly, the war devastated British trade and investment, and changed Britain's colonial and Commonwealth partners from being her debtors to her creditors. As Britain could no longer fulfil the role of market, investor and supplier, the Commonwealth was turning away from Britain, looking elsewhere for trade.<sup>177</sup> Tyndall's proposals betrayed his naive,

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<sup>174</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 79.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>176</sup> Darwin, 'A Third British Empire', 72.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

romanticised understanding of what held the Old Commonwealth together. It was not blind loyalty to the British race, or a commitment to furthering British civilisation; rather, it was concern to keep open channels of trade and influence that had kept the white Commonwealth in line with Britain. Once Britain had been knocked by war, and could no longer offer the same trade and influence, 'kith and kin' loyalty began to waver. However, Tyndall's faith in the emotional commitment of white Commonwealth nations to Britain was strong, reflecting his own inaccurate perceptions of contemporary British strength and the strength of Commonwealth goodwill towards Britain.

The Round Table presented a much more modest vision of the Commonwealth than Tyndall. Instead of placing it at the centre of Britain's strategy to regain its status as a world power, the Commonwealth was presented as a 'bridge' between nations that held shared values as a result of British imperialism. The Round Table accepted that the Commonwealth was composed of nations from 'all parts of the world, at different stages of economic development, and with very different national interests and priorities.'<sup>178</sup> The Commonwealth, in their view, was therefore to be a platform of exchange, rather than a vehicle for the formulation of common policies that would allow Britain and the Commonwealth to act as one bloc. This vision of the Commonwealth was arguably the most realistic, given that it closely resembles the role of the Commonwealth today. In contrast to Tyndall, the Round Table was, at least outwardly, positive regarding the multi-racial nature of the new Commonwealth. It argued: 'It is important to look at this [the multi-racial character of the Commonwealth] as a positive foundation for the development of the future Commonwealth, and not as a dilution of its more concentrated integrity under white hegemony.'<sup>179</sup> The phrasing of this statement makes clear that the Round Table was aware that some viewed the new, multi-racial Commonwealth as a 'dilution.'<sup>180</sup> Its stress on the importance of positivity, suggests that there was a need for it, or, in other words, that positivity towards the multi-racial Commonwealth was lacking. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Firstly, it may have been a result of racism, the impact of which had been exacerbated by the effects of mass immigration to the UK. Secondly, it may have resulted from a realistic appraisal of member interests; the fact is that the political and economic interests and concerns of the old Commonwealth had been much closer aligned. The accession of states which had different priorities, economic capacities, and strategic concerns did indeed dilute the ability of the Commonwealth to formulate unified strategies and act as one entity. For some, this realisation equalled disillusionment with the entire notion of the Commonwealth, given that its diversity made it powerless, and therefore limited its capacity for furthering British

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<sup>178</sup> May, 'Empire Loyalists', 49.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

interests; this was the view of Enoch Powell. As explored in the previous chapter, Powell led the campaign for the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which restricted the rights of Commonwealth nationals and undermined the concept of a Commonwealth nationality. In March 1963, Powell argued that British patriotism must not be founded 'on pretence that the Commonwealth is more than it really is or something different than what it really is.'<sup>181</sup> It was part of a speech focused on British pride, in which he had earlier asserted: 'Britain to-day, after all the changes of the last decades, needs a new kind of patriotism.'<sup>182</sup> These 'changes' could refer to a number of things, for example: decolonisation, Britain's increasingly apparent financial and political dependency on the United States, changing power relations in Europe, or perhaps the growing threat of the Soviet Union. However, the first three possibilities were closely connected; British autonomy had been predicated on her economic and political power, which came from her status as an imperial power. Two implications can therefore be drawn from Powell's speech. Firstly, Powell believed that British patriotism had previously been grounded in Britain's status as a world power, which was a result of her imperial status. By implying that some were misjudging the value of the Commonwealth, Powell showed his awareness that some were attempting to continue to channel British imperial patriotism through the Commonwealth, an organisation with superficial parallels, but one that was, in fact, fundamentally different. Secondly, by calling for a 'new kind of patriotism', Powell was essentially calling for a rejection of imperial patriotism.

Powell's anti-Commonwealth views were not simply a corollary of his racist views; he had no more hopes or expectations for continued cooperation with the old dominions, than he did for cooperation with the multi-racial Commonwealth. In response to Tyndall, who wrote to him about the potential of strengthening ties between white Commonwealth nations, Powell replied: 'my judgement is that especially in Canada, but also in Australia and New Zealand, these [ties] are bound to diminish with the passage of time and that no political structure can be based on them.'<sup>183</sup> His rejection of imperial links therefore transcended racial boundaries. While it is difficult to fully ascertain the reason for Powell's rejection of empire, several commentators ascribe it to Powell's disillusionment due to the failure of empire. Tom Nairn compares Powell's attitude to that of disenchanted 'ex-votaries of Stalin who, unable to bear what their idol had become, turned to denounce the god that had failed them. Powell reacted in the same way towards the political collapse of imperialism. Given that the failure, the disenchantment, had occurred, what was once the all-embracing, seductive truth *could* only be a tissue of lies.'<sup>184</sup> Thus interpreted, Powell's

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<sup>181</sup> POLL 4/1/1 JEP speech at Louth Constituency Open Meeting, 08 March 1963. CAC.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 116.

<sup>184</sup> Nairn, *Break-Up of Britain*, 267; also see PUB 149/3 'Close of Play', *Monday World*, Winter 1969/70. CPA.

rejection of the Commonwealth as a future vehicle of British influence was derived, in part, from his disillusionment due to decolonisation. However, one could also argue that Powell was driven by a realistic appraisal of the Commonwealth – an understanding that the Commonwealth truly was not an extension of empire, and therefore, in Powell's opinion, of no use in furthering Britain's global interests.

It is important to recognise that debates on Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) were happening at the same time as Commonwealth debates; Britain's failed application to the EEC had a bearing on how the future role of the Commonwealth was viewed. After Britain's first application to the EEC, which was submitted in August 1961, was rejected by the French President, Charles de Gaulle, the Monday Club began internal discussions on alternatives to the Common Market. In a memorandum, it was argued: 'The Government must now act quickly on an alternative to the Common Market... There is now a great opportunity to plan a Commonwealth alternative hinged on the E.F.T.A. countries and Japan with discriminatory trade measures and the offer of a comprehensive package deal to those who wish to join us.'<sup>185</sup> The EFTA (European Free Trade Association) was formed as an alternative, looser trading bloc to the EEC in 1960, and Japan was included as its trade was becoming important to Australia and New Zealand. The memorandum went into considerable detail over the practical steps necessary to proceed with their ideas, however, for the purposes of this paper, it is only necessary to draw out three key points. Firstly, the Monday Club's proposal was shaped around the multi-racial Commonwealth; the step-by-step outline showed how agreements could be made between Commonwealth nations before other nations were invited to join. The Commonwealth was therefore to be at the centre of Britain's new role in world affairs. Secondly, the proposals extended imperialist notions of development by ensuring that 'cheap, quickly available commercial and technological training and education is made available to the underdeveloped countries, provided always that agreement could be reached on trade matters and that those countries were willing to accept the recommendations by the Economic Committee.'<sup>186</sup> The rationale for Britain's colonial development policy was that by providing education and training, along with infrastructural development, Britain could boost the economic productivity of her colonies, which would benefit Britain, while continuing to control the colonies' foreign and economic policy. This old colonial policy was clearly reflected in the Monday Club proposal. However, one must allow that Britain was not the only country at the time offering financial aid with political strings attached. The fact that, for example, the USA gave nations aid in

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<sup>185</sup> PUB 117/6a Monday Club Memorandum on negotiations and alternative to the Common Market, 1 February 1963. CPA.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

return for anti-Communist support, indicates that we cannot comprehensively tie this Club proposal to Britain's imperial past. Having acknowledged this, the memorandum's reference to Britain's 'responsibilities' suggests a continuation of the moral rhetoric that characterised the Empire, suggesting that the Empire provided an inspiration, if not the cause, of such a proposal.

The final point of observation is that the Monday Club had, perhaps deliberately, skewed what the Commonwealth was. While describing proposals for cooperation between equal nations, the memorandum pointed out that the Commonwealth 'would have the benefit of a great and practical history of cooperation to assist it in the formulation of its future policy.'<sup>187</sup> This implies that the Commonwealth had always been based on voluntary cooperation. If this assertion was based on the experience of the old Commonwealth, it not only failed to recognise the fundamental shift addressed above concerning Britain's post-war weakness, but it failed to openly recognise that Britain's relationship with her dependent colonies had always been different from the settler colonies. It was illogical to expect the same working relationship with the ex-dependent colonies, given the difference in what Britain had demanded from settler and dependent colonies.<sup>188</sup>

Alternatively, if one considers that the assertion of a 'great and practical history of cooperation' was based on the combined history of the Empire-Commonwealth, then it was based on the misconception that the Empire had been an exercise of cooperation. The Monday Club's assertion came close to confusing, if not conflating, the Empire with the Commonwealth, which suggested either a misjudgement of what the Empire was, or a misjudgement of what the Commonwealth was. This was a crucial to prolonging hopes for a strong Commonwealth.

#### The Decline of the Commonwealth Idea

Up to the early 1960s, the Commonwealth was seriously considered as a potential vehicle for promoting British influence on a world stage. In their 1955 manifesto, the Conservative Party argued that the Empire-Commonwealth was 'the greatest force for peace and progress in the world today.'<sup>189</sup> This belief was reemphasised by a Tory pamphlet in 1960 which asserted: 'no political party would now dare to suggest publicly that the Commonwealth has outlived its usefulness. Today every political party is anxious to establish a reputation for unwavering devotion to this great heritage.'<sup>190</sup> However, there was a shift in the 1960s which saw the tide turn against the Commonwealth; on 23 January 1966, the *Sunday Telegraph* declared that 'the Commonwealth is a

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> For example, the significant disparity in contributions to the war effort in WWII between India and Australia/New Zealand – see: Jackson, *British Empire*, 353 & 465.

<sup>189</sup> McIntyre, *Commonwealth of Nations*, 444.

<sup>190</sup> Srinivasan, 'Nobody's Commonwealth', 262.

disappearing myth.<sup>191</sup> The bulk of opinion had turned against the Commonwealth, largely because the reality of voluntary cooperation had not lived up to the hopes and ideals set out above, but also due to debates over the EEC and Commonwealth immigration.

A key factor that caused disillusionment with the Commonwealth idea was the realisation that member states did not have common interests. By 1961, there was a non-European majority in the Commonwealth. It had not occurred to many of those who were initially optimistic about the potential of the Commonwealth that the membership of coloured nations 'was not an expression of filial gratitude and loyalty. Rather it provided merely a convenient platform on the world stage, from which they could air their grievances.'<sup>192</sup> Members were unafraid to oppose British policy, exposing clear evidence of diplomatic disunity. For example, in 1956, India and Ghana were two of five founding members that established the non-aligned movement, a movement which advocated a middle path for developing nations between the two power blocs in the Cold War. Unafraid to pursue a separate course to Britain, India and Ghana refused to bolster the 'special relationship' that Britain had fostered with the USA. Members were in some cases disunited to the point where they acted against each other. One example is the tension between India and Pakistan which resulted in armed conflicts in 1947, 1965 and 1971. Another example was the expulsion of South Africa, one of the group's oldest members, in 1961 due to opposition to its policy of apartheid. This caused much resentment in Britain and dented right-wing support for the Commonwealth.<sup>193</sup> For some across the Right, the expulsion of South Africa showed that the Commonwealth was of limited use as a means of exerting British power. Given the assertiveness of the new Commonwealth members in pursuing their varied diplomatic interests, the Commonwealth could not feasibly act as one, coherent power bloc.

The Commonwealth members also had increasingly diverse trade interests, which destroyed any hopes of creating a trading bloc. As late as 1958, Britain had reaffirmed its commitment to the Commonwealth as a trading bloc at the Commonwealth Trade Conference in Montreal. However, over the 1950s, British trade with the Commonwealth had been declining. Between 1950 and 1960, the proportion of British exports going to Commonwealth destinations shrank from c.47 per cent to 40 per cent; imports from the Commonwealth declined at a similar rate. There was also increasing concern in Britain that it was exporting too much skilled and professional labour overseas to Commonwealth nations, which was causing a talent gap in Britain.<sup>194</sup> All of these shifts combined

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Porter, *The Lion's Share*, 337.

<sup>193</sup> Srinivasan, 'Nobody's Commonwealth', 263.

<sup>194</sup> Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 138.



showed that the Commonwealth was declining in importance for the British economy. It is important to recognise that these changes were matched by shifting trading patterns across Commonwealth member states. For example, by 1967, Canadian trade with the US was worth nine times more than Canadian trade with Britain. British trade with Australia had been surpassed by Japanese trade with Australia, and in both Australia and New Zealand, political leaders were embracing their 'Asian destiny.'<sup>195</sup> According to Tyndall, this was a direct result of Britain's campaign to enter the EEC; he argued that due to the Common Market campaign, which would see Britain turn both towards Europe and away from the Commonwealth, the old Commonwealth had been made to feel unimportant, like 'expendable commodities, to be used or cast away as the requirements of the moment dictate.'<sup>196</sup> This, in his view, had weakened bonds of both trade and loyalty between Britain and the Commonwealth, limiting the common interests of the group and its ability to act as a strong power bloc.

The Round Table agreed with Tyndall that Britain's EEC application altered the viability of the Commonwealth, however, in contrast to Tyndall, the Round Table examined the effects of the application in Britain, rather than across the old Commonwealth. The Round Table argued that the debate over joining the Common Market wrongly presented the Commonwealth and the EEC as mutually exclusive options. Accordingly, the Commonwealth was perceived as 'an obstacle to a more realistic pursuit of British interests,' which caused a decline in support for the Commonwealth.<sup>197</sup> This was happening while mass immigration caused the Commonwealth to transform from being 'a symbol and vehicle of white supremacy into a symbol and vehicle of multi-racialism.'<sup>198</sup> Immigration was viewed as the main legacy of the Commonwealth, and, as shown in the previous chapter, multi-racialism was a largely unwelcome phenomenon across Britain; it caused popular British attitudes concerning the Commonwealth to turn from disinterested to disapproving within just a few years. It is therefore clear how diverging trade and diplomatic interests, coupled with domestic unpopularity, caused many to become disillusioned with the potential of the Commonwealth as a means of exerting British power and influence across the globe.

There were, of course, exceptions to this; some across the political right refused to accept that the Commonwealth was over as a meaningful grouping. A Monday Club pamphlet, authored by a member of the Club's executive council, Victor Montagu, argued an emotional case for the revival of Commonwealth commitments in 1970. He argued that Britain should spend more 'time and effort...

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<sup>195</sup> 'Result of Market Moves', *Spearhead*, November/December 1967. SA.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> May, 'Empire Loyalists', 51.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

defending something more precious, more personal to us, namely our own constructive work throughout the centuries, corners of Colonial fields, where our kith and kin have settled, constitutions carefully modelled on our own, the professional services and the capital we have sunk in creating thriving new communities of all races.<sup>199</sup> Montagu based his appeal on prior British investment, emotional and financial; calling on Disraeli's legacy, Montagu argued that Britain should not abandon the people that Britain had long been connected to by history, language and commerce. By referring to the United Nations as a 'waspish collection of peoples, mechanically tabulated, in a sky-scraper of New York,' the pamphlet indicated a sense of nostalgia for the history and romanticism of the Empire-Commonwealth.<sup>200</sup> The romantic element was clear from references to a Commonwealth as a 'powerful force' for 'world unity', consisting of 'sovereign nations freely associated' with bonds extending 'for a hundred years before 1945.'<sup>201</sup> Writing in 1970, Montagu clearly belonged to a minority that believed the Commonwealth still had ties 'as strong as links of iron,' although it is difficult to ascertain how sizeable or significant that minority was. What can, however, be drawn from Montagu's assertions is the continued fondness or nostalgia for the ideals of the Empire. The pamphlet had little basis in trading figures or diplomatic agreements; it was an appeal to history, to a tradition of cooperation between Commonwealth nations. This tradition of cooperation was of course a fantasy. Empire was about coercion and pressure, where Britain always negotiated from a position of strength. While by 1970, most had come to the realisation that the Commonwealth was to be nothing like the Empire and had abandoned ideas of Britain exercising global influence through the Commonwealth, there remained some, such as Montagu, who continued to believe in the emotional and historical commitment between Commonwealth nations as a basis for future cooperation.

The dissolution of the Empire, and its replacement by the Commonwealth, was a challenging process. The representation of the Commonwealth by some as a continuation, or even culmination, of empire had two significant consequences. Firstly, it meant that the transition from empire to Commonwealth was expected to remain under British control, and that elements of old colonial relationships were expected to be maintained. According to May, 'such expectations served the very useful purpose of smoothing the trauma of loss of 'world' power and of colonial rule.'<sup>202</sup> However, this reassurance was linked to the second significant consequence, which was that it meant that Britain experienced a delayed reaction to decolonisation. Initial hopes for the Commonwealth, based on experience of colonial relationships rather than a solid understanding of contemporary

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<sup>199</sup> PUB 117/30 Monday Club, *The Conservative Dilemma* (Pamphlet, 1970). CPA.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> May, 'Empire Loyalists', 53.

diplomatic and trade interests, extended into the 1960s. However, the weakening of Britain's economic, military, and strategic position had occurred from as early as the Second World War. Unrealistic hopes for the Empire-Commonwealth had, to a significant extent, blinded many Britons, and caused a realistic debate on Britain's position in the new world order to be delayed until the early 1960s.

### The Turn Towards Europe

As Britain considered its relationship to the Commonwealth, it was also contemplating membership of a European Economic Community. In the 1950s, Britain was relatively ambivalent towards Europe. British imperial ambition and the sanctity of parliamentary sovereignty made her averse to the idea of supranational European institutions or a European political group, although Britain may have considered European cooperation under British guidance. According to Darwin, 'it remained an absolute orthodoxy of British policy that membership of such a [political] community, or even of a European customs union, was fundamentally incompatible with Britain's Commonwealth links, her global commitments and even with her special relationship with the United States.'<sup>203</sup> However, in August 1961, the Conservative government made a formal application for the UK to join the EEC. This application was rejected by Charles de Gaulle in 1963; however, for the purposes of this study, the reasons for the initial application (and rejection) are largely irrelevant. What is significant is that the application sparked major debate, particularly but not exclusively across the Right, concerning Britain's role in Europe and the implications of British EEC membership for her imperial, and Commonwealth commitments.

The far right was divided by views on race; Tyndall and A. K. Chesterton rejected the Common Market in the belief that Europeans were not united by kin. However, Colin Jordan, who co-founded the British National Party in 1960 and the National Socialist Movement with Tyndall in 1962, believed in the supremacy of the northern European race, and therefore welcomed a union of its people.<sup>204</sup> Tyndall argued: 'there is only one real basis for union – that of race.'<sup>205</sup> Accepting that Britain needed to associate itself with a larger bloc, he argued that the racial disunity and lack of raw materials and living space would prevent Europe from being an effective power bloc. Instead, Tyndall proposed uniting the 90 million whites spread across the Commonwealth to 'build the most powerful civilisation in the history of man.'<sup>206</sup> This was the fundamental aim of Tyndall's Greater Britain Movement, with 'Greater Britain' referring to those who belonged to the 'British race' but

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<sup>203</sup> Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 232.

<sup>204</sup> Walker, *National Front*, 34-7.

<sup>205</sup> 'The Commonwealth – A Time for Realism and Action', *Spearhead*, April 1965. SA.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

lived beyond the British Isles. It is unclear how Tyndall's vision of Greater Britain compared to the EEC alternative, given the lack of clarity on what Greater Britain meant in practical terms. Tyndall mentioned little, apart from increased British investment in the white Commonwealth nations, to clarify the nature of political and economic ties within such a union. Instead, when exploring the potential of the GBM, Tyndall made broad statements such as: 'British history means nothing if it does not mean the systematic and progressive extension of British power into the far corners of the earth, whereby the British people could be guaranteed the means to permanently increase and live nobly in the manner of a great race.'<sup>207</sup> What can be drawn from the rhetoric of 'history', 'progress' and 'nobility' is that Tyndall was more concerned with the grandeur and romanticism of the idea, rather than the practical economic and strategic benefits that may be gained from uniting with 'Greater Britain'. His rejection of British membership of the EEC was not based on any cost/benefit analysis, rather it was product of his fixation on grand narratives. Tyndall sought an option that showed linearity in British history, and therefore championed an option grounded in the British Empire.

The more moderate right, meaning those within the Conservative Party, was also divided in opinion over Europe. The EEC was one issue of several, such as Rhodesia, immigration, capital punishment and social permissiveness, that caused controversy in the Conservative Party throughout the 1960s. Edward Heath, party leader from 1965 and prime minister from 1970, had little interest in Commonwealth issues and believed that Britain's future lay in Europe. He faced considerable backbench opposition during his tenure over all of the above issues, however it was not necessarily the case that the same MPs that opposed Heath over Rhodesia or immigration also opposed him over Europe. While, generally speaking, the Monday Club gave organisational coherence to the right wing of the party, which opposed the often liberal-leaning stance of the leadership, it is important to recognise that there was no strict group of MPs that consistently opposed the leadership over controversial issues. The issue of Europe divided the leadership of the Monday Club, with John Biggs-Davison coming out in support of the EEC and Victor Montagu against it. The majority of Conservative MPs backed Heath in joining the EEC, however there was a sense that this was reluctant. According to the *Guardian*, 'the bulk of the party' followed 'Mr. Heath's line as a sad necessity.'<sup>208</sup> By the time Heath became prime minister in 1970, the bulk of the Monday Club had also acquiesced. Around 1972 the anti-Market movement gained momentum under the leadership of Enoch Powell; the National Front also increased its campaigning and attracted increasing numbers of recruits from disillusioned members of the Monday Club. Overall, the anti-Market campaign

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<sup>207</sup> 'The Meaning of Greater Britain', *Spearhead*, July 1965. SA.

<sup>208</sup> POLL 3/2/1/19 'Party hurdle for Tory Marketeers', *The Guardian*, 13 October 1971. CAC.

failed, and Britain joined the EEC on 1 January 1973. However, the issue of relevance for this paper is discerning why there was mixed opinion concerning the EEC, by analysing some of the reasons behind anti-Market sentiment, and how, if at all, it was related to empire.

A major reason for opposition to Britain's entry into the EEC was the threat it presented to parliamentary sovereignty. The loss of sovereignty was not only a concern for the Conservatives; Euroscepticism stretched across the political spectrum. Former Labour minister Tony Benn was a strident campaigner against membership, who later argued that 'The most formal surrender of British sovereignty and parliamentary democracy that has ever occurred in our history took place in January 1972, when Mr Heath signed the Treaty of Accession which bound Britain to the Treaty of Rome.'<sup>209</sup> According to a *Times* article from 1971, sovereignty became 'the supreme issue for Westminster politicians' following the anti-Market campaigning of Enoch Powell among others, however, the preservation of sovereignty had been a controversial issue during Britain's first application to the EEC by Harold Macmillan.<sup>210</sup> For example in July 1961, Tory backbencher Anthony Fell called Macmillan's 'decision to gamble with British sovereignty in Europe, when 650 million people of the British Commonwealth depend upon his faith and his leadership' as the 'most disastrous thing that any Prime Minister has done for many generations past,' even calling for Macmillan's resignation.<sup>211</sup> According to reports from the *Guardian*, Fell's statements 'whipped the House from a state of excitement into sheer uproar, punctuated by sharp, shocked Tory protests,' indicating that even in 1961, debates concerning sovereignty and the EEC aroused the passions of the Commons.<sup>212</sup> While Macmillan's application to the EEC ultimately failed, doubts over sovereignty resurfaced when Heath made another application to the EEC.

In some cases, doubts over sovereignty resulted in cautiousness rather than overt opposition to Market entry. This is exemplified by a pamphlet issued by the Monday Club, tellingly titled: 'A Europe of Nations'.<sup>213</sup> The publication was generally in favour of joining the EEC, however the language indicates caution, and perhaps even reluctance. For example, it suggested that 'a confederation of independent states in Western Europe' would be satisfactory, upon the condition that it did not become a federation.<sup>214</sup> The meaning of this was clear; the Monday Club was happy for Britain to cooperate voluntarily with Europe, but it would not allow Britain to be governed by a higher authority, meaning a supranational body, which compromised parliamentary sovereignty.

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<sup>209</sup> Benn, *Arguments for Democracy*, 14.

<sup>210</sup> 'Sovereignty becomes the big issue', *The Times*, 15 February 1971.

<sup>211</sup> *HCD*, vol. 645, col. 935 (31 July 1961).

<sup>212</sup> 'Britain will ask to join EEC', *The Guardian*, 01 August 1961.

<sup>213</sup> PUB 117/13 Monday Club, *A Europe of Nations* (Pamphlet, October 1965). CPA.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

With that said, it was recognised that joining Europe would prevent an erosion of British sovereignty to the USA. The US held significant influence over British finance, and the technology it had access to; the Monday Club therefore argued that cooperation with Europe would reclaim some of that power back from America.<sup>215</sup> A similar argument was articulated in a Club pamphlet authored by David Levy, a young Tory radical and literary editor of the *Monday World* journal/newspaper; he argued: 'every day we abstain from the making of multinational Europe our real independence is whittled away. Cooperation with our European equals is surely closer to self-government than is our present slide into the economic slavery of American domination.'<sup>216</sup> This, again, indicates a preference for a confederal Europe when compared to the alternative of British subjugation by the USA, suggesting that it was viewed as the best of a bad choice. It was perhaps naïve to assume that a Europe of sovereign nations, tied together only by voluntary cooperation, would be able to act as a coherent bloc that could counter the power of the USA and the USSR. However, for many, maintaining British sovereignty and independence to act in its national interest was non-negotiable; for some, this meant complete opposition to EEC membership, while for others it meant cautious support for membership of the EEC in order to protect Britain from undue American influence.

Another important reason for opposition to British entry into the EEC was belief in the Commonwealth. As with sovereignty, concern for the Commonwealth did not necessarily equate to overt opposition to the EEC. For example, in 1962 the Monday Club circulated a memorandum highlighting the economic advantages of the EEC, however, it also asserted that any agreement with Europe would be inadequate if suitable permanent guarantees were not obtained for Commonwealth nations.<sup>217</sup> In this case, the Monday Club's anxiousness to maintain Commonwealth ties did not constitute a barrier to joining Europe, but rather a preliminary hurdle. However, for others, the Commonwealth was regarded as a better grouping for Britain than the EEC. This perspective did not necessarily present the Commonwealth as a more practical alternative to Europe for achieving the goal of belonging to a strong power bloc that could compete with, or at least resist being influenced by, the two superpowers. Rather, Victor Montagu, executive member of the Monday Club, argued that Britain did not need Europe because it did not need to belong to a unified power bloc. He wrote: 'My opposition to the Common Market link up is based on a rejection of the power bloc theory as a means of Britain's survival and a conviction that the Commonwealth, now that full independence has been granted, is ready for measures to be devised to give it fresh cohesiveness.'<sup>218</sup> Montagu believed that Commonwealth ties could be strengthened, primarily

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> PUB149/4 'A European Perspective', *Monday World*, Summer 1970. CPA.

<sup>217</sup> PUB 117/4 Monday Club Memorandum on the Common Market, 26 October 1962. CPA.

<sup>218</sup> PUB 117/30 Victor Montagu, *The Conservative Dilemma* (Monday Club Pamphlet, 1970). CPA.

through trade, allowing Britain to maintain independence from the US and Europe, while continuing to associate with countries with which it had a historical connection.

For Montagu as well as many others, the historical connection was fundamental to the attraction of the Commonwealth over Europe. It allowed continuity to be written into British history, which perpetuated the sense that Britain had a national purpose or destiny. A. K. Chesterton referred to this continuity of purpose, in a booklet titled *Common Market Suicide*, as ‘the spirit of the British nation – a spirit tempered by a millennium of historical endeavour.’<sup>219</sup> For Montagu, the purpose that characterised the ‘spirit’ described by Chesterton was ‘world unity’, which he believed that Britain could orchestrate because it had spread ‘language, parliamentary institutions and commercial practices’ across ‘a vast association of nations which straddles six continents and seven seas.’<sup>220</sup> Tyndall also appealed to a historical connection with the Commonwealth, although only the white Commonwealth, in his vision for Greater Britain. However, Tyndall, unlike Montagu, did believe in the power bloc theory, and he saw Greater Britain as a much more unified entity than Montagu that would rival the strength of the world’s superpowers. Tyndall proposed ‘an equal partnership coordinated by a federal body with powers in certain limited fields... a genuine system of political and economic union.’<sup>221</sup> While Tyndall did not articulate the specifics of how such a union would work, the basic features appear to resemble those of the EEC. For Tyndall, therefore, his rejection of the EEC was not based on an objection to its functions or limitations on British sovereignty, rather it was based on a belief that there existed a more suitable grouping which utilised Britain’s historical connections that could better fulfil Britain’s foreign policy objectives.

There were also other reasons that were cited for popular opposition to Britain joining the EEC. According to an article in the *Sunday Times* from May 1971, the fear of a rise in the cost of living was ‘the main stumbling block for Mr Heath’s campaign to win the country’s approval.’<sup>222</sup> In spring 1971, popular support for the EEC was limited; an article from March 1971 cited that only 22 per cent of Britons supported the attempt to join the EEC, while 59 per cent opposed it and 19 per cent remained uncertain.<sup>223</sup> According to the *Sunday Times* article, over half of those who opposed entry said that they would support it if it meant that the cost of living went down, leaving ‘a hard core of only 25 per cent still resolutely against joining Europe.’<sup>224</sup> This meant that the majority of anti-Marketeers were primarily concerned about their standard of living. The 25 per cent ‘hard core’ of

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<sup>219</sup> B.22 Chesterton, ‘Champagne or the Rope’ in *Common Market Suicide* (1977) 14. AKCC.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> ‘An alternative to the Common Market’, *Spearhead*, June 1967. SA.

<sup>222</sup> POLL 3/2/1/19 ‘Price rise swells anti-Market ranks’, *The Sunday Times*, 02 May 1971. CAC.

<sup>223</sup> ‘Survey shows 22% want to join Six’, *The Times*, 16 March 1971.

<sup>224</sup> POLL 3/2/1/19 ‘Price rise swells anti-Market ranks’, *The Sunday Times*, 02 May 1971. CAC.

the population therefore referred to those who were opposed to the EEC for reasons that were attached to strong opinions or personal values. This included belief in parliamentary sovereignty and Commonwealth ties, but also xenophobia, anti-bureaucracy, nostalgic reactionism (for pounds, ounces etc.) and different trading patterns to Europe. It would be impossible to ascertain what proportion of politicians and ordinary Britons believed in any given value or principle, and how far their beliefs impacted their vision for Britain's future. However, what this analysis has shown is that, across the British Right, there were a variety of justifications for each of the different imaginings of Britain's new world role in this post-colonial era. While there was limited coherency in the anti-Market campaign, it is clear that the only reason for opposing EEC membership that was explicitly connected to empire was a naïve hope for Commonwealth revival. This would suggest that the debate concerning British entry into the Common Market only marginally reflected a right-wing difficulty in coming to terms with a new post-colonial order. However, a more nuanced interpretation requires an understanding of Britain's self-perception as a great world power, and a more in-depth assessment of how far it is accurate to connect Commonwealth support to imperial nostalgia.

#### The Significance of Empire in British Post-Imperial Policy

In the immediate post-war era, despite Britain's weakened financial position and the loss of India from the Empire, Britain assumed itself to have an important position in the world. Encouraged by the moral authority gained from victory in the Second World War, and its leadership of the vast Empire-Commonwealth, Britain still saw itself as a great world power. This was not entirely a delusion; there were various indications that Britain was the third-strongest power in the world, after the USA and Soviet Russia. For example, in the early 1950s, Britain paid over 40% of the total European contribution to NATO defence spending, it was the only atomic power apart from the two superpowers, and it produced almost a third of all industrial output in non-Communist Europe.<sup>225</sup> However, Britain was still deeply dependent on the USA for finance and technology, which left her politically vulnerable. Decolonisation meant that Britain steadily lost control of strategic interests and could no longer command the trade and foreign policy of territories across the globe. Just a few decades prior, there was no doubt that Britain could survive alone (backed by her empire), giving her full autonomy to act in her own interests, without need to compromise with other nations. Yet by 1960, this was no longer the case; opinions were mixed over whether Britain could still survive 'on

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<sup>225</sup> Srinivasan, 'Nobody's Commonwealth', 258.



her own' on the basis of its old historical connections, or whether it was time to make concessions to European states.<sup>226</sup>

With that said, it is important not to project those opinions as clear opposites; one should not conflate pro-Europeanism with anti-imperialism. Given that Britain's decision to accelerate the decolonisation of Africa coincided with Macmillan's application to join the Common Market, the application 'appears irresistibly as an historic watershed in British world policy, marking the moment of decisive choice between the global ambitions and imperial commitments of the past and a future as a member nation of a united Europe with its supranational ideas.'<sup>227</sup> However, it is unlikely that Macmillan's government viewed its decision in that way; it is more probable that it was seen simply as a means of preventing British isolation in Europe, rather than as an abandonment of the Empire-Commonwealth. For many, there was no choice to be made between the Empire-Commonwealth and Europe, because they were not mutually exclusive. A pamphlet issued by the Monday Club in 1965 argued that Britain should maintain strong relations with both groupings. It argued that the two groupings were too different to be treated as comparable alternatives to one another: 'On the one hand, Europe is a geographical and cultural entity with an economic, military and political potential comparable to any of the great continental powers. The Commonwealth, on the other hand, covers a variety of relationships so diverse that it is straining at language to group them under one word.'<sup>228</sup> From this perspective, Britain did not need to choose between the Empire and Europe; at most, it needed to prioritise its commitment to each. This did not seem unfeasible, given that other countries in the Commonwealth were also making regional agreements, for example the ANZUS pact, while continuing to participate in the Commonwealth. Being pro-European, therefore, did not mean being anti-imperialist, and neither was being pro-Commonwealth the same as being anti-European or anti-internationalist. Significantly for this paper, being pro-Commonwealth did not signify any fundamental rejection of the new, internationalist world order.

Between 1960 and 1973, after all the debate that has been reviewed in this chapter was exhausted, Britain did indeed shift its priorities from the Empire to Europe. This shift was perhaps inevitably incoherent and contested, given the longevity of the Empire and the novelty of Britain's weakened position in a changing world. However, the political decisions that led to the gradual abandonment of the Commonwealth and the hesitant steps toward Europe were essentially guided by the same impulse that had long guided British foreign (and imperial) policy – the protection of Britain's global strategic interests. According to Larry Butler, 'one of the most important characteristics of the British

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<sup>226</sup> Heinlein, *British Government Policy*, 269-71.

<sup>227</sup> Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 234.

<sup>228</sup> PUB 117/13 Monday Club, *A Europe of Nations* (Pamphlet, October 1965). CPA.

imperial system' was its 'capacity for flexibility and pragmatic adjustment to changing circumstances.'<sup>229</sup> He argued that British imperial policy was diverse, and often inconsistent, however it had a fundamental continuity, which was the safeguarding of British global interests. In the 1960s, Britain's turn towards Europe was essentially an attempt to stabilise Britain's world position. It was a new alliance that would fulfil what Heath understood to be 'the job of the British Government': 'to build up British influence in the world.'<sup>230</sup> While the Empire, along with Britain's maritime, economic and political power that had been connected to her imperial status, had previously given Britain the stature and global influence that it sought, after decolonisation, Britain naturally turned to new alliances.

The turn towards Europe coincided with declining British support for the Commonwealth; yet, as argued above, this did not necessarily signify that anti-imperialism was the motivation behind Britain's application to the EEC. To assume otherwise would be to equate declining support for the Commonwealth with declining support for the Empire, thereby conflating two different institutions. The connections between Empire and Commonwealth are easy to make; one was derived from the other, meaning the membership of both groups was largely the same, both institutions had a monarch as its figurehead, and during the mid-twentieth century, the British government often used to the two terms interchangeably, or even together ('Empire-Commonwealth'). However, once decolonisation was the accepted policy of the British government, and the Commonwealth expanded into a new, multi-racial organisation, the Commonwealth had arguably transformed into the antithesis of empire. The Empire was concerned with subordination and homogeneity, while the Commonwealth celebrated equality and diversity. The Commonwealth was a 'voluntary organisation run by a secretary-general and pledged to promote equality', unlike the Empire, which was 'a mandatory organisation presided over by a king-emperor and pledged to uphold hierarchy.'<sup>231</sup> Of course, there were those that believed that the Commonwealth would be a surrogate for empire, however, once it became clear that this was not the case, many on the Right lost hope in the Commonwealth.

### British Uniqueness and Patriotism

A factor that was implicit in Britain's deliberations over a new direction in foreign policy was a renegotiation of patriotism. It was briefly examined above in a speech made by Enoch Powell which suggested that, with empire in the past, Britain needed to find a new basis of national pride.

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<sup>229</sup> Butler, *Britain and Empire*, xi.

<sup>230</sup> POLL 3/2/1/7 'The Prime Minister's Address at Blackpool' at the Conservative Party Conference, 13 October 1973. CAC.

<sup>231</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 116-7.

According to Paxman, stories of struggle, exploration and mission 'gave the British a deep conviction about their national destiny.'<sup>232</sup> Empire was what set Britain apart from other nations; it was both source and proof of British power. However, Porter argues that while other countries defined Britain by her empire, Britain was projecting a different image domestically. He argues that Britain's self-image was that of 'a free, moderate, and peaceful nation, marked off from other nations by those qualities, and by the domestic 'progress' that had formed the main motif of her history for 400 years.'<sup>233</sup> Porter's argument better explains the lack of explicit resistance to decolonisation in Britain. However, both Paxman and Porter link British pride to that which set Britain apart from other nations. British pride was fundamentally linked to its sense of uniqueness, and its ability to act independently of any other nation according to its own interests and moral judgements. Britain's ability to act in this way had of course been derived from its economic, political and military strength, which in turn were products of the Empire. However, by the early 1960s, empire was lost, Britain was weak, and it was dependent on the USA; foreign policy debates in the 1960s therefore indicated a desire to regain the strength necessary to act independently in her own interests.

It was unclear, however, how best to achieve this; Britain seemed to have no direction or purpose when it came to foreign policy. Its policy on Africa was inconsistent; while Britain was on the retreat from Africa, it continued to interfere in countries with white settler communities, although not necessarily in their favour. Britain was becoming a puppet of the USA; when interests clashed, Britain made compromises. Policy towards ex-colonial nations was unclear; should Britain seek good relations with new African leaders to maintain trade, or fight back against their anti-colonial critique at the United Nations? This incoherence suggests that Britain had difficulty adjusting its foreign policy to a post-colonial world, in a way that would guarantee the protection of her interests, in addition to her sovereignty.

The range of conflicted opinions over British foreign policy examined in this chapter make a conclusive judgement on the relevance of empire difficult. Pro-Commonwealth sentiment was sometimes driven by imperial nostalgia, but there were other causes such as experience of Commonwealth voluntary cooperation, and historical trade connections that were also significant. Pro-EEC sentiment was, for some, a turn away from Britain's imperial past, however, for others it was simply the most practical option for pursuing Britain's interests, rather than an abandonment of the Commonwealth. Some conclusions can, however, be drawn. Firstly, there was clear evidence up to the early 1960s of a romantic view of both the Empire and Commonwealth, that caused many to

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<sup>232</sup> Paxman, *Empire*, 99.

<sup>233</sup> Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 306.

believe that a vastly diverse group of states could voluntarily be held together by their historical connection. It was propped up by a false conviction in the emotional commitment of Commonwealth countries to Britain. The delayed realisation in the 1960s that Commonwealth nations had varied trade and diplomatic interests and were unafraid to pursue them, caused significant disillusionment on the Right; the prolonged hopes which clung to old ideals had shown the difficulty of some to adapt to Britain's position in this new world order. Secondly, although there were few arguments against the EEC connected explicitly to empire, the argument for sovereignty was significant. Britain's ability to act independently was something it was proud of, and it was linked to a belief in British uniqueness and power. These beliefs were derived indirectly from empire, and they were fundamental to guiding Britain's foreign policy, whether Britain now had an empire or not. Here we see the common thread between Commonwealth and EEC advocates; both groups sought to restore British strength, independence and influence, which were phenomena that Britain was accustomed to, due to her imperial past. The disagreements came from how best to realistically achieve this goal however the fundamental aim remained the same.

## Conclusion

Overall, this paper has explored three distinct issues – the welfare of white settler communities, race and immigration, and foreign policy – which showed the different ways in which resistance to the new post-colonial world was articulated between 1960-1973. The extent of that resistance or difficulty to adjust varied according to the issue being grappled with. Concern for white settler communities was largely confined to right-wing politicians and activists, while foreign policy proposals which hinted at an underlying imperialism came from both wings of the political spectrum. Opposition to immigration had the most popular support, mobilising a much larger section of society than the other two issues discussed; here was the strongest evidence that right-wing activity which resisted Britain's process of becoming post-colonial reflected a wider inability to come to terms with decolonisation. Generally, however, the most explicitly-imperial sentiment was expressed by the Right.

Few, even on the far right, expressed outward regret over the loss of empire due to the loss of tangible assets such as territory or trade. There was some concern that Britain had lost military control over geo-strategic interests due to the loss of empire, however the reclaiming of dependent territories was rarely proposed as a solution to regaining global influence. Rather, evidence suggests that British resistance to the post-colonial order was based on an emotional commitment to strands of imperialism, rather than a will to reclaim what was lost. For example, protection of white settler interests was tied to a sense of loyalty towards 'kith and kin', and duty towards Africans, to prevent them from descending into the chaos that would ensue if they were left without British guidance. Hopes for the Commonwealth indicated a belief in Britain's moral authority to lead her former colonies, together with a conviction that the Empire had not been held together by coercion, but by common values and, in some cases, common blood. Attitudes towards race were more complex; mainstream political leaders held on to traditionally professed values of British tolerance and multi-racialism, while the reality of the white superiority that underpinned empire was reflected in the anti-immigration activism that came from below. Here, it was those that pushed for measures such as the Race Relations Acts that remained committed to the outward display of moral behaviour, which had been so crucial to legitimising empire.

It is important not to overstate the conclusions made in this study. It would be an exaggeration to argue that Britain remained a fully imperial society, or that British politics was at its core governed by a sense of imperial mission. This paper has given various examples of Tory MPs and even ministers who betrayed imperialist beliefs and motivations, however they often stepped away from party line to do so. The Conservative Party leadership was consistently more left-leaning than the

bulk of the party, and it would be difficult to argue that Prime Ministers Macmillan or Heath were governed by any sense of imperial mission. Significantly, this can explain why most scholarship to date has failed to acknowledge the extent of the Right's resistance to the loss of empire. The far right, meaning groups such as the National Front, the Greater Britain Movement and the League of Empire Loyalists, were more explicitly imperialist than the Conservative Party, but even then, one must be careful not to draw simplistic conclusions. An 'imperialist' mentality consisted of several, sometimes conflicting, ideas such as paternalism, racism and liberalism; someone such as Tyndall, who believed in the superiority of the British race, but not in any sense of duty towards 'inferior' races, thus resists simple categorisation as an imperialist. It is better therefore to understand this study as uncovering traces of imperialism that persisted in British politics as Britain sought to make the transition towards becoming post-colonial.

This study has shown that, contrary to conventional historical wisdom, Britain was far from indifferent towards the dismantling of empire. The historiography to date has largely taken the dismantling of empire to literally mean the loss of colonial territories. However, this paper has examined how sentimental attitudes towards Britain's imperial past manifested as tensions and disagreements when Britain was confronted with phenomena such as Commonwealth immigration and political advance in Central Africa. This constituted resistance to the post-colonial order in a way that was more complex than simply rejecting the process of losing overseas territories. By examining the extent and articulation of Britain's emotional commitment to empire, this paper has opened up a new angle for historical analysis of how decolonisation was received in Britain.

It has been shown how elements of right-wing ideas often bled into the political and popular mainstream, however this paper does not claim to prove that imperialist ideas underlay the thoughts of the majority, or that most people struggled to adjust to a post-colonial order. Given that this study focuses on the right wing of British politics, it is too one-sided to make such a claim. A future study seeking to measure the extent of such ideas would need to look at the opposite end of the spectrum for comparison; it would need to explore the pervasion of ideas and rhetoric used by the anti-colonial movement, or British perception of post-colonial, or internationalist movements. A wider study of public media would also be fruitful; this study has been limited largely to the use of national newspapers, however a deeper analysis could look not only at regional newspapers, but also compare the popular reception of films such as *Passage to India* and *Gandhi*, or look at the influence of reggae, soul and grime music. By combining traditional historical methods with literary analysis techniques, one could better ascertain how far the views of the far right were shared by the wider population. This paper has simply opened up the extent of imperial influences on the wider

population to speculation; it has been shown that ideas and rhetoric derived from empire continued to be used by mainstream politicians, but the extent of their influence has yet to be shown.

Overall, it is clear that the Right had difficulty adjusting to a Britain without empire. Right-wing politics remained saturated with the residue of empire, as shown by the persistence of paternalism, racism, and the image of Britain as a major world power, deserving of global influence. The difficulty to adjust was often articulated as disagreements. For example, conflicts within the Conservative Party showed how the will to preserve imperial interests came up against the more progressive will of the leadership, often resulting in public divisions. In the case of defending white settlers, disagreements indicated that there was a vocal group that actively sought to maintain certain imperial assets under British control. However, conflicting proposals over British foreign policy did not necessarily indicate a will to maintain empire, rather it reflected Britain's difficulty to adjust to a world where its empire did not guarantee it a strong voice in world affairs. This does not detract from the traditional argument that the British Right, particularly the Conservative Party as the party of empire, adjusted relatively well to the loss of empire given the speed of the decolonisation process. However, this study has acknowledged the difficulties of that transition, highlighting that, despite the progressive leadership of the Tories, imperialist impulses and ideas continued to guide the actions of not only the Right but also wider society as Britain transitioned into a post-imperial nation.

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