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Britain's Post-War Empire and "The UN Containment Policy"

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Abstract

This primary sourced article tries to show that the policy of "UN containment" lay central in the official mind of the architects of the British Empire during the formative and early years of the UN (before the Suez Crisis of 1956). Since the British were far from disposed to hastily relinquish their imperial hegemony, the UN, which they thought could hamper their favoured "orderly decolonisation" policy, had to be managed at all costs. Just as the League of Nations with its Mandate system was used to reinforce the European imperial order, so was the UN colonial system. The international organisation, the British expected, could be a tool for maintaining the legitimacy of colonial rule. Whether or not such intentions proved to be successfully realised in hindsight, this strategy necessitated a close tie with the United States. The onset of the Cold War was apparently advantageous for the British in this respect as it fostered Anglo-American relations though the US anti-colonial stance often frustrated the British.

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0) Introduction

Britain after 1945 pursued a policy of 'orderly decolonisation'. Even at the outset of the post-war era, Churchill's wartime insistence that self-determination be limited to the former Axis territories had to be quietly abandoned. The independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 had its own set of historical contexts from the previous decades. But there can be no doubt that the formation of the United Nations (UN) had a definite influence on the British who realised that under the new hegemony of the United States and the Soviet Union, Britain needed to make a change in their imperial attitude. The main object was now to keep under control the inevitable drive towards self-government, or in some cases independence.[1] Britain adopted, at least publicly and to a degree in substance, a policy of gradual decolonisation leading to transformation of the Empire into the Commonwealth. By definition, this policy did not demand that her colonial possessions should be hastily relinquished, irrespective of their varied utility and circumstance. Arthur Creech Jones, the Colonial Secretary of the Attlee government, spoke of 'the obvious truth that full independence can be achieved only if a territory is economically viable and capable of defending its own interests.'[2] The 'transfer of power' was intended to be as cautious as possible, to ensure that the successor regimes would preserve various substantial connections with Britain, or at least remain well-disposed to the West.[3]

Indeed, at the end of the Second World War, there was not much to suggest that the British Empire would collapse within mere few decades.[4] In the 1940s, Britain acted on the premise that her future would be inextricably linked to her imperial connections.[5] With such thoughts in mind, the British helped create the UN system not as a mechanism to instigate change but to stabilise international order in which they occupied a central position. This article, drawing on the extensive literature on the UN history as well as declassified documents from the national archives of the United Kingdom, tries to illustrate Britain's post-Second World War imperial policy in relation to the UN.

Britain's UN policy has been insufficiently discussed in the scholarship of Britain's end of empire. Only in the last decade did a few historians start to pay serious attention to it. An eminent imperial historian Wm. Roger Louis in his voluminous book on End of Empire published in 2006 highlighted the UN aspect of British policy during the Suez Crisis of 1956.[6] Ronald Hyam in his *Britain's Declining Empire* (2006) and John Kent in his *America, the UN and Decolonisation* (2011) dealt with the UN factor rather in depth in connection to the South African and the Congo questions respectively.[7] However, the period before Suez, on which this article focuses, has been left almost completely in the dark. David Goldsworthy and John Kent may be exceptions but their works are limited in the scope.[8] Louis, who published the path

breaking *Imperialism at Bay* as early as 1977 focusing on the creation of the UN, did not cover the immediate post war period when Britain's "UN containment policy" consolidated.[9]

The following sections try to show that the policy of "UN containment" lay central in the official mind of the architects of the British Empire during the formative and early years of the UN. Since the British were far from disposed to hastily relinquish their imperial hegemony, the UN, which they thought could hamper their favoured "orderly decolonisation" policy, had to be managed at all costs. Just as the League of Nations with its Mandate system was used to reinforce the European imperial order, so was the UN colonial system. The international organisation, the British expected, would be a most convenient tool for maintaining the legitimacy of colonial supremacy. This strategy, as in other foreign policy areas, necessitated a close tie with the United States. The onset of the Cold War was advantageous for the British in this respect as it fostered Anglo-American relations though the US anti-colonial stance often frustrated the British.

1-1) Britain's Early Plans

The British were convinced that there should be some kind of universal world organisation in the post-war world. Above all, they realised that Britain was no longer strong enough to act as a world power on her own even with assistance from the Commonwealth. Anthony Eden, as Foreign Secretary, expressed this view to his Cabinet colleague in 1943: 'We can only hope to play our part either as a European or as a World Power if we ourselves form part of a wider organisation'[10] Moreover, the idea of a universal organisation to promote international security and inter-governmental cooperation remained compelling in the 1940s despite, or rather because the League had foundered in the previous decade. As an Anglo-American answer to Hitler's 'New Order' and Japan's 'Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere', the concept of an international organisation looked even more important in the postwar era.[11] Various alterations were made to the basic model of a world parliament on which the League of Nations was based. Ensuring joint American and Soviet participation was the number one priority for leaders on both sides of the Atlantic. Thus, the Security Council was accorded significant authority and the 'veto' system, in order to satisfy the five great powers.

Initially, however, Britain's own plans for an international colonial system, met with American cold shoulder. Although the British suggested in July 1943 that there should be a "Colonial Declaration", the Americans ignored it and instead presented Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, with a draft of the 'Declaration by the United Nations on International Independence'. Undeterred, the British Colonial Office drew up the so-called Poynton-Robinson

project, which aimed to promote close regional cooperation among the colonial powers in place of the League's Mandates system.[12]

Although the proposal was finally abandoned at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, its main spirits are worth noting here since they survived in the minds of policy makers well into the post-war years. Firstly, the project indicates the shift in British official thinking of this period towards development and international cooperation. Post-war British governments tried to squeeze out some cash to help selected colonies develop, though the sums involved had to be always slight. The idea of cooperation with other colonial powers was pursued, with some limited success, with regard to France into the 1950s.[13]

Secondly, the Poynton-Robinson project reveals the CO's long-standing hostility to the meddlesome concept of international accountability and to the idealistic propensity of the League's Mandates Commission. The idealism of the interwar years had lost conviction as a result of the League's failure. Although the Mandates system met with approval or at least toleration from the majority of British elite, the increased international hostility to colonialism in the 1940s made them more sceptical about international supervision.

The UN colonial system that emerged was a result of compromise. The British, especially after Yalta, had resigned themselves to the Americans being unwilling to listen to their viewpoint. They now adopted a more defensive attitude and concentrated on preventing unfavourable international mechanisms and protocols being established, rather than taking initiatives. Not only the Americans, but the Soviets, the Chinese and the ex-colonial Asian-African states, which though still few in number were becoming vocal, tried to influence the colonial provisions of the UN Charter when the San Francisco Conference was convened in June 1945.[14]

Certainly, the atmosphere of the conference alarmed the British. It was clear that any proposal of the Poynton-Robinson type would not command sympathy internationally. Even before the formal inauguration of the UN, the imagined pressure of the General Assembly was weighing on Stanley when he wrote in a memorandum that 'throwing the whole Colonial Empire open to discussion by this motley assembly' was 'hazardous in the extreme'.[15] Churchill was opposed to any UN interference into the British Empire, exclaiming that Britain should not be 'examined by everyone to see if it is up to their standard.'[16] The perceived shift in international normative standard concerning colonialism was beginning to make a mark on the attitude of the British.

All in all, however, the territorial and strategic ambitions of the great powers led to the UN adopting a scheme similar to the Mandates system. The United States strongly wanted to control the ex-Japanese Pacific islands without appearing annexationist, which they thought

required an international fig leaf of the Mandates kind. On the British side, Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary of the Attlee government, now strove to gain control over strategically important Cyrenaica, the eastern part of Libya, in an attempt to consolidate Britain's position in the Middle East and Mediterranean, which had been destabilised by the upsurge of Arab nationalism, particularly in Egypt.

In a secret Foreign Ministerial meeting in September 1945, Bevin proposed to his Soviet counterpart, Vladimir Molotov, that Britain should give another portion of Libya to Italy, acquiring in exchange a UN trusteeship of Cyrenaica. Bevin expressed fears about 'anything happening in the Mediterranean which might ... cut the Empire in half'. The United States had justified its 'strategic trusteeship' of the Pacific islands by saying that they were 'uninhabited' and refusing to accept it as an act of colonialism. Likewise, Bevin asserted that 'he was not in search of wealth, for the country [=Cyrenaica] was nothing but sand ... and was thinking purely in terms of security.'[17] The watchwords had changed to 'development', 'welfare' and 'security' but Britain and America's conduct was similar to that of the heyday of Empire.

Territorial grabs of this sort were not necessarily supported by a consensus even at the highest level of Britain's decision making. The Prime Minster Clement Attlee was profoundly sceptical about the form of international supervision in which a particular colonial power monopolised the control in the territory. He thought that 'the British Empire can only be defended by its membership of the United Nations Organisation' and wrote in a memorandum that 'after the last war, under the system of mandates, we acquired large territories. The world outside not unnaturally regarded this as a mere expansion of the British Empire. Trusteeship will appear to most people as only old mandates writ large.' According to him, 'if the new organisation is a reality, it does not matter who holds Cyrenaica or Somalia or controls the Suez Canal.'[18] Emphasising the cost of maintaining too many overseas outposts and referring to the sensitive questions of the Kiel Canal, Baltic sea gates, Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, Black Sea Straights and Singapore, he argued that 'the only realistic policy is that of placing all these strategic territories under international control, not the control of one or two powers, but of the United Nations'.[19] Similarly Lord Halifax, Britain's ambassador to the United States, replied to the US Secretary of State James Byrnes that the American request for Britain to retain two specific air bases in India after the envisaged independence of the country, so that the United States could use them any time, would meet with 'great difficulty' in the UK, and would feel 'that proper authority United Nations organisation ought in due course to express its interest in these bases...'[20]

On the other hand, Churchill, now out of power but a staunch believer in the Atlantic alliance, felt that Britain should not surrender to the UN important imperial assets, which could

instead be used to help the Anglo-American global policing. He wrote to Bevin in November 1945 that 'the fact that the British Commonwealth and the United States were for strategic purposes one organism would mean that we could build up the United Nations organization around us and above us with great speed and success', characteristically adding 'whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder'.[21]

Such divisions, even among Britain's most senior leaders, only meant that the question of international supervision would lead to a further compromise. The UN Trusteeship system, which turned out to be little different from the Mandates system, was not formally inaugurated until March 1947, when the first meeting of the Trusteeship Council was held.[22] Most of the existing interpretations overestimate the importance of a few minor changes that were made to the Mandates system. The truth is that the founding members of the UN failed to find any system better suited to the new reality and were able to agree only on a continuation of the existing arrangement.

1-2) Trusteeship System

What I have so far rather imprecisely called 'the UN colonial system' consisted of the UN Trusteeship system and the vague yet broad UN Charter provisions referring to the bulk of the vast colonial territories, namely, the 'non-self-governing territories' in the UN terminology. The Trusteeship system was stipulated in Chapter XII and XIII of the UN Charter, and the NSGTs provisions in Chapter XI, 'the Declaration regarding non-self-governing territories'.

It was fortuitous for the British that the Trusteeship system which emerged was one they could manage. Most importantly, the British succeeded in limiting the system's territorial scope to the very minimum. In Chapter XII it was laid down, in accordance with the agreement reached at Yalta between Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union, that the Trusteeship territories would comprise (a) Existing Mandates of the League of Nations, (b) Territory to be detached from the Axis powers, and (c) Any other territory that may voluntarily be placed under trusteeship. In practice, this definition exempted the bulk of the British Empire from the new system.[23] Britain placed only three African territories under the Trusteeship system: Tanganyika, Togoland and the British Cameroon, that is to say, the former League B Mandates.[24]

As for the wording of the Chapter XI, it is often noted that the word 'independence' appeared in the text as a goal of the Trusteeship. This word was to prove politically important when UN anti-colonialism became stronger during the 1950s. It is, however, often forgotten that the expression 'independent nations' also occurred in the League's Covenant (Article 22-4) in relation to the former Turkish A Mandates, and that the word 'independence' in Chapter XII was

immediately preceded by the phrase 'self-government or'. When Andrew Cohen published a book in the late 1950s to defend the UK's increasingly unpopular colonial policy, he nostalgically wrote that 'the United Nations Trusteeship Agreements, negotiated in a most constructive period after the Second World War, contain firm obligations on administering powers to promote the political, economic, social and educational advance of the Territories and their people.'[25] Despite Cohen's claims about colonial development, the Charter itself spoke little of such positive obligations; Of eleven articles that constitute Chapter XII, only one (Article 76) concerns the administration of the territories themselves. And apart from the inclusion of the word 'independence', this article itself was similar to the vague provisions on the NSGTs. The Chapter XII's somewhat clumsy lengthiness cannot be automatically regarded as evidence of the UN taking colonial matters more seriously than the League had. The rest of Chapter XII was devoted to the circumspectly detailed definition of what could constitute the Trust territory and of the additional stipulations regarding 'strategic trusteeship', which were wholly of American origin.

Under Chapter XIII, the Trusteeship Council was set up to supervise the Trust territories. Here, too, the British were relieved to have a variety of safeguards against the Council becoming too critical of the colonial powers. Firstly, the composition of the Trusteeship Council was made up in such a way that there was always a strict parity of membership between those states which administered Trust territories and those did not. This was in sharp contrast with the General Assembly, in which colonial powers now formed only a small minority, thus making the Trusteeship Council disproportionately in favour of the colonial powers.[26] The League's Mandates Commission was a body of private experts on colonial affairs who were not expected to speak on behalf of particular governments. In this sense, the Trusteeship Council was certainly upgraded to being one of the main organs of the UN system, but the parity principle ensured that the colonial powers were not likely to be subject to unduly harsh attack from the Council at large; in those days, the meticulous criticism of reformist Lugard still needled the Colonial Office official mind.[27]

Secondly, the United States, having duly acquired the former Japanese Mandated islands as a 'strategic Trusteeship', joined the Council as an administrating power. The United States was in practice to cast her vote mostly with the other colonial powers and exert diplomatic influence over the other Council members. Thirdly, the competence of the Trusteeship Council was carefully circumscribed.Although the Trusteeship Council was accorded the power to receive petitions from and send visiting missions to the Trusteeship territories, one of the initial propositions that periodic visiting missions be sent to the Trusteeship territories *at the Council's own will* was fiercely opposed by the British, and was finally made conditional on the consent of

the administrating power concerned.[28] After all, as an ex-Foreign Office official later claimed that Britain was even able to create an air of 'mutual cooperation' with the UN at the Trusteeship Council.[29]

1-3) Non-Self-Governing Territories

The creation of the new category of the NSGTs proved to be more significant than the Trusteeship system in the context of the history of decolonisation. Here, too, the League's Covenant had already included in Article 23 a reference to the non-Mandates territories: the article required of the member states to ensure 'just treatment of native inhabitants of territories' belonging to colonial powers. But the inclusion in the UN Charter of a separate Chapter that concerned the colonial territories outside the formal international supervision gave strong ammunition to anti-colonialists at the UN who, referring to this Chapter claimed that all colonies should come more tightly under UN authority. By registering at the UN as many as forty-two NSGTs, consisting the bulk of the British Empire, Britain now formally accepted, at least in the eyes of international observers, that her colonial dependencies had a different international legal status from the metropolitan territory. As an anti-colonial writer, El-Ayouty, asserts, the 'Declaration regarding non-self-governing territories signalled the first admission that international concern extended far beyond the scope of the Trusteeship system.'[30]

Nonetheless, it would be unhistorical to take a determinist view about this obscure Chapter on the NSGTs. Rather than the language of the UN Charter itself, it was the changing *political* balance after 1945 between anti-colonialists and the colonial powers that ultimately made the 'Declaration' historically significant. Had Britain and the other colonial powers retained after 1945 the same level of political clout inside the UN that they had possessed during the organisation's formative years, Chapter XI would probably have remained harmless or even helpful to Britain's imperial blueprint. Precisely because the British wanted to avoid a scenario in which the UN Charter provoked difficulties at the UN and elsewhere, they made the utmost efforts to restrict its terms of reference.

When the idea of drafting a separate Chapter regarding the colonial territories outside the Trusteeship system was first aired by the American State Department during the war in 1943, the British immediately took a highly guarded stance. Hilton Poynton, then one of the central figures in the British Colonial Office dealing with the Anglo-American negotiations over the future of the colonial world, wrote in a 1944 memorandum that 'A British Colony is every bit as much British territory as the United Kingdom itself ... the dependent status of these territories does not of itself afford any grounds for international supervision of their affairs'.[31] Chapter XI

was, therefore, a great setback for the British. In order to ensure American participation in the UN, the British had to satisfy the United States' anti-colonial sentiment and pretention.

Nonetheless, the British resistance was not futile. Most important, Britain managed to exclude the word 'independence' from Chapter XI in spite of repeated pleas for its inclusion from a number of delegations at San Francisco. They finally prevailed in their argument that the inscription in the UN Charter of this highly contentious word would incite local agitation, cause instability and hamper development in the colonies. A US delegate in San Francisco ruefully wrote: '[in the Chapter XI] independence was not mentioned as a goal, for the simple reason that no colonial power except the United States looks upon it as a normal and natural outcome of colonial status. It must be remembered that the Conference was a conference of governments and not of dependent peoples'.[32]

Indeed, the text of Chapter XI was reassuringly conventional from the British viewpoint, peppered as it was with typical British imperial phraseology, such as 'sacred trust' and 'protection against abuse', and 'the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount'. These terms are to be found in Article 22-1 of the League's Covenant and in the 'native paramountcy' doctrine declared in 1923 to suppress the disturbing self-assertions of the settlers in Africa. The emphases of Chapter XI were on 'development' and 'cooperation' 'with international bodies' and an 'progressive' development towards 'self-government'. As Poynton later proudly recalled, the finalised Chapter XI was 'based largely on existing British colonial policy' and 'it is noteworthy that the world "independence" nowhere occurs in this Chapter.'[33] The gradualist approach so evident in the Chapter XI bears out his remark.

As it turned out, Article 73(e) of Chapter XI was soon to become one of the major points of contention between the colonial powers and the anti-colonialists at the UN. It stated that colonial powers should 'transmit regularly to the Secretary General for information purposes, subject to such limitation as security and constitutional consideration may require, statistical and other information of a technical nature relating to economic, social, and educational conditions in the territories.' This was indeed the only specific obligation required of the colonial powers regarding the NSGTs. And it must be remembered that the submission of political information was specifically excluded. It would have been almost impossible for anyone in 1945 to imagine that such innocuous-looking language could be employed to put the ailing British Empire in the dock during the last phase of decolonisation. In the event, however, 'submission of information' was interpreted by the majority of UN members as an admission of international accountability for colonial policy. Then, the pressure mounted to provide *political information*, namely concrete evidence of progress towards self-government. The British finally succumbed to this demand in

1961, while claiming that their concession was voluntary, and that nothing had changed in their interpretation of the Chapter. Finally, the objective of independence was encoded in the historic General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV), adopted by an overwhelming majority in December 1960, which the British abstained from but were in practice obliged to follow as a result of mounting political pressure.

1-4) Human Rights

Here, one important aspect must be mentioned: human rights. The notion of human rights was conspicuously introduced for the first time in the UN Charter, and in a way connected to the colonial problem. This was clear in Article One of the UN Charter. Although the first clause of Article one was about the UN's central concern, the maintenance of international peace and security, the second clause established 'the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples', and the third clause emphasised the UN's commitment to 'promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion'. The links between self-determination and human rights, as well as the sensitive question of race, were to prove highly disruptive to European imperial assumptions. The UN was to establish internationally the interpretation that these values and principles were inseparable and that the right of self-determination was one of the main elements of human rights. Article 76 of the Chapter XII on Trusteeship system, the only place in the UN Charter where the word 'independence' occurred, included the phrase 'respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all', implying that independence was an expression of human rights.

Colonial problems were to be connected to the principles of human rights. While the Cold War intensified in the second half of the 1940s, the Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948. The colonial powers had increasing difficulty in barring UN intervention into their colonial problems, when these problems could be judged by the UN as matters pertaining to human rights.

Yet, at the time the UN Charter was signed, the lofty principles of Article One seemed general and long-term. If the practical application of self-determination to individual cases were left at the discretion of the colonial powers, the British were able to feel that the high-sounding principles would not greatly affect the actual implementation of imperial policy.

What is striking, then, is the British will and ability to institutionalise Britain's own preferred version of colonialism in 1945. It is difficult to quantify Britain's strength in the 1940s. Her relative enfeeblement throughout the twentieth century was a slow and multi-dimensional

process. Some doubted that her decline would persist and no-one could agree about how long it would take, even if they thought the downturn was irreversible. Some aspects of British power seemed to have lasted better than others. In the newly-created UN, Britain's diplomatic influence was still considerable. This can be seen by the fact that the General Assembly approved in 1946 by a large majority the Trusteeship agreements with Britain of the token, minimum offerings of three old African Mandates. The General Assembly then had 'the realisation that .... failure to approve the trusteeship agreements would make it impossible to set up the Trusteeship Council and bring the trusteeship system into operation.'[34] The Trusteeship system itself could not be launched without Britain's willingness. Moreover, the anti-colonialists in the UN still lacked numbers and political sway. Initially, twelve Afro-Asian states, out of a total of fifty-one, were UN members. The League had begun with five Afro-Asian members and accepted six more by the outbreak of the Second World War. Even though the British anticipated a general increase in the number of ex-colonial states, they were determined to keep the change within bounds and to ensure that such new states would be as pro-British and pro-West as possible.

1-5) Discussion

The American anti-colonial passion waned during the closing stages of the war, allowing the British to exert influence in the formation of the UN Charter. The American preoccupation in securing 'strategic trusteeship' was of particular importance in this process. Rather than in the specific language of the UN Charter, the role of the United States must be found in the long term implications of the broad framework the UN adopted under US influence in the colonial sphere, especially the renewed concept of international supervision of colonies and the inclusion of Chapter XI. Certainly, the subscription of the American public to the principle of self-determination had a broad historical impact on the end of the British Empire. The British were put on the defensive and strove to make more plausible gestures towards colonial welfare, development and self-government. As we shall see below, the American position fluctuated between support for their Atlantic allies and the newly-emerging Third World in the context of the Cold War. Although the Americans did not always side with the anti-colonial camp, however, the British were seriously affected even by their un-cooperation and occasional hostility.

Before proceeding to the next chapter, let us sum up our main points as follows; firstly, UN competence in the colonial sphere was circumscribed by the distinction of the Trusteeship territories from the NSGTs. Although accountability and supervision was formally established concerning the Trusteeship territories, they were limited in territorial scope, and the Trusteeship

Council was somewhat disarmed by the parity principle and by its restricted terms of reference.

Secondly, as to the NSGTs, all the colonial powers, spearheaded by Britain, regarded the territories as falling strictly within their domestic jurisdiction and insisted that UN interference into such territories would violate Article 2(7) of the UN Charter, which stated that 'nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.' Although a limited amount of information was provided to the UN 'for information purposes', the colonial powers resisted the increasing pressure from the anti-colonial camp in the UN to be more accountable for the vast NSGTs.

2-1) The UN Containment Policy

There were two prerequisites of an orderly decolonisation. Firstly, the international legitimacy of colonial rule could never be too seriously questioned, since the policy of gradual decolonisation required a long period of transition before the necessary changes would be completed. Certainly, the British succeeded in institutionalising their preferred language in the colonial provisions of the UN Charter. Nowhere in the Charter was colonialism made illegal or illegitimate. Nonetheless, any erosion of the international legitimacy of colonialism would be immeasurably damaging to the maintenance of British authority and initiative at domestic, colonial and international levels.

Secondly, if the UN did become unsympathetic to colonialism, which it soon seemed to do, its interference into Britain's individual colonies had by all means to be resisted. If UN intervention should occur in whatever form, the UN might well be considered a higher authority than the British government, at least by Britain's opponents and probably by international onlookers. Even if the international legitimacy of colonialism had been more or less maintained, any such UN intervention could be highly detrimental to the decolonisation process in individual colonial territories. There was no knowing how UN intervention might would undermine British efforts to control the pace and manner of decolonisation, a task already proving far from easy. Here, too, the British managed to limit the institutional competence of the main organs of the UN dealing with colonial matters. The Trusteeship territories aside, Britain and the other colonial powers maintained that the UN had no competence to deal with the NSGTs since the territories were strictly within the domestic jurisdiction of the metropolitan powers under Article 2(7) of the UN Charter.

These were the two main components in what can be called as Britain's 'strategy of UN containment'. This strategy was, by its very nature, something that could never have been

openly declared as an official policy. The legal argument about Article 2(7) was often put forward publicly as a reason for rejecting UN intervention, but the British were increasingly aware that this argument was also unpopular in many quarters. Britain had a basic interest in maintaining her all-important position as one of the five privileged members of the UN in possession of a permanent seat at the Security Council. Such a central position in international politics was something the British had taken for granted since the days of the League and their confidence had been reinforced by their victory in the Second World War. Britain's relations with the UN, therefore, must never appear manifestly divergent and confrontational if she was to retain her prestige as a leading world power.[35]

Despite appearances to the contrary, a policy of UN containment clearly existed and was implemented with great determination and consistency. Even as early as 1946, when post-war euphoria and optimism about the new world organisation was still widespread, the British government was averse to the UN involving itself in India. In the tumultuous run-up to the decolonisation of the subcontinent, Bevin was presented with a suggestion that Britain should refer the Indian question to the UN, which he resolutely rejected. He was anxious not to give the Americans the impression that 'we no longer had the means to face our responsibilities'. If the UN was asked to restore order in India, he further maintained, 'the Soviet Union would be the only country, which would be both ready and able to supply the necessary number of troops. The result of such an appeal might therefore amount in practice to handing over the empire of India to the Soviet Union.'[36] The British dislike of any recourse to the UN in colonial matters had a variety of justifications but essentially stemmed from Britain's ambition to remain a world power. Like Attlee, Bevin publicly praised the UN and declared in his election campaign, 'I stand for the World Security Organisation, to prevent any more of these terrible wars.'[37] Yet as mentioned earlier, he was keen on using the UN Trusteeship scheme to prop up the British Empire in the Middle East.

The UN system's broad framework having been established in the form of the Charter provisions, the front line of defence of colonialism now moved to the interpretation and actual implementation of the system. Debates in the UN were more often than not conducted in an ostensibly legalistic manner, but the conflict over colonial issues were essentially political. Whether the anti-colonialists at the UN would succeed in any practical augmentation of UN competence in colonial affairs depended firstly on the political power balance among the member states, and secondly on how that power equilibrium would be affected by events as they unfolded, and thirdly on how those events were to be interpreted. In this sense, the British were well aware that the most problematic organ from the viewpoint of carrying out their own preferred colonial policy was not the Trusteeship Council but the General Assembly.

The General Assembly was initially composed of fifty-one states, namely the original UN members, of which all but a small minority of European states with colonial possessions were by varied modes and degrees unsympathetic to colonialism. Although violent anti-colonial diatribes mainly came from the ex-colonial world and the Communist countries, the British were already exposed at San Francisco Conference to the high-pitched oratory, which duly went into record, made by such supposedly minor states as Guatemala and Argentina, advancing their claims to British Honduras and the Falkland Islands respectively.[38] Having made various concessions to the British in the drafting process of the UN Charter, the Americans nevertheless continued to indulge in their anti-colonial rhetoric, much to Britain's annoyance: John Foster Dulles, who had served as an adviser to the US delegation at the San Francisco Conference, typically told the General Assembly in 1947 that 'the colonial system is obsolete and should be done away with as soon as possible'.[39] The same year saw the General Assembly debate and narrowly defeat by a margin of one vote a motion requesting the colonial powers to turn all the NSGTs into Trust territories.[40] Moreover, the onset of the Cold War unleashed an all-out anti-imperialism propaganda from the Communist bloc. The British were thus made aware that the international climate had changed from the interwar years when such anti-imperial harangues were virtually unheard-of at the League. The General Assembly possessed only recommendatory power, unlike the Security Council, which could exert 'mandatory' authority under Chapter VII. Yet those states dissatisfied with the existing arrangements seized every opportunity to expand UN competence in colonial matters.

The first significant anti-colonial move was the setting up of the so-called Committee of Information on the NSGTs. At the first session of the General Assembly in 1946, a resolution was adopted in which the Assembly drew attention to the fact that the obligations accepted under Chapter XI were 'already in full force', and requested the Secretary General to include in his report on the work of the UN a summary of the information transmitted to the Secretary General under Article 73(e) by the powers administrating the NSGTs. The Committee of Information was accordingly set up in 1947, and empowered to examine the information and submit reports for the consideration of the General Assembly. This was an attempt by early anti-colonialists at the UN to strengthen their claim that the colonial powers had already acknowledged the principle and the practice of international accountability for their colonial policy. Nevertheless, the British were not overly concerned about this obscure Committee. The political and numerical power balance of the General Assembly in the late 1940s was still such that the new Committee had to follow the precedent of the Trusteeship Council, because of the strict numerical parity in membership between administrating and non-administrating powers. Initially, the Committee was set up only on an *ad hoc*, one-year basis. In 1949, the Committee's terms of reference were

somewhat expanded and renewed for a three-year period. Only in 1952 was the Committee of Information finally made more or less permanent.[41]

2-2) The Middle East and South Africa

In the meantime, the General Assembly obliged the British to modify their imperial strategy in the Middle East, thwarting their intention of securing Cyrenaica as a UN Trust territory under UK administration. The British wanted to use this landmass in eastern Libya as the alternative military base to the ever troubled Suez Canal area. Britain's postwar imperial strategy was centred on the Middle East and the plan to set up a military reserve in Cyrenaica was one of its key elements. Bevin had been conducting an extremely laborious and inconclusive negotiations over the question of former Italian colonies with the various parties concerned, such as the Soviets, French, Italians, Americans and the local rulers since 1945.[42] To the utmost dismay of the Foreign Secretary, however, in May 1949 the General Assembly finally defeated, though again by the narrow margin of only one vote, the so-called 'Bevin-Sforza plan', which envisaged the partition of the territory into three UN Trust territories, administered by Britain, France and Italy respectively. The background to the insufficient support was the plan's transparent imperial ambition and the strong hostility of the Arabs and Africans to the idea of having the Italians once again in Africa.[43]

Had Britain succeeded in acquiring a UN strategic trusteeship in Cyrenaica, she might well have been able to retreat from the Suez base earlier and less quarrelsomely than she actually did. The whole Suez irritation and debacle, which did such a serious damage to the British Empire might have been averted. The British now had to change tactics, after further twists and turns finally sponsoring the Libyan independence in 1951. This act of convenience secured necessary military facilities for the use of Britain and the United States. The Anglo-Saxon powers were also able to hail the 'birth of a new nation' as a manifestation of their liberal-mindedness and of the efficacy of the UN.[44] In the eyes of many, however, Libya's sudden independence made a mockery of the usual British argument that the independence of backward regions had to wait until the 'natives' had been thoroughly trained and made fully prepared for it.

During the early years of the UN, the most influential non-white member state was India. Although her independence was only realised in 1947, India was admitted to the UN as an original member in 1945, an invitation that represented Britain's desire to appease one of her most resourceful yet difficult allies in the Second World War. No sooner had the postwar era started than India assumed leadership among the diplomatically inexperienced anti-colonial

Arab-Asian states in the UN. By 1953, a Foreign Office official was complaining:

> '[India] has had so much intimate experience of our susceptibilities on Colonial issues that she is able to put a finger on our weak spots with unerring accuracy. It is safe to say that if India can be dissuaded from initiating or supporting a particular anti-Colonial manoeuvre, her friends in the Arab/Asian bloc are either so clumsy or so lacking in genuine concern with Colonial issues that we should probably have no difficulty in killing that manoeuvre in the lobby.'[45]

India brought to the UN some of the most awkward colonial issues in the early years of the UN. She initiated an attack on South African racialist policy in 1947 by referring to the General Assembly the question of the racial discrimination against Indians in South Africa, the first UN item of clearly anti-colonial character. When the government of the Union of South Africa formally consolidated its *apartheid* policy after 1948, India and other anti-colonial nations succeeded in inscribing the question at the General Assembly in 1952. Together with the deadlocked question of South West Africa, where the Union government adamantly refused to upgrade the territory from the status of a League's C mandate to that of a UN Trusteeship, the three South African items were to provoke acrimonious debates at the UN every year from 1952 onwards.

Britain's dilemma concerning Article 2(7) began with these ominous South African items. Indeed, just as the Boer War marked Britain's hegemonic zenith and the beginning of her long-term imperial decline, so the South African impasse at the UN began causing trouble soon after the Allies' victory, and was to drag down the British Empire for the second time. The South Africans took a highly confrontational stance at the UN maintaining that any attempt to discuss *apartheid* and the condition of the South African Indians would violate Article 2(7) of the UN Charter, which prohibited the organisation from interference in the domestic affairs of its member states. Though unsympathetic to *apartheid* itself, the British sided with the South Africans in the UN for a number of reasons. South Africa was one of the key white-run Commonwealth countries and was by far Britain's most important trading partner in Africa. Britain was dependent on South Africa's mineral resources and the Cape route was of great strategic importance in the context of imperial defence and the Cold War.

Yet it must be said that Britain's stance towards the South African items at the UN was principally determined by her overriding interest in maintaining her consistent legal position at the UN on the domestic jurisdiction principle. Once Britain had allowed the UN to enter into discussion on South African questions, she feared she would find it impossible to oppose UN interference in any of the other territories of the British Empire.[46] Britain's aversion to accepting international accountability and UN intervention in colonial matters was shared by most of the

other colonial powers such as France, Belgium, Australia and New Zealand (and Portugal and Spain after they were admitted to the UN in 1955). The objections on the ground of Article 2(7) was shared by 'progressive' and 'traditional' colonial powers. Although New Zealand, for example, can be considered to have pursued a fairly enlightened colonial policy, it probably made more of the domestic jurisdiction principle than any of the other powers because of her general cautiousness in international affairs as a small power.[47] These colonial powers formed, as it were, the 'domestic jurisdiction group' within the UN and more often than not voted *en bloc*.

The 'domestic jurisdiction group' firmly maintained that it was obvious that Article 2(7) applied to matters within the NSGTs. This interpretation, however, became gradually less easy to assert in some cases, as the principle of human rights developed and expanded in the early postwar years. The West's desire in the Cold War to gain moral high ground over the Soviet world encouraged this trend, first culminating in the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the General Assembly in 1948. Although specific reference to the principle of self-determination was carefully avoided in the Declaration, Article 21(3) of the Declaration included the words: 'The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government...'.

As a result of the persistent activities of the anti-colonial groups in the UN, in 1952 the General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions which appeared to expand the interpretation of Chapter XI. Analysing various related General Assembly resolutions, El-Ayouty concludes that 'the year 1952 marked a turning point in the success of Afro-Asian effort to proclaim self-determination as a right to be exercised by all peoples deprived thus far of it.'[48] Although many of the colonial powers disliked the direction in which the General Assembly appeared to be moving, the need to uphold the UN in wider international affairs, particularly in the context of the Cold War, compelled them to acquiesce in the shift. In their arguments against the Soviets at the UN, some Foreign Office officials expressed the view that Britain had already acknowledged that human rights had an international character.[49] Certainly, human rights were recognised by the British as the thin end of a wedge that could eventually dislodge Britain's' colonial empire.

Nonetheless, when the previously ad-hoc Committee of Information became semi-permanent in 1952, only Belgium dared to walk out of the Committee, protesting that the body's very existence was contrary to the UN Charter.[50] As David Goldsworthy writes: 'Up to the mid-1950s, Britain was usually able to succeed tactically by mustering the requisite numbers [in the Trusteeship Council, the Committed of Information and the General Assembly, let alone the Security Council where she had the veto].'[51] Under the balance still more or less favourable to the West and the Europeans, Britain's sensitive colonial problems, such as the repression of the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya, the counter-insurgency in Malaya, and the grievances of the vast

black majority against the formation of the white-run Central African Federation in 1953, made no headway in to the formal UN agenda.

2-3) The United States

After the Second World War, the relationship with the United States was central in Britain's foreign policy; and it was becoming more and more so in the 1950s. The American anti-colonial discourse, though often no more than rhetoric, was in a sense more problematic than the more intense anti-colonialism of smaller nations, for the cardinal importance to Britain of Anglo-American relations and US influence over the rest of the world, made it impossible to ignore American criticism. Goldsworthy is fully justified in asserting that 'American anti-colonialism mattered more than that of any other nation.'[52] To be sure, mounting Cold War tension made the Americans more amenable towards the British argument that European imperial outposts in key positions around the world formed a useful bulwark against Communist. At the UN, the Americans now tended to refrain from being too outspoken about 'British imperialism'. Yet, the Anglo-American difference over colonialism did not narrow as much as the British had hoped.[53]

At times, the United States acted unilaterally and unpredictably when it came to questions that critically affected the interest of European empires. The first important occasion of this was over Palestine. While realising 'the difficulty of conducting imperial policies in the UN context' the Labour government finally threw Palestine, so coveted by Lloyd George a few decades before, into the lap of the UN in 1947. Although some key officials from the US State Department initially gave the British a contrary impression, the American President Harry S. Truman soon overrode the State Department and 'inaugurated a foreign policy line which entailed pillorying the British, not least in the United Nations for an inhumane attitude to Jewish refugees...'[54] The American administration was swayed by the huge pressure from Jews in the United States and elsewhere. It must be remembered that some Commonwealth countries such as Canada, New Zealand and South Africa supported the Zionists. When the UN voted for partition in November 1947, a pro-Arab representative at the UN believed that Costa Rican vote have been bought for 75,000 dollars. Bernard Baruch, the US politician who made his name by proposing a nuclear control plan at the UN in 1946, threatened China and France with a possible reduction of US economic aid to them if they failed to vote in line with the US on Israel. The American public opinion turned so decisively against the British after the US media vividly reported the British treatment of a certain group of Jewish refugees, who had been denied landing in Haifa and forced to return to Marseilles. Once the UN voted for partition, the Truman

administration strongly sponsored the creation of Israel as the Americans made much of making a 'success' of the UN.[55] Bevin had hoped to give the Americans an 'object lesson' in the essential correctness of British colonial judgements by damping the most intractable problem into the lap of the UN, where the Americans could not escape from assuming leadership. His attempt, however, completely backfired.

From the perspective of the European colonial powers, the Americans were responsible for the liquidation of the Dutch Empire, and also, to a lesser extent, that of the French. The Truman administration was on balance supportive, mainly because of Cold War strategic considerations, of the Europeans trying to regain a foothold in their revolt-stricken imperial estates.[56] But when the matters came under a broad international spotlight, especially at the UN, America turned her back. In December 1948, as US and international public criticism of the Dutch mounted, the Americans reversed its neutral position on the Netherlands' efforts to restore Indonesia. They now backed a Security Council resolution condemning the second Dutch 'police action' (which was making a military success) and demanding the release of the Indonesian nationalist leaders. A UN scholar, Evan Luard, has stressed the UN role in this episode observing that the UN was able to wield influence 'partly because of its ability to appear, rightly or wrongly, as the focus of world opinion generally.'[57] As for the French Empire, the American attitude was ambivalent, as they appreciated the strategic importance of the French colonies in Indochina and North Africa. Nevertheless, the Americans were always concerned with the UN and exerted enormous pressure on the French to take a more progressive-looking attitude in their dependencies, in return for the US blocking the UN anti-colonialists' moves to place French colonial issues, and especially Tunisia and Morocco, under international scrutiny.[58] In 1952, a private secretary to the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, resentfully noted: 'The Americans not backing us anywhere, In fact, having destroyed the Dutch empire, the United States are now engaged in undermining the French and British empires as hard as they can.'[59]

Although the Americans were in private quite helpful to the British, their official attitude towards colonial items at the UN underwent a significant shift around 1954. The effect of the Cold War détente after Stalin's death in 1953, and the emergence of the Third World as a new political bloc in world politics, which was to be demonstrated in the Bandung Conference in 1955, both affected dynamics at the UN. In 1954, after a British Minister inadvertently indicated in the House of Commons that full rights of self-determination could 'never' be granted to Cyprus, the outraged Greek government brought the Cyprus issue to the UN in the hope of gathering international sympathy for its desire to incorporate the island. Despite a desperate plea from Churchill, now once again the British Prime Minister, the United States switched her vote from a no to abstention, and the question of Cyprus was duly inscribed in the formal UN

agenda.[60] This issue, which may appear slight and technical, in fact seriously affected the British position at the UN.

As I mentioned in relation to the South African question, Britain's objection to UN intervention in colonial matters fundamentally rested on interpretation of Article 2(7) of the UN Charter. The British, having failed to persuade the Americans to block the inscription of the issue, now stressed the international rather than colonial character of the matter on the ground that the issue involved both Greece and Turkey. The British made every effort at the UN to ensure that the matter was discussed in the First Committee of the General Assembly, which dealt with political issues, and not in the Fourth Committee, which concerned colonial matters.[61] According to Harold Macmillan, then the Chancellor of Exchequer, '[though Britain opposed the inscription of the Cyprus question on the domestic jurisdiction grounds,] we needed the support and sympathy of the people and Government of the United States...' Britain then proposed a tripartite negotiation among the three powers concerned. Macmillan wrote that 'naturally the idea of a conference at which the future of a British colony would be discussed with two neighbouring powers raised many doubts. This might prove a dangerous precedent and make it difficult to resist pressure to submit other colonial problems to a similar procedure.'[62] Clearly, the UN was beginning to pose a concrete obstacle to Britain's policy of orderly decolonisation.

It must be added that the Americans also showed occasional bursts of hostility to the British when it came to the question of 'America's backyard'. When Guatemala's reform-minded government stood on the verge of collapse owing to subversion covertly supported by the United States, the British supported Guatemala's appeal to the Security Council. The then President, Dwight Eisenhower, exclaimed:

> '[We should] use the veto [in the Security Council] and show the British that they have no right to stick their nose into matters which concern this hemisphere entirely. The British expect us to give them a free ride and side with them on Cypress [*sic*.] and yet they won't even support us on Guatemala let's give them a lesson'.[63]

Dulles, now the Secretary of State, similarly told the US representative to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge, to 'let the British know that if they took an independent line backing the Guatemalan move in this matter, it would mean we would feel entirely free without regard to their position in relation to any such matters as any of their colonial problems in Egypt, Cyprus [*sic*.], etc.'[64]

Now that both superpowers, and indeed Britain herself, were trying to extend their influence over the emerging Third World, it was all the more difficult for the Americans to appear to be siding with 'colonialist' European powers, especially at such an open forum as the UN. With the prospect of the United States losing an 'automatic majority' loomed large as UN

membership gradually increased, the Americans had a greater need to secure their majority in the General Assembly. In their effort to woo the Third World, the Americans now had to manage the UN at the expense of their European allies when it came to colonial issues. The 'Cold War effect', which the British enjoyed temporarily between 1947 and 1954, was rapidly diminishing.

2-4) International Pressure

The UN membership increased only by ten in the second half of the 1940s and no new admission was granted between 1951 and 1954. Nevertheless, except for Iceland, Sweden and Israel, the other seven new members were from Arab-Asian world and largely behaved in an anti-colonial manner. Also, the two European countries, especially Sweden, were not always easily persuaded to support what they tended to view as 'reactionary colonialism'. From the British viewpoint, the rise of multilateralism meant that by the early 1950s Britain was enmeshed in what Eden called 'the alarming growth of international committees and commissions of every sort and kind', such as the UN and its specialist agencies, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), the Council of Europe and others.[65] Save in the case of European integration, Britain had played a highly active role in organising all these international groupings. Britain's commitment to internationalism, itself stemming from the realisation that Britain could not act alone as a world power, had the paradoxical effect of making more difficult her defence of colonialism at the UN.

More than ever now, the British had come to realise the importance of the public relations of Empire. This is evident in the Colonial Office papers dealing with overall colonial policy. A CO official observed that:

> 'the important ways in which we should deal with nationalism, both inside and outside the Colonial sphere, are those which depend on publicity and propaganda, especially in the United States and the United Nations, and not by thinking in Edwardian terms of the use of military and economic power which we no longer possess.'[66]

This is a clear confession by a government insider of the extent to which Britain's policy of 'orderly decolonisation' was heavily dependent on how she presented herself to the international public.

Eden later described the six years during which Lennox-Boyd served as Colonial Secretary (1953-1959) as a 'period of endless harassment' against Britain's colonial policy.[67] Even with regards to the Trusteeship territories, the British confronted increasing difficulties at the UN as the 1950s progressed. Tanganyika's nationalist leader, Julius Nyerere, was able to use

the territory's international status to keep his otherwise out-of-the-way African country under the world's scrutiny and bring himself to the attention of his fellow Tanganyikans. The old-fashioned Governor of Tanganyika, Edward Twining, referred to the quiet sage, ostensibly pretending to be nonchalant, as 'a bit of a trouble maker'.[68] The UN conducted five Visiting Missions to Tanganyika between 1948 and 1960, provoking a British colonial administrator to dismiss the UN as '58 back-seat-drivers'. To the exasperation of the British, the 1954 Visiting Mission pressed, under the strong influence of the American member Mason Sears, for a timetable for independence within twenty five years. The British called the UN report 'Sears report' and particularly resented the fact that he handed it to the press, which predictably excoriated the colonial administration, before the UK government was asked its opinion about it.[69] When they grudgingly decided the next year to take some steps towards elections in the territory, they announced it in New York before they did so in Tanganyika herself.[70] What the British preferred to call 'steady progress towards self-government' had now been reduced to a mere propaganda contest.

In British Togoland and a neighbouring French Togoland, the Ewe 'unificationists' made tactful use of the UN to frustrate the British intention of 'integrating' British Togoland with the neighbouring Gold Coast and British Cameroon with Nigeria. The Ewe nationalism affected the French part of the UN trusteeship, and both European countries had to fight a draining defensive battle at the UN against international criticism for trying to merge UN Trust territories into 'mere' colonies of the Gold Coast and Nigeria.[71] Poynton at one point considered the danger of a concerted move by anti-colonial states in the UN in favour of an international, i.e. UN administration for Togoland. In the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly, and to lesser extent in the Trusteeship Council, the 'unificationists' were influential. The Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox Boyd said:

> 'we cannot (repeat cannot) ignore United Nations aspect of this matter, however much we may dislike it. Consequences of conflict with the United Nations, or of United Nation's refusal to agree to a plebiscite at all at this stage, would in my view be gravely detrimental to Gold Coast interest. I am sure, therefore, that we must all strive together for a solution which is fair, which will be acceptable to the United Nations, and which will offer best prospect of integration of whole of British Togoland and with Gold Coast. These considerations are not (repeat not) easy to reconcile.'[72]

John Kent points out that 'it was only the defection of India that paved the way for the eventual acceptance of the integration of British Togo in the Gold Coast'. Contrary to the common notion that British action had been determined by a surge of nationalism, Kent concludes that 'it was international considerations not reactions to "nationalism", that conditioned the nature and timing

of British initiatives in Togo'.[73]

2-5) Discussion

As we have seen, the British had made sure in 1945 that the UN colonial system should not cause much embarrassment to colonial powers. And their effort to resist international pressure in colonial matters remained among the top priorities in their foreign policy.

The nomination of one of the most prominent colonial governors, Alan Burns, as the UK representative at the Trusteeship Council and the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly indicated the importance the British government attached to the international projection of Britain's 'enlightened' colonial policy, as did the nomination of Frederick Lugard. By the end of his nine-year tenure in 1956, Burns, was to be 'completely disillusioned' by the UN's preoccupation with the 'political and ideological conception of "colonialism"'.[74] The British had come to resist UN interference almost everywhere not only into the NSGTs, but in the Trusteeship territories, too. Andrew Cohen stressed in his book published in 1959 that 'great caution ought, I believe, to be shown by outside people or groups about intervening between Governments and local public opinion. Where local political forces are already strong, the balance may be upset if outside opinion throws weight purely on their side -- a danger which should be apparent to anybody observing the operation of some members of the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in relation to the French and British Cameroons.' [75] The UN was considered a hindrance to the prosecution of an orderly decolonisation.

During the period before the Suez Crisis in 1956, however, it must be said that the British did not foresee the full future implications of the anti-colonialism. In hindsight, it is possible to say they underestimated the potential of the Third World. A primary-sourced study on British view of the Bandung Conference in 1955 indicates that although the British were sensitive about the Asian-African moves, they preferred to concentrate on signs of weakness and division.[76] Pierson Dixon, the UK ambassador to the UN, wrote in the wake of the Bandung Conference that 'the Conference might perhaps be regarded as having done much less harm than might have been feared.'[77] In relation to the Ewe question, the Indians, though continuing to be vocal anti-colonialists, in effect took an indecisive stance at the UN, partly because of their exasperation over Kashmir issue, and partly because they wanted to keep up good relations with the British. After all, the UN in the 1950s was still a basically Western institution in which the Indians could only cautiously assert themselves. When the French Algerian question came onto UN agenda in 1955, to the great annoyance of the 'domestic jurisdiction group', the Indians even

contributed to watering down the resolutions and in effect neutralising the UN. India behaved similarly during the Cyprus debate.[78]

Moreover, the British could view the thaw in the Cold War as having enhanced or at least maintained Britain's international status. This was especially the case with Eden, the Prime Minister after 1954, who considered himself to be the father of the 'Geneva spirit'. Little evidence exists to show that the so-called 'package deal' admission to the UN of as many as sixteen states in 1955 alarmed the British. In his autobiography, Macmillan wrote that 'there was a danger that the anti-colonial vote would be a source of trouble. On the other hand, if the Western Powers opposed them for no apparent reason except prejudice, this might swing them and their friends more and more into the Communist camp.'[79] The UN, which in any case had been largely kept clear of the affairs of the British Empire, did not appear so problematic to the British as to cause them to lose their nerve. Britain's self-image as an enlightened great imperial power and a devoted Cold Warrior, second only to the United States in importance, determined its basic world outlook.

3) Conclusion

In conclusion, Britain's UN policy in the 1940s and towards the middle of the next decade was essentially determined by her age-old self-image of a great imperial power. Towards the end of the Second World War, Britain successfully cooperated with the United States to help create the new universal organization by way of drafting its Charter and building its main organs mostly to her advantage especially in colonial matters. It would be a mistake to think that Britain's power at the time was helplessly limited. Rather, she was able to wield considerable influence in international agenda setting.

The British perception of the world colonial order was basically unaffected by the onset of the post-Second World War era. The intensification of the Cold War, in particular, obliged the United States to tone down her criticism of European colonialism. Britain's favoured policy of "orderly decolonisation" and "UN containment policy" looked as if a very viable, pursuable policy up until the outbreak of the Suez Crisis in 1956, when the UN suddenly (so it looked to the British) became an effective focal point of the international critics of colonialism as an ironic result of the British own decision to bring the Suez case to the world organisation with the hope of managing it to their advantage.

Notes

1   Goldsworthy (1990).

2   CAB (48) 12, 8 December 1948, Cabinet Memorandum by Creech Jones.

3   The British official mind tended to avoid the use of the word 'decolonisation' and preferred the expression 'transfer of power'. The former term is nowadays regarded more or less neutral and academic.

4   Emerson, Rupert, 'Colonialism, Political Development, and the UN' *International Organization* Vol. 19-3 (Summer 1965), p.484; Armstrong, David, Lloyd, Leona and Redmond, John (eds.) (1993), p.88; Parsons, Anthony, *From Cold War to Hot Peace: UN Interventions 1947-1995* (New York, Penguin Books, 1995), p.244.

5   Kent, John, *British Imperial Strategy and the Origins of the Cold War 1944-1949* (Leicester UP, 1993).

6   Louis, Wm. Roger, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (New York, Tauris, 2007).

7   Hyam, Ronald, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation 1918-1968*, Cambridge UP (2006). Kent, John, *America, the UN and Decolonisation: Cold War Conflict in the Congo* (London, LSE International Studies, 2011).

8   Goldsworthy, David. 'Britain and International Critics of Colonialism, 1951-1956' *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 29-1 (March, 1991); Kent, John, *The Internationalisation of Colonialism: Britain, France and Black Africa, 1939-1956* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992).

9   Louis, Wm. Roger, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941-1945* (Oxford UP, 1977)

10 Woodward, L., *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* Vol.5 (HMSO, 1975), pp.14-18.

11 Orde, Anne, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895-1956* (London, Macmillan, 1996), p.147.

12 The National Archives (UK), CO/323/1858/23 Minutes by T.K. Lloyd, 7 May 1943.

13 Kent, John, 'Anglo-French Colonial Cooperation 1939-49 *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 17-1 (1988), pp.55-82. Kent, John, *The Internationalisation of Colonialism: Britain, France and Black Africa, 1939-1956* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992).

14 Gutteridge, J. A. C., *The United Nations in a Changing World* (Manchester, Manchester UP, 1969), pp.48-53.

15 CAB 87/69, 19 March 1945, Memorandum by Stanley, 'International Aspects of Colonial Policy' cited in Louis (1977), p.472.

16 Cited in Louis (1977), p.458.

17 Bullen, R. & Pelly, M. E. (eds.), *Documents on British Policy Overseas [henceforth DBPO], Series I Vol.2, Conferences and Conversations 1945: London, Washington and Moscow* (London, HMSO, 1985), p.317.

18 *DBPO Series I Vol.2*, pp.42-43.

19 Butler, R. & Pelly, M. E. (eds.), *DBPO Series I, Vol. 1 The Conference at Potsdam 1945* (London, HMSO, 1984), p.364. This document is dated 18 July 1945 and was written in Potsdam, a week before Atlee came into power as a result of Labour's landslide victory in the general election.

20 *Foreign Relations of the United States [Henceforth FRUS]*, 1945 Vol. VI, p.209. About the 'internationalist' line of Attlee and others, see Smith, R., 'A Climate of Opinion: British Officials and the Development of British Soviet Policy, 1945-1947' *International Affairs* Vol. 64-4 (Autumn 1988); Smith R., & Zametica, J., 'The Cold Warrior: Clement Attlee reconsidered, 1945-7' *International Affairs* Vol. 62-4 (Autumn 1985): Myers, F. 'Conscription and the Politics of Military Strategy in the Attlee Government' *Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol.7 (March, 1984). Although this line of approach did not after all become the mainstream government thinking, its existence testified the undercurrent of the official inclination towards international organisations.

21 *DBPO Series I, Vol.III, Britain and America: Negotiation of the United States loan 3 August - 7 December 1945* (HMSO, 1986), pp.316-317.

22 Murray, James N. Jr., *The United Nations Trusteeship System* (Urbana, The University of Illinois Press, 1957),

p.73.

23 Louis (1977), p.473.

24 All A Mandates were made independent by 1948 for various reasons. The C Mandates in the Pacific under the administrations of Australia and New Zealand were transferred to the UN Trust territories under the same governments. The legal status of South West Africa remained disputed until 1966 as the Union of South Africa refused to transfer the territory to the UN supervision.

25 Cohen, Andrew, *British Policy in Changing Africa* (London, Routlege, 1957), p.19.

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28 Pungong (2000), p.96.

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36 CAB (46) 222, 14 June 1946.

37 Blackwell (1993), p.131.

38 Louis (1977), pp.541-543.

39 Crocker, W, R, *Self-Government for the Colonie*s (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1949), p.11.

40 Crocker (1949), p.14.

41 Gutteridge, J. A. C., *The United Nations in a Changing World* (Manchester, Manchester UP, 1969), pp.53-55.

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44 Jussup, Philip, *The Birth of Nations* (New York, Harper, 1977).

45 CO936/97/18, Martin to Pritchard(CRO), 7 August 1953.

46 Hyam, Ronald, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation 1918-1968*, Cambridge UP (2006), pp.326-9.

47 Wainhouse, David W., *Remnants of Empire: The United Nations and the End of Colonialism* (New York, Harper and Row, 1964); Battersby, John, 'New Zealand, Domestic Jurisdiction and Apartheid, 1945-57' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Vol.14-1 (January, 1996), pp.101-117.

48 El-Ayouty (1971), p.59.

49 Goldsworthy (1991), p.8.

50 El-Ayouty (1971), p.50-53.

51 Goldsworthy (1991), p.7.

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