

# **The Centre of the Periphery: Re-assessing Julian Amery's Contribution to the Yemen Civil War 1962 – 1964**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examines the influence exerted by Julian Amery and the Aden Group on two core elements of British Foreign Policy in the Yemen Civil War from 1962 - 64, recognition of the Yemeni Arab Republic and officially sanctioned covert operations undertaken by the British military. Previous accounts of this episode, most notably the seminal work of Clive Jones, have made strong inferences about the influence of Amery and his associates.*

*Though it has been shown that Amery and his mercenary associates had a degree of influence on the ground in southern Arabia, this paper challenges the previously held view that Amery and the Aden group's efforts at home yielded similar influence in the corridors of Whitehall and Number 10. It is argued that his privileged access to the echelons of power did not translate into influence and that he should be understood more as a pariah than a player in this episode when attempting to understand official government foreign policy on the matter.*

## Introduction

On September 22<sup>nd</sup> 1962 Abdullah al-Sallal led a republican-inspired coup, backed by Gamal Abdel Nasser, against Imam Muhammad al-Badr in the Yemen. A civil war on the western tip of Southern Arabia morphed into a proxy conflict between republican and monarchist antagonists in the wider Arab Cold War. Layered onto this, Nasserite ambitions to eject Britain from its colonial foothold in Aden put British interests at odds with the fortunes of the republican regime. It is against this backdrop that a group of Conservative MPs known collectively as the Aden Group, using their contacts and every political tool at their disposal, set out to influence British government foreign policy to intervene on the side of the Royalists in the interests of maintaining the Aden base.

The importance of the Aden base to British interests cannot be underestimated. During the days of empire it was an essential bunkering facility between Suez and India. After the expansion of the British Petroleum oil refinery in Little Aden it had become the second busiest port in the world after New York.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, after the Suez Crisis it became a vital British outpost in maintaining its colonial commitments 'East of Suez'. This significance was further increased when the decision was made in 1960 to relocate the Middle East Command (MIDCOM) to the Aden base.<sup>2</sup> The threat posed to the Aden base by the Yemeni revolution was initially underestimated by key policy makers. It took some time before it became clear that Nasser would utilise the unrest to covertly promote subversion within Aden Colony itself in an attempt to make the British position untenable. In this respect the hawks of the Aden Group were prophetic, but it is notable that for the initial part of the conflict they were not successful in convincing key decision makers of this fact.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67: Last Outpost of a Middle East Empire*, 2004, Routledge, p16

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p29

This study will focus specifically on a key figure within the Aden Group - Julian Amery. Amery was a prominent figure within the Conservative Party. He had been a Member of Parliament for Preston North since 1950 and made a name for himself by being particularly critical of the Eden government's handling of the Suez crisis. Under Macmillan and Douglas-Home he held the portfolio of secretary of state for air and then later minister of aviation. In multiple accounts of Britain's role within the conflict and the final withdrawal from Aden, Amery is cited as a figure of significant note and influence. Though Sue Onslow has conducted a focused study of Amery's role in the fallout from the Suez crisis, to date no focused study has been undertaken concerning his personal contribution in this period.<sup>3</sup> This study seeks to fill this gap. It also questions the veracity of key assumptions in the literature about Amery and his networks. In his seminal study of Aden Group activity and British government policy during the Yemen crisis Clive Jones makes significant claims about the influence of the Aden Group and Julian Amery specifically concerning the recognition of the Yemeni Arab Republic and officially sanctioned covert operations.<sup>4</sup> Such claims are founded on the assumption that the privileged access that Amery and other actors had to the inner workings of government translated directly into influence on Yemen policy. Such a supposition is attractive but requires testing. If instead a distinction can be made between access and influence then a significant re-examination of the role of the Aden Group in this affair will be necessary. Through a focused case study on Julian Amery this paper suggests that such a distinction must be made.

The methodical framework for establishing this distinction involves splitting this study into three sections. The first section is an in depth character assessment of Julian Amery himself. Using his autobiography *Approach March* and other public writings it attempts to develop a deep understanding of his politics, personality and motivations. Building on this, the second section then offers an analysis of the quality of Amery's personal relationships with the Aden

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<sup>3</sup> S. Onslow, *Unreconstructed Nationalists and a Minor Gunboat Operation: Julian Amery, Neil Mclean and the Suez Crisis*, Contemporary British History vol.20 no.1, 2006, pp73-99

<sup>4</sup> C. Jones, *Britain and The Yemen Civil War, 1962-1965: Ministers, Mercenaries, and Mandarins – Foreign Policy and the Limits of Covert Action*, 2004, Sussex Academic Press

Group and the two prime ministers of the period under examination. Using material from Amery's personal papers it attempts to reconstruct the nature of these relationships and crucially their boundaries and limitations. It is the inferences one can draw from this examination of the man and his networks that provide the basis for differentiating access from influence. In the third section these inferences are applied to a focus on two policy dimensions Amery attempted to influence: non-recognition of the Yemeni Arab Republic (YAR) and official British covert operations to provide assistance to the Royalist forces. Drawing on the relevant archive material from official de-classified British government sources and scholarship conducted by Spencer Mawby and Rory Cormac on officially sanctioned operations this section finds that, though Amery had significant access to information and key decision makers through his networks, this did not translate into significant influence.<sup>5</sup> Amery failed to translate access into influence because his personality and networks made him a pariah in other influential circles. Though happy to indulge Amery in meetings and correspondence on account of personal friendship, in their professional capacity key decision makers were aware of Amery's reputation as a hawkish and divisive figure and this served to colour their reception of his appeals. Far from being at the centre of events, Amery, and many of his contacts, were perhaps more pariahs than players and at best Amery can be said to have been at the centre of the periphery.

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<sup>5</sup> R. Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies: British Intelligence and Counter Insurgency*, 2014, Oxford University Press; S. Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67: Last Outpost of a Middle East Empire*

## Chapter 1: Julian Amery – A Character Assessment

Before undertaking the primary purpose of this section a very brief overview of Julian Amery's credentials is necessary. By the outbreak of the conflict in Yemen in September 1962 Amery had been the Conservative Member of Parliament for Preston North for twelve years. He had been an undersecretary in the War and Colonial Offices and had served as secretary of state for air before being promoted to minister of aviation. Alongside his political credentials over time he had built up a wealth of personal connections. Many of these connections were garnered by virtue of his public school education, having been educated at Summer Fields and Eton, and his influential father Leopold Amery, himself a prominent Conservative politician who had served as colonial secretary in the 1920s, was a key political ally of Churchill and Eden and had served as secretary of state for India during the Second World War. As a young man Amery travelled to Spain during the civil war to shadow and document Franco's nationalists, at one point coming extremely close to losing his life in artillery bombardment of his convoy.<sup>6</sup> During the Second World War Julian Amery himself served with the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in the Balkans where he made both future military and intelligence contacts. He was also the son-in-law of Harold Macmillan having married his daughter Catherine in January 1950.

Beyond the aforementioned outlining of his credentials, the purpose of this section is to provide an insight into Amery's ideology, motivations, character and identity. This assessment is important because understanding who Amery was and what he stood for is a necessary qualitative component of understanding his relationships and thus his influence. Key aspects of his character might have jarred with certain individuals, creating conflict, whilst persons with more congruent worldviews were likely to be closer allies. A character assessment of Amery also demonstrates that extreme caution must be used when evaluating the source material. Without being aware of this, it could lead one to overemphasise Amery's impact on events.

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<sup>6</sup> J. Amery, *Approach March*, 1973, Hutchinson, p95

This section will use *Approach March*, Amery's autobiography, as a lens through which to assess Amery's character. It documents Amery's early life from 1919 to 1945. Written between 1966 and 1970 this source is exceptionally notable as Amery's retrospective is very much coloured by events in Yemen and the years immediately preceding authorship. There are multiple occasions where Amery punctuates the narrative with reflective comment providing the reader with insights into his contemporary political views and character. Usually when using autobiographies and memoirs as a source it is imperative to take into consideration the dual limitations of memory and agenda. However, for this study, it is the inferences from Amery's selective memory and biases that used to create his character profile so such limitations are less problematic. What follows is an assessment of the man that Julian Amery was and these findings will be of great significance in the assessment of his personal relationships in the subsequent section.

Growing up as the son of the colonial secretary of the world's largest empire it is little surprise Amery was an ardent imperialist. He believed in the British Empire and lamented its decline. For Amery the soul of Britain was intimately connected with its overseas dependencies and connections. In an article published in *Political Quarterly* in 1953 he stressed 'the power, the livelihood, the social unity and even the moral strength of the British people depend upon the existence of the Commonwealth'.<sup>7</sup> Amery believed that Britain and its empire were synonymous. In *Approach March* he noted 'It was the genius of Disraeli and Joseph Chamberlain that they recognized the need to think imperially rather than nationally; that they saw in the empire, not just a sphere of interest, but the ground plan on which all British policies should be founded'.<sup>8</sup> It is only when this mindset is fully appreciated that the passion, the resources and the time invested by Amery in defending Aden can be understood. Aden was an economic and strategic British interest, but above all else for Amery it was of existential importance.

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<sup>7</sup> J. Amery, *A Conservative view of the Commonwealth*, Political Quarterly vol.24 no.2, 1953, p169

<sup>8</sup> J. Amery, *A Conservative view of the Commonwealth*, p167

Because of his imperialist beliefs Amery was staunchly anti-Communist. Though for a time he claimed to have flirted with Communism in his youth, he wrote 'the purges in the Soviet Party and the Red Army suggested that the system did not work out in practice. In any case the break-up of the British Commonwealth and Empire was a major Soviet aim, and this alone made Communism unacceptable'.<sup>9</sup> Communism represented one of the biggest threats to Amery's worldview and values. Whether Nasser's Arab Nationalist regime can be described successfully as communist is irrelevant. Amery himself viewed Nasser as a pawn in the Soviet machinery and thus took his advances into Yemen even more seriously as a result. Amery's pursuit of any method to frustrate Nasser's ambitions was in part founded on the perception that Yemen was another key frontier in the war of ideas.

Amery was also a conservative in the truest meaning of the word. His politics were founded on the belief that 'there was not much wrong with the British constitution but only with the men who ran it. The problem was not to change the system, but to change the men'.<sup>10</sup> Connected with this was a belief that oppressive order, if of a limited scale, was preferable to anarchy. Reflecting on his experience in Spain Amery noted 'if I had been a Spaniard I would have supported Franco. The Nationalist state was oppressive, no doubt, but at least it was relatively controlled oppression in contrast with the anarchy and unpredictable witch hunting of the Republic'.<sup>11</sup> His experiences in Spain also coloured his understanding of civil war in general. He came to conclude that:

*It was tempting of course to construct compromise governments, embracing the best elements from both sides. But I soon realised that this was not practical politics. In a civil war, an individual cannot contract out or pursue his own pet solution. He must either emigrate or take sides and defend the bad against the worse.*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> J. Amery, *Approach March*, p58

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p58

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, p111

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, p111

It is this analysis that explains Amery's passion for defending the Yemeni Royalist cause. In al-Sallal's republican regime he saw anti-imperialism, communism and anarchy; in the Imam he saw order and the status quo. Despite his poor humanitarian record and previous disputes with Britain Imam al-Badr was the bad to defend against the worse.

A further aspect of Amery's character to understand is that he was a maverick. He believed in 'the truth of Lord Acton's dictum that history is more often a conflict between right and right than between right and wrong'.<sup>13</sup> Following from this he possessed a certainty that posterity would vindicate certain actions that were condemned by contemporaries. On multiple occasions during the Second World War Amery acted with insubordination that he justified through patriotism – earning himself enemies in the Foreign Office. He viewed inciting a coup against Prince Paul in Yugoslavia as essential to British war interests but this was rejected by his immediate superiors. He attempted to circumvent this decision and remarked 'my action had undoubtedly been insubordinate in so far as Campbell was still my nominal chief. But there was a war on; and I was satisfied in my own mind that events would soon justify what I had done'.<sup>14</sup> Amery also decried the lethargy of the British bureaucracy regarding the supply of assistance to the anti-German uprising in Yugoslavia commenting that 'it was intolerable that so grave an issue should be neglected because of bureaucratic arguments about organisation, establishments and jobs'.<sup>15</sup> Amery was a decisive and instinctive man who never shied away from taking unsanctioned action if he believed it to be the correct course stating unequivocally 'in a desperate situation ... the only unforgiveable sins are the sins of omission'.<sup>16</sup> No doubt Amery's involvement in Yemen can be understood in these terms. He saw his policy position as correct and Her Majesty's Government's as wrong and vindicated by experience believed it was his duty to circumvent this on Britain's behalf. It is also worth noting that Amery's own analysis of his war days is retrospective and perhaps his self-congratulation for his insubordination is

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid*, p29

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p185

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*, p245

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, p192

enmeshed with a personal need to justify his contemporary actions in Yemen under a similar pretext.

Finally, it is Amery's approach to retrospection that is vital to understand for a study of his role in events. Amery was determined to carve out for himself a place in history. He was a firm believer in the impact individuals had on the course of events. 'Of course, there are trends in history and currents in political thought. But the chain of cause and effect is continually broken at the individual link'.<sup>17</sup> It is this underlying need for a legacy that shaped his motivations for involving himself in causes that would make him known. Vitally for the purposes of this study it affects the source material available for evaluating Amery's role. Amery had a tendency to exaggerate his own influence on events. In *Approach March* he makes a series of bold claims. He credited himself with being partially responsible for D section (later SOE)'s mandate to incite subversion in Albania because of a very short memo he composed that he claimed turned the tide of the Whitehall battle.<sup>18</sup> He believed the Yugoslavian uprising was a turning point in the war because it 'forced Hitler to clean up Germany's Balkan flank before attacking Russia, and so delayed the Russian campaign by more than six weeks. These six weeks probably saved Moscow and may thus have turned the tide of the war'.<sup>19</sup> In choosing to frame the rebellion, in which he played a very limited role, as a vital turning point Amery has attempted to persuade himself that his contribution to the war was indeed pivotal. He also claimed that he was partially responsible for Churchill's visit to the North African front which he attributed to galvanising morale that led to the defeat of Rommel.<sup>20</sup> In his analysis he makes very large leaps in the causal chain and tries to place himself at the centre. Thus, when evaluating any source material relating to Amery his tendency to exaggerate is of critical importance and must be at the forefront of any analysis.

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid*, p112

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*, p160

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p229

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p310

A full summary of the kind of man Julian Amery was could be the topic for a book in itself. It is, however, hoped that this short summary highlights the key aspects of his personality and ideology that will be of import when analysing his influence. Amery was a man who sought adventure and excitement for its own sake, who believed in the ideals of the British Empire and was committed to defending it at great personal cost. He reviled and feared Communism and was comfortable compromising on certain lesser ideals in the name of realpolitik to support his enemy's enemy. He was independently minded and comfortable in upsetting the government machine in pursuing unsanctioned policy that he believed was best for Britain. However, he also had a misplaced belief in his own influence that is imperative to take into consideration throughout the rest of this study.

## Chapter 2: Julian Amery's Networks

One of Julian Amery's most notable qualities was his ability to build informal networks around himself with some of the most influential people of the time. This section will examine his relationship with key figures in his network known as the Aden Group. It will then turn to a discussion of his relationship with the two prime ministers in this period. It will aim to analyse the quality of his personal relationships within these networks as well as the scope of the power of these individuals as a way to unpick Julian Amery's influence on events.

The Aden Group was a network of Conservative members of parliament and their associates who were described by Christopher Gandy, British Consul to Taiz'z, as 'survivors of the Suez Group' who 'viewed Nasser as the Great Satan'.<sup>21</sup> Their shared aim was to use all means in their power to secure definitive government action that would secure the Aden base and preferably bring about the downfall of Nasser in the process. Julian Amery was a key member of this network. Also of particular note are Neil 'Billy' McLean, David Smiley, Duncan Sandys and Kennedy Trevaskis. Amery had other connections with Thorneycroft, Poole, Powell, other influential Conservatives and further contacts in the Middle East but it is impractical in a survey of this size to analyse all of Amery's associates. It is Amery's relationship with these four men that will be considered in depth in this section.

Amery and McLean attended Eton together but their friendship was forged more deeply during the Second World War. McLean became such a dear friend of Amery's that it was Amery who wrote his obituary.<sup>22</sup> McLean became a member of parliament in 1954 and is a notable figure in the events that unfolded within South Arabia because of his multiple trips to the region earning him the loaded nickname 'The Right Honourable Member for Aden'. McLean was important in the creation of the British Mercenary Organisation (BMO) that trained, organised and helped

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<sup>21</sup> C. Gandy, *A Mission to Yemen: August 1962 – January 1963*, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* vol.25 no.2, 1998, p263

<sup>22</sup> J. Amery, *A Tribute to Billy Mclean 1918-1986*, *Central Asian Survey* vol.6 no.1, 1987

supply Royalist forces in the Yemen in the early part of the civil war. Though personally very close, a survey of the source material suggests that one cannot assume the strength of Amery's hand in McLean's actions. Though of one mind politically and with regards to the best course of policy in the Yemen the nature of communications at the time often relegated Amery's role to a conduit of McLean's reports rather than an active player. Furthermore, by April 1963 Mclean appears to have reported to Amery more as an afterthought than as a vital link in the information chain. In a short memo he wrote 'herewith a copy of a short report I wrote on the Yemen the gist of which has already been sent via telegram to Duncan Sandys and F.O. [sic] last weekend'.<sup>23</sup> Though Amery and McLean were very close personally, and when in London met regularly, one must thus be cautious about how much influence one ascribes to Amery regarding McLean's actions on the ground.

Colonel David Smiley was another important member of the BMO and served as a political and military advisor for the Saudi government from 1963. Amery's relationship with Smiley was much less intimate than his friendship with McLean. Though similarly forged in the perils of guerrilla warfare in the mountains of Albania, the two men did not know each other as well. Amery acknowledged this in *Approach March*. He noted Smiley 'was more interested in things than in people'.<sup>24</sup> Amery also recorded a key feature of Smiley's character stating that he lived 'for action alone and was never happier than on a dangerous reconnaissance or when blowing things up'.<sup>25</sup> This attitude, though seen as useful if constrained within a military framework, rendered Smiley a liability and a possible embarrassment to Her Majesty's Government after his official service. Bruce-Lockhart, director of Middle East Operations at SIS, at the time of Smiley's first mission to Yemen wrote to him that his 'presence in Yemen would be counterproductive to [HMG's] policy'.<sup>26</sup> It is this circumspection of Smiley within the corridors of Whitehall that

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<sup>23</sup> AMEJ 1/7/2 – memo from Billy McLean to Julian Amery dated 26/4/63

<sup>24</sup> J. Amery, *Approach March*, p328

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*

<sup>26</sup> Cited as: IWM Sound Archive 10340/7 Colonel David Smiley in C. Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War*, p121

reduced his political influence. It is perhaps even possible to infer that it might have impacted Amery's by association, as JIC assessments were very suspicious of all information provided by advocates 'prejudiced to the Royalist cause'.<sup>27</sup> Though able to have effect on the ground Smiley was a pariah within policy making circles – especially in the Foreign Office.

Duncan Sandys was one of the most vocal and influential voices in opposing recognition of the YAR and calling for strong direct action to be taken against the Republicans or at the very least supporting the Royalists. In his position as colonial secretary he wielded a cabinet portfolio that afforded him an influential voice. According to Jones, Sandys was a key force in postponing Britain's recognition of the YAR and according to Mawby was influential in the decision to heighten aerial military action by HMG across the border in the Radfan in 1964.<sup>28</sup> Amery considered Sandys a close friend. In *Approach March* he recounted that they first met after Sandys was impressed by a manifesto Amery and other students at the Conservative Association in Oxford had written. 'The warmest welcome came from Duncan Sandys ... [he] asked me to go and see [him] as soon as term was over. My meeting with Duncan Sandys was the beginning of a close and lasting friendship'.<sup>29</sup> The archive material certainly appears to corroborate this. In an undated handwritten note Sandys congratulated Amery on a speech in the Commons stating 'Julian, you were absolutely first class. Well done. Could you come out to have an import [sic] word with me about the debate?'.<sup>30</sup> According to his desk diaries of 1963 and 1964 Amery on numerous occasions went for dinner and drinks with Sandys and on occasion for lunch with both Sandys and his wife.<sup>31</sup> The two were clearly close political allies with a good personal relationship. The tone of their available correspondence, however, suggests Sandys always considered Amery to be his junior, perhaps even a protégé he was very fond of, but subordinate nonetheless. Sandys was eleven years Amery's senior and although elected to parliament at the

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<sup>27</sup> R. Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies: British Intelligence and Counter Insurgency*, p143

<sup>28</sup> C. Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War*, p54; Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67*, p103

<sup>29</sup> J. Amery, *Approach March*, p118

<sup>30</sup> AMEJ 2/1/44 – undated handwritten note

<sup>31</sup> AMEJ 4/3/38; AMEJ 4/2/39 – desk diary entries

same time had held far more distinguished portfolios. Sandys considered Amery an ally, and vice-versa, but it is highly likely that the influence ran more in Sandys' favour.

Amery also enjoyed a good relationship with Kennedy Trevaskis who served as High Commissioner for Aden from 1963 to 1965. The two men were well acquainted enough for Trevaskis in late 1964 to ask Amery to recommend him to future employers.<sup>32</sup> Amery's subsequent recommendation to Viscount Caldecote stated 'quite apart from his qualifications he is [a] highly intelligent man gifted with great common sense'.<sup>33</sup> Amery organised for McLean to meet Trevaskis on multiple occasions in Aden and Trevaskis provided Amery with inside information from the High Commissioner's office under Turnbull after being replaced.<sup>34</sup> It is clear the two found it useful to correspond and cooperate as they had shared objectives in the region. However, Amery and Trevaskis did not always agree. A key element of divergence between the two was Trevaskis' recommendation for the independence of South Arabia and Aden – a position that grieved Amery.<sup>35</sup> Trevaskis' influence back in Whitehall was also limited by suspicions that he unilaterally doctored and exaggerated evidence in his reports to Whitehall. This suspicion has subsequently been confirmed by Rory Cormac in his study of British intelligence in South Arabia who shows that 'Trevaskis had a low opinion of the intelligence services and was prone to acting as his own intelligence assessment officer' who 'on occasions edited the local intelligence reports unilaterally'.<sup>36</sup> Trevaskis was deeply mistrusted by the Foreign Office and this translated into a muting of his influence in Whitehall circles.

The above analysis of Amery's Aden Group connections is important. But it is imperative to acknowledge that in foreign policy matters, especially in South Arabia, final say lay with the

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<sup>32</sup> AMEJ 1/7/7 - letter from Trevaskis to Amery dated 29/12/64

<sup>33</sup> AMEJ 1/7/7 - letter from Amery to Viscount Caldecote dated 5/1/65

<sup>34</sup> AMEJ 1/7/2 - letter from Trevaskis to McLean praising his effect on the Loyalists dated 21/11/62; AMEJ 1/7/7 - letter from Trevaskis to Amery informing him of Turnbull's plans for withdrawal and future defence dated 12/2/66

<sup>35</sup> S. Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67*, p96

<sup>36</sup> R. Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies: British Intelligence and Counter Insurgency*, p128

prime minister. It is thus a more detailed analysis of Amery's relationships with Macmillan and Douglas-Home that will be the focus of the section that follows.

Amery and Macmillan shared multiple connections. Amery was close friends with Harold's son Maurice. They both attended Eton and Balliol College Oxford where they were members of the Conservative Association and debated together in the Union on multiple occasions.<sup>37</sup> During the Second World War, Amery's chain of command in D section involved Harold Macmillan and Anthony Eden.<sup>38</sup> Macmillan also secured a meeting between Amery and Churchill concerning troop morale in North Africa.<sup>39</sup> Macmillan and Amery were to become more personally connected in 1950 when Amery married Macmillan's daughter Catherine. It is this relationship as Macmillan's son-in-law that has led some historians, such as Clive Jones, to assume Amery was afforded special political favour. Jones notes 'as the minister for aviation, Julian Amery occupied a portfolio outside of the full Cabinet; as Macmillan's son-in-law, however, he had direct access to the inner workings of Cabinet'.<sup>40</sup> It is, however, necessary to qualify this assumption.

It is hard to gauge the nature of such a relationship from the paucity of direct source material available. A lot of the personal interactions would have been left unrecorded and general sentiments of affection and closeness in memoirs obscure the periodical fluctuations in relationships that have a significant impact on influence. In his personal papers, however, Amery dictated his account dated 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1963 of the consequences of the Profumo Affair and the transition from the Macmillan to the Douglas-Home premiership. This account is very useful in assessing Amery's relationship with Macmillan and Douglas-Home. Unlike correspondence or diary dates it provides a much fuller account of all of Amery's meetings and contacts, the content of those discussions, and Amery's reflections on the meetings themselves

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<sup>37</sup> J. Amery, *Approach March*, p76

<sup>38</sup> J. Amery, *Approach March*, p333-4

<sup>39</sup> J. Amery, *Approach March*, p308

<sup>40</sup> C. Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War*, p36

as well as the persons involved. Knowledge of Amery's character and tendency to embellish his own role, however, means that one must treat his testimony with a good deal of caution. That being said there is still a lot one can garner through the lens of this episode.

The first aspect to take from this account is that Macmillan and Amery were indeed very close personally. Amery noted that after the debate on the Profumo scandal in the Commons on 17<sup>th</sup> July 'Harold left the chamber after his winding up speech with tears in his eyes ... I followed him to his room where Maurice also joined us. No one else came near'.<sup>41</sup> It is clear that Amery and Macmillan must have shared a deep personal relationship if only he and Macmillan's son were allowed to see and comfort him in this dark hour. Over the summer recess Amery visited Macmillan at Chequers on multiple occasions and attempted to persuade him to stay on and fight the next election. The level of intimacy between the two men is personified by Amery's account of Macmillan's health problems come the October. 'By 4.00am in the morning the pain had become unbearable and the doctors were sent for. A tube had to be inserted and it was clear he was suffering from a greatly swollen prostate'.<sup>42</sup>

The question remains whether this personal relationship translated into some level of political influence for Amery. It is important to delineate influence from access. Access is a component of influence but they are not synonymous. Nor should we confuse Amery's ability to gather information as influence either. An insight into their professional relationship, however, does perforate through this source. In the summer of 1963 Amery offered strategic advice to Macmillan on how best to secure the prime minister's ambition to have Quintin Hogg, then Lord Hailsham, succeed him. Amery did not offer particularly controversial counsel but interestingly he noted 'rather to my surprise these arguments had a good deal of effect on him ... I had rather expected him to brush this suggestion aside, in fact he seemed to take it seriously'.<sup>43</sup> This shows that Amery was not at all used to Macmillan taking his political advice. This is highly significant

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<sup>41</sup> AMEJ 4/1/14

<sup>42</sup> AMEJ 4/1/14

<sup>43</sup> AMEJ 4/1/14

as it perhaps indicates that Macmillan was particularly effective at compartmentalising his relationships and not allowing personal allegiances to have undue political influence.

Macmillan's reaction to Amery's early knowledge of his intention to resign further corroborates this inference. According to Amery, Macmillan was 'rather disturbed that I had discovered so soon the nature of his intended recommendation'.<sup>44</sup> Though able to acquire information through his connections with Catherine and Macmillan's principle private secretary Tim Bligh it is clear that Macmillan did not share this information with Amery willingly. It would thus appear that Macmillan and Amery's relationship was more nuanced than Jones assumes. Though very close personally it would appear Macmillan was much more guarded with his son-in-law on political matters and though Amery was still often able to remain in the loop regarding information he was not as successful in influencing policy change.

Amery's personal relationship with Alec Douglas-Home lacked anything like the intimacy he shared with Macmillan. Their relationship was one confined almost entirely to the professional sphere. In his account of the leadership transition Amery himself claimed that he 'liked him [Douglas-Home] very much and that I thought he might ultimately prove a unifying influence' but he also 'doubted if he could lead the party to electoral victory'.<sup>45</sup> This is why Amery put his efforts behind trying to secure the candidature of Quintin Hogg. Had this been successful Amery's influence over the following year might have been wholly different. However, factionalism in the Conservative Party meant that Hogg was a divisive candidate. Amery acknowledged that 'it was clear that though we had very strong support we had provoked very strong opposition'.<sup>46</sup> The resolution to this complex factionalism elevated Douglas-Home to the premiership with Butler as foreign secretary and a reluctant Hogg only serving as secretary of state for education and science within the Cabinet from April 1964. Hogg's fortunes and Amery's open resistance to Butler left him politically side-lined. When Douglas-Home asked Amery to

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<sup>44</sup> AMEJ 4/1/14

<sup>45</sup> AMEJ 4/1/14

<sup>46</sup> AMEJ 4/1/14

'soldier on at the ministry of aviation' Amery asked him if he might be included in the Cabinet. Douglas-Home replied diplomatically that 'this was not possible as they had already increased the Cabinet by two members and could not have more'.<sup>47</sup> Amery, ever capable of self-delusion, convinced himself that Douglas-Home acted this way because he did not want to be perceived according favour to those associated closely with Macmillan. More realistically, one can infer Amery was viewed by Douglas-Home as too much of a political liability to have within such a delicately balanced cabinet and this significantly reduced his influence.

Amery had a plethora of contacts both within Whitehall and the Middle East. The aim of this section has been to shed more light on the qualitative nature of those relationships to assess influence. Amery was a key member of the Aden Group and had a very close personal relationship with Sandys. However, based on the source material it would seem Amery was a junior partner in this relationship. He had very good personal relationships with McLean and Trevaskis, and a strong professional and personal link with Smiley but the negative reputation of Smiley, Trevaskis and McLean in decision making circles often served to undermine their influence, and perhaps even muted Amery's influence by association. With regards to Downing Street, Amery had a close personal relationship with his father-in-law Macmillan, but documentary evidence seems to suggest that Macmillan compartmentalised this relationship and in the political sphere and worked to provide Amery with no special favour or undue influence. Amery's personal relationship with Douglas-Home was more strained and professionally Amery was further isolated because of enemies he made during the leadership transition. It is likely any influence he might have had with Macmillan was certainly significantly reduced under Douglas-Home's premiership. It is the dynamics of these relationships along with further documentary material that will be used in the next section to help qualify Amery and the Aden Group's role in recognition and officially sanctioned operations.

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<sup>47</sup> AMEJ 4/1/14

### **Chapter 3: The Impact of Amery and the Aden Group on Recognition of the YAR and Official Covert Operations**

The remainder of this study will focus on the events that took place between September 1962 and October 1964 with regards to the contribution of the Aden Group, the British Mercenary Organisation and Julian Amery himself to the situation in South Arabia. It will evaluate some of the claims made by scholars concerning the impact of these actors on different aspects of foreign policy. It will focus on two key areas: first, on how influential Amery and the Aden Group were on the deliberation over recognition of the YAR; and second, on how successful Amery and his allies were on driving officially sanctioned covert operation. It will be shown that claims over Aden Group influence on recognition have been exaggerated and that Amery and elements of his network, because of their pariah status and lack of intelligence reliability, had limited influence on the nature and extent of the official covert operations.

First, however, the decision to limit the scope of this analysis to the period outlined must be justified. The operations of the BMO continued beyond October 1964 and the Yemen Civil War remained an ongoing policy concern of the British until their withdrawal from Aden in 1967. The justification for this time frame is as follows: after the Conservatives lost the General Election in October 1964 the Aden Group and Julian Amery's ability to influence policy was drastically reduced and the operations of the BMO were curtailed significantly by a far less sympathetic Labour Colonial Office.

It is clear that Amery himself and his associates were the subject of significant irritation and malign within the Colonial Office and the High Commission of Aden under Turnbull. In a letter written to Amery by Tony Marnham, assistant under-secretary for the colonies, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1964 he attempted to persuade Amery to postpone his planned trip to Aden. This is because he believed Amery's visit, in the company of McLean who he noted was 'widely believed to have been closely associated ... with mercenary operations inside the Yemen', could

undermine diplomatic attempts to engage with the United Arab Republic.<sup>48</sup> He wrote that 'Patrick Gordon Walker ... is very concerned lest a visit by you to Aden in McLean's company might be regarded as provocative'.<sup>49</sup> Richard Turnbull, the recently appointed High Commissioner, regarded such a trip as 'embarrassing and even [potentially] dangerous'.<sup>50</sup>

Amery himself was considered a particular nuisance to the Labour government. In his official capacity as opposition spokesperson for the colonies he repeatedly attempted to raise the South Arabian question, sometimes in inappropriate contexts. One such example is when Marnham attempted to dissuade Amery from initiating a discussion on South Arabia during the Consolidated Funding Bill in late July 1965. Marnham noted that such a discussion 'could seriously reduce the chances of success at these talks [on the Adeni Constitutional Conference]'.<sup>51</sup> Amery's repeated interventions on the South Arabian issue served to alienate the Labour government of the day and it is likely that as such his influence on foreign policy, barring drawing public attention to Labour failure, was almost non-existent. Hence, the discussion of Amery and the Aden Group's role is confined to the years where the Conservatives were in government and had a more significant seat at the table of foreign policy formation.

The significant role of Julian Amery and members of the Aden Group, notably Neil McLean, in influencing Her Majesty's Government to withhold recognition of the Yemeni Arab Republic is an argument advanced by Jones. In his chapter on the debate over recognition in *Britain and the Yemen Civil War* he presents a narrative that by the Cabinet meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> October 1962 'it appeared that the establishment of diplomatic ties with the YAR was now just a matter of time'.<sup>52</sup> Jones then suggests this position spurred McLean into action and that his subsequent reports from his trips to Yemen 'were influential in securing a pause for thought over the

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<sup>48</sup> AMEJ 1/7/7 – letter from Marnham to Amery dated 23/12/64

<sup>49</sup> AMEJ 1/7/7 – letter from Marnham to Amery dated 23/12/64

<sup>50</sup> AMEJ 1/7/7 – telegram from Turnbull to Marnham dated 1/1/65

<sup>51</sup> AMEJ 1/7/7 – letter from Marnham to Amery dated 30/7/65

<sup>52</sup> C. Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-65*, p45

sagacity of recognition in Whitehall'.<sup>53</sup> By the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1963 the debate over recognition became a moot point as al-Sallal severed diplomatic ties with the United Kingdom because of its prevarication on the issue of recognition. Thus, Jones posits that the decision of the Cabinet to maintain its policy of non-recognition in the meeting of February 5<sup>th</sup> 1963 was a crucial one and was testament to the work of McLean and the Aden Group giving key decision makers enough reason to delay.

Jones' narrative is grounded on two main claims. First, that government policy on recognition underwent a fundamental shift between 26<sup>th</sup> October 1962 and 5<sup>th</sup> February 1963. Second, that the course of government policy, whether changing or stable, was indeed significantly affected by the activities and depositions of Mclean and the Aden Group. Jones himself makes the caveat that 'the impact of McLean's early reports on the issue of recognition should not be exaggerated'.<sup>54</sup> However, it is posited that Jones still over emphasises the impact of the Aden Group within the Cabinet discussions and the strength of these claims is not supported by the evidence. There is, however, room to attribute indirect influence to the Aden Group, specifically Kennedy Trevaskis and actions he took on the ground.

The fundamental issue with Jones' analysis is that he tries to paint a picture of a policy shift regarding recognition from the two October Cabinet meetings in 1962 and the final Cabinet meeting in February 1963 before the debate was superseded by events. He does this by selectively stressing false comparisons and omitting key information from the minutes of each of these that provides evidence of policy continuity. Jones' narrative leads us to believe that by the end of October 1962 recognition was both inevitable and imminent as recognition was 'just a matter of time' and that 'desperate times called for desperate measures'.<sup>55</sup> Yet it is implied that by February 1963 the Cabinet had 'changed' its position to one of committed non-recognition because of a higher focus on Aden and local ruler sensibilities. Jones justifies this by noting the

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid*, p54

<sup>54</sup> C. Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-65*, p54

<sup>55</sup> *ibid*, p45

phrase in the minutes 'our paramount interest was the maintenance of our position in Aden'.<sup>56</sup> This focus on prioritising the strategic interests in Aden was, however, not a new occurrence in the February meeting. In the October 31<sup>st</sup> meeting it was noted that 'it had to be recognised that in present circumstances the maintenance of our position in Aden was of paramount importance'.<sup>57</sup> Jones also dismisses the main conclusion of the February 5<sup>th</sup> meeting that the Cabinet sought 'de facto recognition ... be accorded to the republican regime ... urgently' because this was 'to remain contingent upon a positive response from Johnston', who was then the Governor of Aden.<sup>58</sup> First, it must be noted that Jones considerably underplays the significance of the move towards trying to urgently achieve de facto recognition by the Cabinet in the February meeting. This is far from a victory for the Aden Group and those advocating non-recognition, rather a defeat.

Second, this consideration of the input of local rulers and the Governor of Aden was a continual thread in all the Cabinet meetings not just a phenomenon of the February meeting. In the meeting of the 26<sup>th</sup> October, because of Yemeni incursions in Beihan, it was stated 'although on balance it would still be right to recognise the new regime the date would have to be set back ... [it] would make it much more difficult for the governor of Aden to persuade the rulers to accept the situation'.<sup>59</sup> In the 31<sup>st</sup> October meeting it was noted that a danger of early recognition was that it could 'dishearten our supporters in the colony and the protectorates, lead to a collapse in morale, and prejudice the present moves for a merger of Aden Colony with the Aden Protectorate' the prime minister also said that 'in light of the governor's reply the situation would need to be considered again'.<sup>60</sup> Far from being imminent as Jones suggests, recognition was contingent on local sensibilities in October 1962 and remained so in February 1963. The emphasis on policy change between these dates rather than on continuity is not supported by

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<sup>56</sup> CAB 130/189 GEN 776

<sup>57</sup> CAB 130/189 GEN 776

<sup>58</sup> CAB 130/189 GEN 776; C. Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-65*, p54

<sup>59</sup> CAB 130/189 GEN 776

<sup>60</sup> CAB 130/189 GEN 776

the evidence and is perhaps an attempt by Jones to create a wider geopolitical significance for McLean's activities in this period.

The second claim to be examined is what impact the activities of McLean and the Aden Group actually had on the Cabinet discussions and course of government policy. It is important to stress that at this point from October 1962 to February 1963 McLean's activities were confined to reportage. Of most note is his documented conversation with King Saud and his assessment of Royalist fortunes in the Yemen. In his report on visiting Yemen from 27<sup>th</sup> October to 30<sup>th</sup> October McLean recorded a conversation he had with King Saud where he stated that he 'wished greatly to resume diplomatic relations with HMG [sic]'.<sup>61</sup> It was proposed by McLean and others that cooperation with Saudi interests over Yemen and withholding recognition of the YAR would help in this regard. Though perhaps advanced at a lower level, this line of argument is not mentioned in the Cabinet minutes of either the 31<sup>st</sup> October or 5<sup>th</sup> February meetings despite the presence of prominent Aden Group figures such as Sandys and Thorneycroft. Though perhaps playing a small part in the minds of policy makers it thus cannot be judged a pivotal contribution of McLean's to the Cabinet discussion. The impact of McLean's forays into the Yemen and subsequent reports on the strength of the Royalist forces and loyalties are regarded as important by Jones because they provided evidence that the YAR did not command the loyalties of the majority of its subjects – a prerequisite of recognition.<sup>62</sup> An analysis of the minutes of these Cabinet meetings, however, shows the issue of Royalist force strength or support is not a central feature in the decision not to recognise the YAR. Indeed in the meeting of the 31<sup>st</sup> October the JIC assessment took a prominent place over McLean's findings noting 'there was some evidence of increasing tribal activity in the East but not enough to alter the assessment that the republicans would maintain and probably consolidate their present position'.<sup>63</sup> By February 1963 it was acknowledged that the military situation was in a stalemate

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<sup>61</sup> AMEJ 1/7/2 – McLean's documented conversation with King Saud dated 27/10/62

<sup>62</sup> C. Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-65*, p50

<sup>63</sup> CAB 130/189 GEN 776

with 'neither side having the power to move into the territory of the other'.<sup>64</sup> It was the effect recognition would have on stability in Aden that might 'encourage our opponents and upset our friends' that was far more important in the decision to withhold recognition than the Royalist fortunes emphasised by McLean's reports.<sup>65</sup>

It appears that Jones' assessment overstates the influence of the Aden Group in Whitehall. There is, however, still a case that can be made for the indirect influence of the Aden Group from a different sphere. If it is acknowledged that a significant and consistent factor in the withholding of recognition was the attitudes of local potentates, work on the ground to change or harden opinion against recognising the YAR must be seen as noteworthy in some way. According to Christopher Gandy's account this is what occurred. Gandy claims that 'I was informed by a senior British official in the administration, Alastair Macintosh, [that] a majority of the federal rulers at first wanted us to recognize the republic' and that 'it needed vigorous intervention by Trevaskis to persuade them otherwise'.<sup>66</sup> He suggested that 'On 6 February the federal rulers sent London a long, highly articulate telegram, probably drafted for them by Trevaskis, opposing recognition except under strict safeguards'.<sup>67</sup> Gandy further believed that the likes of Julian Amery and the Aden Group had allies among senior officials in Aden such as Kennedy Trevaskis and Charles Johnston, then governor of Aden.<sup>68</sup> There is not much available evidence to this effect aside from Gandy's own account. This account itself is limited by his personal animosity towards the Aden Group and his geographical distance in Taiz'z. Gandy himself admits 'I was largely ignorant of discussions and decisions in Aden, London, New York and Washington, but the official records now reveal what was going on there'.<sup>69</sup> It was also written much later than the events and so memory and hindsight affect the analysis within the source. However, this pattern of direct and unilateral intervention on the ground fits very much with

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<sup>64</sup> CAB 130/189 GEN 776

<sup>65</sup> CAB 130/189 GEN 776

<sup>66</sup> C. Gandy, *A Mission to Yemen: August 1962 - January 1963*, p257

<sup>67</sup> *ibid*, p272

<sup>68</sup> *ibid*, p264

<sup>69</sup> *ibid*, p253

Trevaskis' personality and politics. Though it is impossible to say for sure if Gandy's analysis is accurate it is not unreasonable to believe Trevaskis would engage in such action as it is perfectly consistent with his behaviour as Governor of Aden in the following two years.

Following from this tentative conclusion it would seem that there is space to attribute some level of influence to the Aden Group on the issue of recognition. It does not lie, however, as Jones suggests, in the direct intervention of Mclean in the Yemen or Amery and Sandys in Whitehall. The influence is more subtle and rests on the combination of Macmillan's emphasis on and wariness of local sensitivities and Trevaskis' potential exploitation of this on the ground.

The contribution of the mercenary operation and the Aden Group to the intelligence picture in the Yemen is an important aspect to examine. Jones illustrates that there was a serious dearth of British human intelligence capabilities in the Yemen during this period. He notes 'British intelligence as a whole remained woefully ill-informed regarding the situation inside the Yemen ... in particular, SIS had been found wanting, with only one officer, Hubert O'Bryan Tear, stationed in Aden'.<sup>70</sup> One of the functions fulfilled by McLean's early excursions into the Yemen and Royalist territory and the subsequent formation of the British Mercenary Organisation was that they were able to provide supplementary intelligence assessments that were distributed amongst significant actors in Whitehall. In his autobiography Smiley recounted when he delivered such an assessment to Douglas-Home within Number Ten Downing Street. 'The Prime Minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, listened carefully to my account, and asked me to contact him personally whenever I returned from future visits'.<sup>71</sup> Previously Amery was also known to have passed information directly to Macmillan when he was prime minister.<sup>72</sup> This has led Jones to make an assessment that 'to this extent, the activities and reports of those associated with the

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<sup>70</sup> C. Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-65*, p42

<sup>71</sup> *ibid*, p100

<sup>72</sup> R. Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies: British Intelligence and Counter Insurgency*, p139

Aden Group carried a lot of weight in cabinet discussions throughout the summer and autumn of 1964'.<sup>73</sup>

However, there are some important qualifications to make to Jones' analysis when assessing the influence of Amery and the Aden Group. One of the key points to observe is this supplementary intelligence provided by local sources such as the BMO and Trevaskis were viewed with much circumspection by SIS and crucially the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). Trevaskis himself was known to exaggerate. Furthermore because of a low opinion of the intelligence services he was 'prone to acting as his own intelligence assessment officer ... on occasions he edited the local intelligence reports unilaterally'.<sup>74</sup> This was terrible practice and caused the JIC to be particularly mistrustful of any evidence that had passed through his hands. Sources within the Foreign Office judged that Trevaskis tended to interpret any incident under his own theory and this led John Bushell, an intelligence officer from MIDCOM, to assess that the ability to conduct accurate and objective intelligence assessments in Aden were greatly hindered.<sup>75</sup> Likewise 'The JIC was dismissive of mercenaries' and 'the committee stressed the distinction between intelligence obtained via unprejudiced sources and that obtained from persons favourable to [the] Royalist Cause'.<sup>76</sup> Rory Cormac assesses 'that the JIC, fearing bias, was too quickly dismissive of evidence emanating from the Colonial Office and was overly reliant on intelligence from the Foreign Office or GCHQ'.<sup>77</sup> It would appear that the impact of the supplementary intelligence from the BMO and the Aden Group in this period was muted because of the question of reliability. Rather than intelligence delivery enabling Amery and his associates to carry weight in cabinet discussions as Jones suggests, the provenance and the perceived politicisation of the material offered may in fact have harmed their cause.

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<sup>73</sup> C. Jones, *Britain and the Yemen Civil War, 1962-65*, p99

<sup>74</sup> R. Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies: British Intelligence and Counter Insurgency*, p128

<sup>75</sup> *ibid*

<sup>76</sup> *ibid*, p143

<sup>77</sup> *ibid*, p125

The JIC's reluctance to use local and mercenary intelligence sources was highly significant because it was the JIC assessments that provided the groundwork for the formation of government policy regarding South Arabia. This is because the intelligence reports produced by the JIC assessing the threat level were the core documents that framed appropriate responses to such a threat. In the autumn of 1962 when the JIC reports concluded that 'the threat was primarily unconventional and subversive' and 'stopped short of concluding that British interests were threatened by coordinated and externally directed violent subversion' it left no room for a justification of direct or indirect intervention within the Yemeni conflict.<sup>78</sup> As long as the JIC's intelligence assessment of the threat level remained cautious the justification for and sanctioning of overt and covert operations in the Yemen was limited. When the intelligence assessments began to acknowledge an increased threat level it was then that foreign policy began to take a more interventionist turn. Evidence of this causal relationship between the JIC threat assessment and direct action can be evidenced by RANCOUR operations in the summer of 1964. It was at this point that the JIC began to take a more alarmist view of the threats and as a reaction to this assessment the Douglas-Home administration sanctioned the supply of money and arms to tribes in the Federation of South Arabia (FSA) to use against Egyptian targets on both sides of the border.<sup>79</sup>

One of the objectives of Amery and the Aden Group was to influence the government to provide direct support to the Royalist cause – if not through overt means then through covert measures. When officially sanctioned covert operations did occur they were coordinated by the Joint Action Committee (JAC). The role of the JAC was to scrutinise and coordinate various proposals of action and provide a forum for interdepartmental discussion.<sup>80</sup> Cormac notes that 'the Joint Action Committee had extensive connections with the JIC. This included much overlap between the two committees, with one senior source who later sat on the JIC describing the JAC as a JIC

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<sup>78</sup> R. Cormac, *Coordinating Covert Action: The Case of the Yemen Civil War and the South Arabian Insurgency*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol.36 no.45, p697

<sup>79</sup> *ibid*, p696

<sup>80</sup> *ibid*, p703

subcommittee'.<sup>81</sup> This is why JIC intelligence assessments and suspicion over local source reliability were so important in constraining government sanctioned covert action because the JAC and JIC were so intimately connected. Cormac argues that 'available archival evidence suggests that, channelled through the JAC, all source intelligence assessments helped moderate the more aggressive proposals for covert intervention'.<sup>82</sup> The Aden Group were thus largely unsuccessful in their attempts to influence H.M.G. to intervene directly in Yemen as they would wish. Indeed, one point to address is that the setting up of the BMO is in itself an admission that the Aden Group failed in this objective. If they had been successful in influencing the government to aid the Royalists they would not have needed to take matters into their own hands through mercenary operations. Despite Duncan Sandys and Peter Thorneycroft sitting on the JIC and Amery's attempts in the background to sway Macmillan and Douglas-Home through alternative intelligence channels it appears that their influence was significantly limited by the consequences of JIC intelligence assessments that dismissed their supplementary material.

On analysis it would appear that Amery and the Aden Group were much less influential than Jones has suggested. On the matter of recognition it would appear that government policy was in fact much more consistent and that McLean's reports carried far less weight than Jones suggests. There is, however, room to suggest that work by the Aden Group, specifically Trevaskis, in South Arabia could have influenced the attitude of the local potentates towards recognition, which in turn prolonged the recognition debate until events took control. It would also seem that the Aden Group failed to achieve their goal of altering H.M.G.'s official position of non-intervention. Though official covert operations began in the summer of 1964 this was not attributable to the Aden Group but instead a shift in JIC intelligence assessments. If anything, Amery and the Aden Group worked counterproductively against their preferred policy

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p704

<sup>82</sup> R. Cormac, *Confronting the Colonies: British Intelligence and Counter Insurgency*, p147

outcomes because the perceived reliability of their supplementary intelligence material meant that their input, even if accurate, was ignored.

## Conclusions

The aim of this study has been to provide a focused analysis of the contribution of Julian Amery and the Aden Group to the Yemeni Civil War. It has concentrated on the scope of their influence in Whitehall to try and assess in what ways, if any, official government policy was affected. The primary conclusion to draw from this survey is that Amery and the Aden Group's influence was not as significant a force within Whitehall as previously thought. Though in Southern Arabia they may have had some success through setting up the BMO in aiding the Royalists to continue their campaign for as long as they did, they had very limited success in achieving their aims at home. This was because the personalities and actions of individuals within the group served to undermine their influence by alienating key actors. Mercenary operations themselves coloured the reputations of McLean and Smiley, and Trevaskis' doctoring of intelligence assessments aroused significant circumspection. Thus, with regards to lobbying for official covert operations Sandys and Amery, when presenting information and analysis to the Cabinet or other policy forums, were undermined by association and the provenance of their sources. Amery himself, though close personally with Macmillan, found it hard to influence the prime minister politically, and having made powerful enemies in the events that led to Douglas-Home's premiership was side-lined further. Though non-recognition was a policy outcome that reflected the Aden Group's preferences it was not the efforts of Amery, Sandys and McLean that secured this. Instead it was a combination of Macmillan's emphasis on local sensibilities and al-Sallal's impatience - though there is some room to attribute local opinion manipulation to Trevaskis.

The findings of this study directly contrast some of the assessments made by Jones in the historiography of this period. It is argued that Jones significantly overemphasises the impact of the Aden Group. This is because he makes certain assumptions conflating influence and access. Due to the wealth of literature emphasising the power and influence of the Suez Group in the downfall of Eden it is tempting to draw similar conclusions on its loosely formed successor,

especially due to the continuity of personalities. The context, however, had significantly changed and the Aden Group did not possess the same force. It is also hoped that this study has contributed a methodology for testing such assumptions by framing events in conjunction with a personal character assessment of a key individual and an in depth discussion of their relationships with other significant actors. It is the assessment of relationship quality that helps delineate access from influence in the main body of analysis.

Furthermore, building on the work of Cormac, this study has also contributed to an understanding of official British foreign policy formation. In particular how the government machinery of the day relied wholly on its official intelligence and decision making capabilities and explicitly rejected external influences because of the pariah status of these periphery actors. This affected the assessments made, and perhaps led to an initial underestimation of Nasser's intentions. This has consequences for future studies of British policy in other similar post-colonial conflict situations, as the wholesale dismissal of external intelligence sources, based on personal animosity and mistrust, might be a key policy failing of the British government in these contexts.

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