

Anglo-American Relations and the Politics of Militarization in the British Bahamas,  
1960-1973

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On the chilly afternoon of Sunday, February 26, 1967, some five thousand spectators crowded onto the tarmac and into Butler Aviation Hangar at the Palm Beach, Florida Airport. The afternoon was pregnant with excitement as spectators ate complimentary hotdogs, sipped soft drinks, and strained to glimpse several exhibits, including a submarine, U.S. Navy dive equipment, and U.S. Navy helicopters and aircraft, which had attracted “a queue of small boys.” A Navy band, celebrating the international dimension of the occasion, struck up “God Save the Queen” before a rendition of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Notable attendees included Vice President Hubert Humphrey, U.S. Senator George Smathers, astronaut Scott Carpenter, and Sir Ralph Grey, the governor of the British Bahamas, who, wearing a plumed bicorn and bedecked in medals, “cut an impressive figure.” Such fanfare marked the commissioning of the Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center (AUTECH), a more than \$100 million naval facility on Andros Island, Bahamas. A joint Anglo-American initiative to further both anti-submarine warfare and the study of the deep ocean, Vice President Humphrey touted AUTECH as furthering “the common cause of human freedom” for both Britain and the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

The AUTECH naval facility represented the last significant Anglo-American military installation constructed in the Bahamas and, indeed, the Anglophone Caribbean during the Cold War. Since World War II, with British cooperation, the United States had gradually militarized the Caribbean Commonwealth. Shortly after the fall of France in September 1940, the U.S. and Britain concluded the famous “destroyers-for-bases” agreement. According to the deal, the U.S. furnished a beleaguered Britain with fifty used destroyers and, in return, obtained leases on 87,000 acres of Crown land for naval and air

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<sup>1</sup> “Humphrey, Samthers Stress AUTECH Importance At Commissioning Here,” *The Palm Beach Post*, February 27, 1967, pp.1-2, 6.

bases in the territories of Newfoundland, Bermuda, Trinidad, Antigua, St. Lucia, Jamaica, British Guiana, and the Bahamas.<sup>2</sup> The allied victory in World War II reduced, but did not end the American presence in the Caribbean. If anything, the Cold War and the development of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) elevated the importance of Caribbean bases. In 1949, President Harry Truman authorized the construction of a 3,000-mile range for the testing and tracking of ICBMs. The Long Range Proving Ground, as it became known, transformed many of the World War II-era bases into missile-tracking sites by 1960, linking together the Commonwealth islands of the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Antigua, St. Lucia, and Trinidad in a chain that stretched from balmy south Florida to wind-swept Ascension Island. In addition to these installations, the U.S. also maintained underwater research and navigation stations in Barbados, Jamaica, and the Turks and Caicos.<sup>3</sup>

The Bahamas figured prominently in this American military expansion in the Commonwealth Caribbean. In 1941, as part of the destroyers-for-bases deal, Britain granted the U.S. unprecedented operating rights in the Bahamas through the Leased Naval and Air Bases Agreement. In 1949, the U.S. subsequently acquired extensive overflight rights through an agreement between the U.S. Air Force and the Royal Air Force. In addition to these operating rights, the U.S. reached agreements for the Air Force Eastern Test Range Station (AFETR) on Grand Bahama in 1950, the naval facility on Eleuthera (NAVFAC) in 1957, and the Coast Guard Long Range Aid to Navigation

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<sup>2</sup> Steven High, *Base Colonies in the Western Hemisphere, 1940-1967* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 17-25. For a precise breakdown of the acreage given to the U.S. during World War II, see Fitzroy A. Baptiste, "United States-Caribbean Relations from World War II to the Present: The Social Nexus," in *U.S.-Caribbean Relations: Their Impact on Peoples and Culture*, ed. Ransford W. Palmer (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 1998), pp. 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> Baptiste, "United States-Caribbean Relations from World War II to the Present," pp. 17-18.

Station (LORAN) in 1960.<sup>4</sup> Of these installations, the British and Americans jointly used the AFETR and AUTEK facilities.<sup>5</sup> These bases left a large imprint on the Bahamian landscape. The AFETR facilities, which enabled the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to track missiles, satellites, and other spacecraft launched from Cape Canaveral, alone comprised more than forty “instrumentation and telemetry sites” and occupied over seven hundred acres of Bahamian land. Thus by the commissioning of AUTEK, the United States had “substantial military interests in the Bahamas.”<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the AFETR, NAVFAC, and AUTEK facilities were critical to Anglo-American security. Integral to anti-submarine warfare in the Atlantic, the Eleuthera facility formed part of the Atlantic Underwater Sound Surveillance System (SOUS) network, which enabled the U.S. to track the movement of Soviet nuclear submarines. Likewise, AUTEK and AFETR represented significant assets for the Anglo-American weapons laboratories in the Caribbean. The U.S. Navy, in conjunction with the Royal Navy, tested undersea weapons and surveillance systems at AUTEK and the AFETR

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<sup>4</sup> Memorandum from James H. Michel to Robert A. Hurwitch, May 4, 1973, pp. 1-2, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I, 1973.

<sup>5</sup> For a brief discussion of U.S.-U.K. basing collaboration, see UK (MOD)-US (DOD) Military Discussions-Military Relationships After Bahamian Independence, undated, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15—Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4—Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15 Bases, Meetings, Installations, 1972.

<sup>6</sup> Background Paper for AUTEK Negotiations, pp. 1-3, in Draft United States Position Papers Relating to Negotiations with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Bahama Islands Concerning the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEK) in the Bahamas, February, 8, 1963, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (7).

featured “such ongoing missile and space programs as Polaris, Poseidon, Trident, and others.”<sup>7</sup>

For casual observers and the State Department alike, the Bahamas and the Anglo-American military facilities dotting its islands played an essential role in the Cold War. As one newspaper columnist opined, “the Bahamas are even more strategic than the naval base of Guantanamo to the overall defense interests of the U.S.” “After all,” the columnist continued, “the Bahamas stand directly between Cape Kennedy and the moon.”<sup>8</sup> To be sure, Guantanamo retained greater notoriety and symbolic importance after the Castro revolution. Yet the AFETR, NAVFAC, and AUTECH facilities, by developing and refining critical aeronautical and ballistic weapons systems, undoubtedly did more to bolster American capabilities. In addition, by developing ballistic systems and helping to physically guide American astronauts into space, AFETR played a critical, albeit largely forgotten role in the space race. Moreover, beyond the military installations in the archipelago, as one State Department employee observed, “US ties to the Bahamas are closer and more numerous than to any other part of the Caribbean.” By 1972, the U.S. had approximately \$1 billion invested in the islands, American citizens made up ten percent of the overall Bahamian population, and over one million American tourists streamed into the islands annually.<sup>9</sup>

The Anglo-American bases were equally important to the political life of the Bahamas throughout the long, tortuous decolonization process that culminated in

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<sup>7</sup> Overseas Bases: Prospects for the Bahamas, November 15, 1972, pp. 2-3, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, DEF 15-3 AUSTL-US to DEF 15 BAH-US, Box 1689, File DEF 15, BAH-US, 1/1/70.

<sup>8</sup> John Chamberlin, “Between Cape Kennedy and the Moon,” *Evening Independent*, March 4, 1967, 12-A.

<sup>9</sup> Study of U.S. Bilateral Security Commitment to the Bahamas, May 18, 1972, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, POL-Political Affairs and Relations, General 1970 to SOC 11-5-Narcotics, 1974, Box 7, File POL-16 Independence, Recognition, 1972.

Bahamian independence in July 1973. Between 1960 and 1973, the Anglo-American installations served as domestic political capital and diplomatic leverage for competing Bahamian political parties. From 1960 to 1963, amid growing racial enmity, the minority white oligarchy, the United Bahamian Party (UBP), seized the AUTEK negotiations as an opportunity to improve its flagging popularity. Imperiled by the rising power of the all-black Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), the UBP used the AUTEK negotiations as leverage in an abortive attempt to revise the U.S. customs legislation of 1961, to secure critically needed funding for public development, and to bolster public support, especially among the merchant classes.

From 1970 to 1973, as the U.S. and U.K. sought to renegotiate the basing rights to the AFETR, NAVFAC, and AUTEK facilities as well as operating and overflight rights in preparation for Bahamian independence, the ruling PLP exploited those issues for similarly partisan purposes. Planning for a post-independence economic, political, and security landscape, the PLP coopted the basing talks in an effort to legitimize its fragile rule against the rising power of the Free National Movement (FNM), to fund the transition from colony to independent statehood, to obtain American security commitments to protect against Cuban and Soviet aggression, and to garner support for the Bahamian Law of the Sea position. Most significantly, however, the PLP employed the Anglo-American basing talks to assuage Bahamian anxieties—widespread in 1970—about the viability of independence from Britain. The Anglo-American bases, the PLP averred, represented financial security and a source of protection against Cuban and Soviet aggression.

These two phases of the basing talks coincided with two distinct phases of Anglo-American relations. During the AUTEK talks between 1960 and 1963, Anglo-American relations, which had deteriorated following the Suez debacle, experienced a renaissance. Mirroring the cordial relations of President John Kennedy and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, the Americans and British worked closely and harmoniously to successfully secure basing rights to the AUTEK facility in 1963. In contrast to the Kennedy-Macmillan years, Anglo-American relations chilled during the extensive basing renegotiations between 1970 and 1973. Under the leadership of Edward Heath, Britain drifted closer to continental Europe and its commitment to empire ebbed. Similarly, humiliated from its ignominious defeat in Vietnam, the U.S., under the ambit of the Nixon Doctrine, initiated a comparably stark strategic realignment.<sup>10</sup> In this new environment, as evidenced by the Bahamian basing talks, Anglo-American relations assumed a qualitatively different and less cooperative tenor. Initially, the Americans regarded the British as a source of stability and so pressured them to stay involved in the Bahamas. Disinclined to preserve an imperial system with few benefits for the British, the Heath government haphazardly bequeathed their obligations to the U.S. As the Americans assumed the imperial burden, they gradually viewed the British as an impediment to a post-colonial future in the Bahamas and consequently acted unilaterally with increasing frequency.

Despite the critical importance of the Bahamas as a research and development laboratory for Anglo-American weapons systems, scholars have devoted remarkably little attention to American foreign policy toward the Bahamas specifically or the British

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<sup>10</sup> For a concise overview of the Kennedy-Macmillan and Heath-Nixon years, respectively, see, John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations in the Cold War and After* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), pp. 49-61, 73-78.



Caribbean broadly. Indeed, the vast majority of scholarship on American foreign relations with the Caribbean focuses on the Spanish-speaking islands, most notably Cuba, the perennial *bête noire* of American policymakers.<sup>11</sup> Of the relatively small corpus of scholarship that has examined the British Caribbean, the general emphasis has been on the period between 1945 and the early 1960s. Situated within the well-trodden decolonization narrative, this literature explains West Indian independence as the denouement of the cooperative process by which the U.S., animated by basing needs and anti-communism, gradually supplanted an attenuated Britain as the hegemon in the Caribbean and, indeed, throughout the post-war world.<sup>12</sup> This scholarship has overwhelmingly characterized West Indian decolonization as a synergistic interaction between American ascendance and anti-colonialism, the decline of British might, and indigenous nationalist pressures.<sup>13</sup> More recently, scholars have injected commercial and

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<sup>11</sup> The literature on Cuba is vast. See, for example, Thomas G. Patterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Esteban Morales Dominguez and Gary Prevost, *United States-Cuban Relations: A Critical History* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2008); Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *Intimate Enemies: The United States and Cuba* (New York: Routledge, 2011). For an outstanding analysis of American and Cuban diplomacy in Africa, see Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002). For an examination of Anglo-American relations in Cuba, see Christopher Hull, *British Diplomacy and US Hegemony in Cuba, 1898-1964* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). For American foreign policy toward the Dominican Republic, see Michael R. Hall, *Sugar and Power in the Dominican Republic: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Trujillos* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000); Russell Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy: U.S. Interventions in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006). For American relations with the Spanish-speaking Caribbean in a Latin American context, see *Beyond the Eagle's Shadow: New Histories of Latin America's Cold War*, eds. Mark A. Lawrence et al. (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> For an archetypal analysis of this decolonization process, see Wm. Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay, 1941-1945: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>13</sup> For an overview of how these forces interacted to produce independence in the British Caribbean, see Cary Fraser, *Ambivalent Anti-Colonialism: The United States and the Genesis of West Indian Independence, 1940-1964* (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1994).

economic interests as well as labor militancy and race into this heady mix.<sup>14</sup> In addition to these regional studies, there have also been several country-specific analyses.<sup>15</sup>

With the exception of a few fleeting references, the voluminous body of scholarship on American military bases overseas has likewise ignored the sizeable military presence in the Bahamian archipelago.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, this literature has focused overwhelmingly on the large base communities in Japan, Korea, and Germany. For example, scholars have explored how American military bases aided in the cultural, economic, and political reconstruction of Germany specifically and Europe generally in the wake of World War II.<sup>17</sup> Others have analyzed the social, economic, and environmental impact of American military installations abroad on both a macro- and micro-level, which has included insightful studies on the bases in Vieques, Puerto Rico,

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<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the economic and labor dimensions of West Indian independence, See Charlie Whitham, *Bitter Rehearsal: British and American Planning for a Post-War West Indies* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002); Gerald Horne, *Cold War in a Hot Zone: The United States Confronts Labor and Independence Struggles in the British West Indies* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2007). For a discussion of race in West Indies decolonization, see Jason C. Parker, *Brother's Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937-1962* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Stephen G. Rabe, *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War Story* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Colin A. Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 101-102; Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream: A History of the Bahamian People*, Vol. II (Athens, GA and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), pp. 372-375; Dean W. Collinwood, *The Bahamas between Worlds* (Decatur, IL: White Sound Press, 1989), p. 49; C.T. Sandars, *America's Overseas Garrisons: The Leasehold Empire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Humberto García Muñiz, "Decolonization, Demilitarization, and Denuclearization in the Caribbean," in *Strategy and Security in the Caribbean*, ed. Ivelaw L. Griffith (New York, Westport, CT, and London: Praeger, 1991), p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> On the role of American military in rebuilding war-torn Germany, see Daniel J. Nelson, *Defenders or Intruders? The Dilemmas of U.S. Forces in Germany* (Boulder, CO and London: Westview Press, 1987); Daniel J. Nelson, *A History of U.S. Military Forces in Germany* (Boulder, CO and London: Westview Press, 1987); Thomas W. Maulucci, Jr. and Detlef Junker, eds. *GIs in Germany: The Social, Economic, Cultural and Political History of the American Military Presence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); John Willoughby, *Remaking the Conquering Heroes: The Social and Geopolitical Impact of the Post-War American Occupation of Germany* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). For a broader view of American military bases in post-war Europe, see Simon Duke, *United States Military Forces and Installations in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). For an overview of the GI experience in post-war Germany, see John P. Hawkins, *Army of Hope, Army of Alienation: Culture and Contradiction in the American Army Communities of Cold War Germany* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2001).

Guantanamo, Cuba, Trinidad, Hawaii, and the island of Diego Garcia in the British Overseas Territory.<sup>18</sup> Recently, scholars have expounded on the profound social ramifications of American military bases abroad by studying the gender and racial dimensions of basing.<sup>19</sup> In addition to these social, cultural, and environmental histories, scholars have also critically appraised the military and diplomatic dimensions of American bases.<sup>20</sup>

The history at hand, by connecting domestic Bahamian political developments with great-power relations in an age of decolonization, blends social and diplomatic history. As one scholar has presciently observed, “social history is diplomatic history and...local and international histories meet on the ground.”<sup>21</sup> In this case, the overarching theoretical framework that links the local and the international borrows from a burgeoning literature on grass-roots anti-basing movements and the relationship between

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<sup>18</sup> For a broader overview of the social, economic, and environmental costs of American military bases abroad, see Anni P. Baker, *American Soldiers Overseas: The Global Military Presence* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2004); Catherine Lutz, ed. *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Sasha Davis, *The Empires' Edge: Militarization, Resistance, and Transcending Hegemony in the Pacific* (Athens, GA and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2015). For detailed, country-level analyses, see César J. Ayala and José L. Bolívar, *Battleship Vieques: Puerto Rico from World War II to the Korean War* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2011); Katherine T. McCaffrey, *Military Power and Popular Protest: The U.S. Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Jana K. Lipman, *Guantánamo: A Working-Class History between Empire and Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009); Harvey R. Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States Occupation* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Beth Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place: The Alchemy of Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii* (New York: The Free Press, 1992); David Vine, *Island of Shame: The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base on Diego Garcia* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> For an excellent interdisciplinary examination of the interconnections between gender, sexual violence, and American military bases overseas, see Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon, eds. *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010). See also Sarah Kovner, *Occupying Power: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Postwar Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012). For an incisive analysis of race on American military bases, see Steven High, *Base Colonies in the Western Hemisphere, 1940-1967* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, James R. Blaker, *United States Overseas Basing: An Anatomy of the Dilemma* (New York, Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 1990); Robert E. Harkavy, *Great Power Competition for Overseas Bases: The Geopolitics of Access Diplomacy* (New York and Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982).

<sup>21</sup> Lipman, *Guantánamo*, p. 6.

the domestic politics of host countries and American bases.<sup>22</sup> This work is particularly indebted to the insights of Alexander Cooley, who has argued that American bases represent multivalent political capital and that the reception or rejection of U.S. bases depends on the domestic political situation of the host nation.<sup>23</sup> Cooley, however, focuses on sovereign states, thus overlooking the political importance of bases in colonial dependencies such as the Bahamas.

The subdued basing debates that animated Bahamian politics between 1960 and 1973 serve as a foil to the militant basing rhetoric that arose between 1957 and 1960 in Trinidad and Tobago. In a mass campaign that extensively employed nationalist and anti-imperialist invective, Trinidad and Tobago, under the charismatic leadership of Dr. Eric Williams, succeeded in closing the American naval base at Chaguaramas.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the Chaguaramas imbroglio, the Anglo-American military bases in the Bahamas did not engender a massive resistance campaign with strong anti-imperialist overtones. Nonetheless, the Anglo-American bases held enormous meaning for the Bahamian people and shaped the archipelago's political landscape. The Bahamas, unlike Trinidad

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Andrew Yeo, *Activists, Alliances, and Anti-U.S. Base Protests* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Kent E. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007). For a comparative account that ties together exogenous and endogenous threats, see Amy A. Holmes, *Social Unrest and American Military Bases in Turkey and Germany since 1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). For a discussion of the linkages between democratization and American bases in South Korea, see Katharine H.S. Moon, "Korean Nationalism, Anti-Americanism, and Democratic Consolidation" in *Korea's Democratization*, ed. Samuel S. Kim (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Alexander Cooley, *Base Politics: Democratic Change and the U.S. Military Overseas* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> The Chaguaramas dispute has been well studied. See, for example, Colin A. Palmer, *Eric Williams and the Making of the Modern Caribbean* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press), pp. 76-137; High, *Base Colonies*, pp. 175-198; Spencer Mawby, "'Uncle Same, We Want Back We Land': Eric Williams and the Anglo-American Controversy over the Chaguaramas Base, 1957-1961," *Diplomatic History*, 36:1 (Jan. 2012), pp. 119-145.

and Tobago, represented a middle ground between acquiescence and outright resistance to Anglo-American hegemony.

For the most part, the Bahamian people and the archipelago's political parties did not in principle object to the presence of American bases, but rather disagreed on the details. Instead of resisting militarization, Bahamian political parties manipulated it to maintain power. In a bipolar world, the Bahamas' role as a "mini-state" circumscribed its options.<sup>25</sup> As Lynden Pindling, leader of the PLP and long-time Bahamian prime minister grasped, "There are only two nations in the world today who can defend themselves—all must enter into some kind of association for the purposes of defense and economy."<sup>26</sup> Embracing the bases in the archipelago enabled a mini-state such as the Bahamas to defray the enormous economic and security costs of independence. In doing so, however, the Bahamas transitioned from a formal British colony to an informal American dependency.<sup>27</sup>

The Bahamas between 1960 and 1973 affords ample insight into the interplay between domestic politics, great-power relations, and decolonization. In particular, close scrutiny of Anglo-American basing diplomacy in the Bahamas during this thirteen-year period complicates and expands on the findings of historian Roger Louis. In a well-known article on "the imperialism of decolonization," Louis argues that the British

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<sup>25</sup> For the problems of mini-states, see John B. Martin, *U.S. Policy in the Caribbean* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 229-232. For a theoretical overview of the problems attending mini-state sovereignty, see Anthony P. Maingot, "The United States in the Caribbean: Geopolitics and the Bargaining Capacity of Small States," in *Peace, Development and Security in the Caribbean: Perspectives to the Year 2000* (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1990), pp. 57-84.

<sup>26</sup> Telegram 1140, September 18, 1968, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969, Political and Defense, POL BAH to POL 17 BAH, Box 1864, File POL 7 BAH.

<sup>27</sup> Decolonization inspired the search for new forms of interstate association and spawned the "federal moment," which attained its apogee in the late 1950s. For an insightful discussion on federalism in the British Empire, see Michael Collins, "Decolonisation and the 'Federal Moment,'" *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 24:1 (2013), pp. 21-40.

Empire did not dissolve following World War II, but rather became reconstituted with American backing. According to Louis, the British swapped formal “colonial control for informal Empire,” which entailed exercising a diminished, though nonetheless substantial role in the internal management of former colonies through free trade, the coopting of local elites, and American largesse. In the post-war world, the British Empire became a hybrid, “more than British and less than an imperium.”<sup>28</sup>

While Louis provides a cogent analytical framework for understanding decolonization between the Attlee and Douglas-Home governments, it does little to illuminate the final wave of decolonization in the 1970s and beyond. Louis’ decision to focus on the critical first two decades of decolonization parallels the general trend in the literature, by which scholars relegate the empire’s final throes into a concluding and often desultory chapter.<sup>29</sup> This is unfortunate, for between 1970 and 1997 two-dozen British possessions, including the Bahamas, achieved independence.<sup>30</sup> Louis’ paradigm, by construing the empire as a bilateral project, also does not capture the complexities and tensions that limited and confounded Anglo-American imperial cooperation by the early 1970s. By the presidency of Richard Nixon and premiership of Edward Heath, as the case of the Bahamas suggests, the Americans and British evinced a mutual lack of interest in

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<sup>28</sup> Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Decolonization,” in *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization*, ed. Wm. Roger Louis, (New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 487, 501-502.

<sup>29</sup> For a concise historiographical overview of decolonization, see John Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1991). In most literature on decolonization, scholars treat the period after the 1960s parenthetically, amalgamating the colonies that achieved independence during the last wave superficially in the concluding chapter. See, for example, W. David McIntyre, *British Decolonization, 1946-1997: When, Why and How did the British Empire Fall?* (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd, 1998); D. George Boyce, *Decolonisation and the British Empire, 1775-1997* (London, Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1999); Nicholas J. White, *Decolonisation: The British Experience since 1945* (London and New York: Longman, 1999); John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Roy Douglas, *Liquidation of Empire: The Decline of the British Empire* (New York: 2002); Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> For a table of independence dates, see McIntyre, *British Decolonization*, pp. ix-x.

the imperial project. For the British, the resonance of empire, which had been declining for decades, reached its nadir in the early 1970s. As Heath and Britain cultivated deeper ties with the European continent, the solicitousness with which the British had once treated the decolonization process evaporated. Whereas the British had worried deeply in the 1950s and early 1960s about the post-colonial future of the Caribbean wards under their charge, by 1970 Britain haphazardly disgorged its remaining colonies and foisted their welfare on the Americans.<sup>31</sup>

The Americans likewise increasingly resisted close cooperation with the British in the Caribbean. This diplomatic volte-face reflects the chill in Anglo-American relations that defined the Nixon-Heath years and the growing American perception that, buffeted by nationalist pressures and anti-colonial sentiment, British clout had inexorably eroded in the Caribbean. This does not imply a rupture in Anglo-American relations. Instead, as the close Anglo-American partnership that had prevailed during the Kennedy-Macmillan years waned in the tumult of the late 1960s and early 1970s, so too did the conspicuous bilateralism of the imperial project. Frustration with the British, once sporadic and muted, became shriller and more prevalent. To be sure, the Americans did not eschew British support. Yet the bilateralism and bonhomie that had defined the Anglo-American imperial project in the first two decades of the Cold War, at least in the Bahamian archipelago, receded. Indeed, by Bahamian independence in July 1973 the Americans

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<sup>31</sup> I am referring specifically to the ill-fated West Indies Federation (WIF) and the considerable care with which the British treated it. For a concise overview of the WIF, see Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 296-300. For a history that situates the WIF in broader perspective, see Howard Johnson, "The British Caribbean from Demobilization to Constitutional Decolonization," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. IV, eds. Judith M. Brown et al. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 597-622. For a discussion of the haste with which the British jettisoned their remaining colonies, see Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, pp. 307-314.

increasingly acted unilaterally in the Commonwealth Caribbean to preserve their economic and security interests.

### **Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEK), 1960-1963**

#### *AUTEK and the Politics of Minority Rule, 1953-1963*

From approximately the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 until 1953, an essentially all-white “agrocommercial oligarchy” exercised complete, nearly uncontested control of the Bahamian archipelago. Known as “Bay Street,” this small, white elite retained political power over a large black majority for over 120 years through bribery, patronage networks, and electoral gerrymandering that gave disproportionate political clout to the white enclaves in the Out Islands. In October 1953, a group of reformers comprising Henry Taylor, William Cartwright, and Cyril Stevenson mounted a challenge to Bay Street hegemony by mobilizing as a political party and assuming the title of the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP). The PLP began as a mostly white or near-white, reform-minded political party with Catholic overtones dedicated to extending the vote to women (still disenfranchised as of 1953), expanding representation in the ruling body, the House of Assembly, truncating the term of the House of Assembly from seven years to five, and improving social equality.<sup>32</sup>

Although Taylor and his acolytes conceived of the party as “transracial,” the PLP struggled to overcome the suspicions of black Bahamians and garner their support. This paucity of black support, coupled with effective Bay Street intimidation, meant that the PLP initially made little progress as an oppositional force in the Bahamas. This gradually changed, however, when the electric Lynden Pindling, a black Bahamian of deep Christian faith, emerged as leader of the PLP. Pindling, along with Milo Butler, realized

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<sup>32</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, pp. 17-19, 308-309.



that uprooting Bay Street rule required portraying the PLP as the party of both working-class Bahamians and “the oppressed black majority.”<sup>33</sup>

The PLP, however, did not begin seriously effacing Bay Street power until the general strike of 1958. On November 1, 1957, smoldering tensions between the predominantly black unionized taxi drivers and white-owned private transport companies erupted. The Taxi-Cab Union, angered by the loss of revenue from the recent agreement concluded between Nassau hotel proprietors and the transportation companies to shuttle tourists to and from the newly opened Windsor Field Airport, initiated a hundred-car blockade of the airport. The twenty-four-hour blockade caused a virtual shutdown of tourist traffic into Nassau. After a two-month lull in the lingering dispute, the PLP and the Bahamian Federation of Labor (BFL), in solidarity with the Taxi-Cab Union, seized the transportation issue as an opportunity to challenge Bay Street rule and implored all Bahamian workers to strike. The ensuing general strike of January 1958, which comprised laborers, hotel workers, municipal workers, and others, prompted British colonial authorities to dispatch troops from Jamaica to preserve order. A tense mood prevailed in the archipelago, with incidents of violence, vandalism, and general discord, until the sixteen-day strike came to an end.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to elevating the PLP’s stature, the general strike reconstituted political power in the Bahamas in two important ways. First, shortly after the general strike, Bay Street reconstituted itself as the United Bahamian Party (UBP) in March 1958. Despite the new label, the UBP still comprised an essentially all-white clique of close-knit merchants and politicians with Roland Symonette and Stafford Sands as its leaders.

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<sup>33</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, pp. 308-309.

<sup>34</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, pp. 310-311.

Second, and more significantly, the general strike attracted considerable (and negative) international publicity, which galvanized the Colonial Office (CO) to push for labor and electoral reform in the Bahamas. The CO dispatched Alan Lennox-Boyd, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the Bahamas to discuss reform. Lennox-Boyd, using the threat of a royal commission, urged the Bay Street clique, now under the mantle of the UBP, to reform its antediluvian electoral practices by accepting the principle of adult male suffrage (though, significantly, not universal suffrage), creating four new House of Assembly seats representing the island of New Providence, and limiting “plural voting to one residential and one property vote per elector.” With the prodding of Lennox-Boyd, the UBP, after much foot dragging and chicanery, demurred on the principle of adult male suffrage, but acquiesced to restricting plural voting to two per individual and to creating the four new assembly seats on the island of New Providence.<sup>35</sup>

As a result of the electoral reforms forced upon the UBP, by-elections for the four newly created New Providence seats transpired in May 1960. In the May 20 by-elections, PLP candidates defeated UBP and Labor candidates in the predominantly black Eastern and Southern Districts of New Providence.<sup>36</sup> Although the PLP controlled only ten of the thirty-three seats in the House of Assembly, with these victories they represented an increasingly powerful political body and menacing threat to UBP hegemony. In the aftermath of the by-elections, S. Roger Tyler, the American Consul General, Nassau,

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<sup>35</sup> Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, pp. 66-73.

<sup>36</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 312. For detailed election results, see Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, p. 78.

opined that the PLP “is the party of the future” and “the end of Bay Street rule is just a question of time.”<sup>37</sup>

By 1960, politics in the Bahamas had become heavily racialized.<sup>38</sup> Under Pindling’s leadership, in the words of S. Roger Tyler, “The PLP has indeed made the negro population politically conscious.” Race had assumed such importance to the PLP that, amid the halcyon days of touristic and economic growth over which the UBP had presided in the late 1950s, Tyler lamented that “the only real argument the PLP can and does stress is racial.”<sup>39</sup> Amid shouts of “All the Way,” the PLP made racial appeals to the electorate, denouncing black Bahamians who cooperated with the UBP as race traitors. In contrast to the PLP, throughout the 1960 by-elections the UBP emphasized its role in constructing national “prosperity.” The theme of economic prosperity, however, increasingly rang hollow with black Bahamians, who believed “that they can run the Bahamas as well as Bay Street and they want to end Bay Street control.”<sup>40</sup>

The election losses in the spring of 1960 had two consequences. First, shortly after his victory in the Eastern District by-elections, Arthur Hanna, one of the more left-leaning PLP members, called for universal adult suffrage, imposing a five-year term in the House of Assembly, and ending the property vote. Buffeted by the PLP, the UBP consented to five-year terms and universal adult suffrage, but resisted abolishing the

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<sup>37</sup> Foreign Service Despatch re Convincing Election Victory of Negro Party, the PLP, May 31, 1960, pp. 1, 5, NARA, Source: RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

<sup>38</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 312.

<sup>39</sup> Foreign Service Despatch re Political Situation in the Bahamas, May 13, 1960, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

<sup>40</sup> Foreign Service Despatch re Convincing Election Victory of Negro Party, the PLP, May 31, 1960, pp. 2-3, NARA, Source: RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

property vote for fear that it would attenuate their power base.<sup>41</sup> Second, discomfited by an especially low level of support from middle- and lower-class white and mixed-race Bahamians, the UBP attempted to reinvent popular perceptions. Whereas in the past the UBP had been content with its lily-white, elitist image, after the elections of 1960 the UBP consciously sought to be more welcoming and inclusive. In the *Nassau Tribune*, Norman Solomon, a white merchant and UBP party member, exemplified the new conciliatory tone when he conceded that the UBP had made grievous mistakes in the past, but entreated “all Bahamians ‘black, white or pink’ to join the new UBP.” The UBP’s statements did little to assuage racial tensions. The PLP publicly upbraided the UBP in the *Nassau Herald*, casting aspersions on both the party and their supposedly novel tactics and exhorting black Bahamians to “destroy the political power of the White man if he is ever to have a chance for equality.”<sup>42</sup>

Racial tensions intensified in the fall of 1962 as the Bahamas readied for general elections, the first in which women could vote. Olive Jensen at the American Consulate, Nassau, captured the extent of the racial rancor when she wrote that “The air is charged with racism, so much so that a small spark could kindle an ugly situation.”<sup>43</sup> Although the PLP consistently emphasized its status as a largely black political movement, race was not the only contentious political issue. By January 1961, the Bahamas was experiencing an economic downturn as the colony struggled to provide social services for a burgeoning population with inadequate tax revenue.<sup>44</sup> Lacking income or corporate profit taxes, the

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<sup>41</sup> Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>42</sup> Foreign Service Despatch re Current Political Developments, November 3, 1960, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

<sup>43</sup> Airgram re Forthcoming Elections in the Bahamas, September 12, 1962, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

<sup>44</sup> Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, pp. 82-83.

UBP-ruled Bahamas obtained revenue almost exclusively through customs duties. Indeed, in the budget of 1962, the UBP obtained two-thirds of its revenue from customs duties.<sup>45</sup>

This lax tax structure, while curtailing tax revenue for the Bahamian state, encouraged foreign, especially American, investment in the islands. Although both the UBP and the PLP acknowledged the critical importance of foreign investment for the islands, the prevailing tax structure largely did not benefit the majority of black Bahamians. The PLP shrewdly exploited the UBP's taxation woes by stressing in its political rhetoric the need for capital-intensive social improvement projects. These calls for social development threatened to overstretch the UBP's meager budget.<sup>46</sup> The PLP likewise sought to discredit the UBP's economic policy by fallaciously claiming that the UBP had engineered a financial depression so as to "blame the PLP for the consequences."<sup>47</sup>

However, the PLP's efforts to subvert the UBP's economic policy ran up against fierce opposition. In response to the PLP's economic critique, the UBP pledged to assess taxation within the archipelago "with a view to increasing Government income without placing burdens on the poor man, while preserving the Colony's traditional freedom from direction taxation."<sup>48</sup> The merchants, the UBP's key support base, waged a counter campaign that exploited fears of economic collapse, warning of "greater unemployment unless the UBP candidates are elected." Some UBP supporters in the merchant and

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<sup>45</sup> Incoming Telegram CA-702, January 12, 1962, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15—Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements.

<sup>46</sup> Foreign Service Despatch re Current Political Developments, March 21, 1961, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

<sup>47</sup> Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, pp. 83-86.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, p. 86.

commercial classes also resorted to extralegal options, coercing their employees to “vote right” by backing the UBP.<sup>49</sup> In general, the UBP sought to deflect criticism by depicting the PLP as “inexperienced and irresponsible.”<sup>50</sup>

The highly anticipated general elections, which took place on November 26, 1962, resulted in the UBP eking out an improbable victory over the PLP.<sup>51</sup> Despite losing the popular vote 44 percent to 36 percent, UBP dominance in the House of Assembly increased. Following the 1962 general election, the House of Assembly comprised nineteen UBP, eight PLP, and six independents.<sup>52</sup> Of the six independents, four were decidedly “pro-UBP.”<sup>53</sup> This represented a loss of two seats in the House of Assembly for the PLP and ensured Bay Street political hegemony for the next five years.<sup>54</sup> The unlikely UBP victory, despite losing the popular vote, resulted primarily from electoral gerrymandering that gave the Out Islands, a bastion of UBP support, disproportionate political clout. In winning the 1962 election, the UBP doomed “Bahamian society to an intensified and long-lasting state of racial polarization.”<sup>55</sup>

Unfolding in consonance with the AUTEK negotiations, the acrimonious, racially polarized political contests of 1960 and 1962 shaped the basing talks in two important ways. First, one of the pressing issues for the UBP-controlled House of Assembly was

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<sup>49</sup> Foreign Service Despatch re Forthcoming Elections in the Bahamas, December 10, 1962, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

<sup>50</sup> Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, p. 86.

<sup>51</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 314. For an insightful analysis of the 1962 election and the general decline of the UBP, see Nona Martin and Virgil H. Storr, “Demystifying Bay Street: Black Tuesday and the Radicalization of Bahamian Politics in the 1960s,” *Journal of Caribbean History* 43:1 (2009), pp. 37-50.

<sup>52</sup> Airgram re Results of Elections in Bahamas, September 12, 1962, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

<sup>53</sup> Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, p. 92.

<sup>54</sup> Foreign Service Despatch re Forthcoming Elections in the Bahamas, December 10, 1962, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

<sup>55</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 312.

how to generate revenue given the fact that the Bahamas had neither income nor corporate taxes. Thus when the PLP began stressing capital-intensive social improvement projects in its rhetoric, the ruling UBP had an acute need for revenue to fund such projects to appease the electorate. Due to the racial polarization of Bahamian political life, maintaining UBP political hegemony depended, to an extent, on fulfilling popular aspirations for public improvement.<sup>56</sup> Concluding a favorable AUTEK agreement with monetary incentives, therefore, would afford the UBP with the financial means to improve the Bahamian infrastructure.

Second, continued UBP rule also depended on securing the support of the Bahamian merchant class by protecting the group's economic interests, which many Bahamians believed the United States government had undermined with recent customs legislation. Prior to September 1961, the Tariff Act of 1930 regulated customs duties for American citizens returning from abroad. Under the Tariff Act of 1930, an American resident returning from abroad after 48 hours or more "could bring in duty free, personal and household effects...in the amount of \$200 in any 30 day period." For American residents returning from abroad after twelve days or more, they "could bring in duty free an additional amount of \$300 in any 6 month period." On August 10, 1961, the U.S. government amended the Tariff Act of 1930, rendering it effective after 30 days. The new amendment, effective for two years, "reduced the amount of duty free exemption from \$200 to \$100 for a resident returning to the US after remaining abroad at least 48 hours, and also abolished for two years the additional \$300 available to a resident who stayed abroad for at least 12 days." Congress intended the customs amendment to staunch the

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<sup>56</sup> Foreign Service Despatch re Current Political Developments, March 21, 1961, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

outflow of gold plaguing the United States as a result of its increasingly lavish Cold War defense expenditures.<sup>57</sup>

For a country dependent on tourism and customs revenues, the amendment of 1961 was wildly unpopular. Some within the UBP thought the customs legislation reduced tourist spending and explained the discrepancy between the growth in tourism (up 28 percent) and dollar expenditures (up only 15 percent) between 1960 and 1963.<sup>58</sup> More importantly, however, the customs amendment was especially noxious to Bahamian merchants, who regarded it as “the cardinal sin of US policy.”<sup>59</sup> The main support base of the UBP, the merchant class, also believed that the customs legislation deleteriously impacted tourism. Since the UBP needed the backing of the merchants to retain political power, any potential AUTEK agreement would have to be congruent with their interests.<sup>60</sup> In the aftermath of the narrow and largely unjust defeat of the PLP in November 1962, the UBP had “to make good on their campaign promise of continued prosperity for the

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<sup>57</sup> United States-United Kingdom and Bahamas Negotiations Concerning the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEK) Position Paper, Raising the Duty Free Exemption for Residents Returning from the Bahama Islands, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (6).

<sup>58</sup> Basic Customs Discussions Paper, pp. 3-4, in Draft United States Position Papers Relating to Negotiations with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Bahama Islands Concerning the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEK) in the Bahamas, February, 8, 1963, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (7).

<sup>59</sup> Airgram re Politico-Economic Assessment, February 26 1965, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Political & Defense, Political Affairs & Relations, POL AUSTL-INDON 1/1/64 to POL BAH 1/1/64, Box 1908, File POL-Political Affairs & Rel. BAH, 1/1/64.

<sup>60</sup> Background Paper for AUTEK Negotiations, pp. 5-6, in Draft United States Position Papers Relating to Negotiations with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Bahama Islands Concerning the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEK) in the Bahamas, February, 8, 1963, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (7).



Bahamas.”<sup>61</sup> Securing a favorable AUTEK agreement thus became enmeshed with broader Bahamian political developments. Whatever political legitimacy the UBP had as the white minority party rested on satisfying popular public aspirations for national development projects, fulfilling campaign promises, and garnering political support from key constituents by revising the customs legislation.

As a result of these exigencies, shortly after the general election of 1962 the UBP pressed for several reforms. First, the UBP successfully agitated for internal self-government, which delegated all control of Bahamian affairs—except foreign affairs and external and internal security—to the House of Assembly as of January 7, 1964.<sup>62</sup> Second, the UBP promoted renegotiating, in their entirety, Bahamian basing agreements with Britain and the United States. Finally, the UBP advocated “payment of customs duties on consumable goods used by base personnel” at foreign defense installations in the archipelago.<sup>63</sup> These reforms, by focusing the attention of the Bahamian public on international affairs, were likely a ploy to deflect attention away from the UBP’s domestic policies. More importantly, renegotiating the basing and customs agreements represented political capital for Bay Street and promised the UBP a source of revenue with which to bolster their increasingly fragile and contested rule.

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<sup>61</sup> Basic Customs Discussions Paper, p. 3, in Draft United States Position Papers Relating to Negotiations with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Bahama Islands Concerning the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEK) in the Bahamas, February, 8, 1963, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (7).

<sup>62</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 337.

<sup>63</sup> Memorandum to Gordon Knox from Robert Tepper re Negotiations for AUTEK Installation in Bahamas, February 2, 1963, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (5).

*Anglo-American Relations, 1960-1963*

It was in this bitterly polarized political atmosphere that the U.S. made its first overtures to British colonial authorities regarding the prospect of another naval base in the Bahamian archipelago. In August 1960, the Department of Defense (DOD) apprised the State Department that the Navy required an Undersea Test and Evaluation Center in the vicinity of the islands of Andros or Exuma in the Bahamian archipelago. At the DOD's prompting, the State Department sought permission from the British government to survey Bahamian waters.<sup>64</sup> The British Foreign Office accepted the American request in November 1960, which enabled the Navy to survey two hundred miles of Bahamian waters south and southeast of Nassau in the vicinity of the Tongue of the Ocean and Exuma Sound.<sup>65</sup> Following a successful survey, the State Department informed the British that the U.S. wished to initiate formal negotiations with the British and Bahamians for the AUTEK facility.<sup>66</sup>

The American Navy's interest in AUTEK arose from advances in ballistic technology that rendered Soviet submarines a menacing threat. Hostile, nuclear-powered submarines with nuclear-launch capabilities patrolling the Caribbean presented, in the words of Captain W.H. Groverman of the U.S. Navy, "grave problems to the defense of the Western Hemisphere and to the protection of naval life lines that are required to

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<sup>64</sup> Letter from Hayden Williams to Ivan B. White, August 1, 1960, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (8).

<sup>65</sup> "U.S. Applies for Permission to Survey Bahamian Waters Wanted for Anti-Sub Rocket Tests," in *The Nassau Daily Tribune*, November 1, 1960, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41, U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, AV 14, Preclearance, 1975 THRU FN, Finance, 1975, Container #16, File DEF 15 AUTEK, 1960/66.

<sup>66</sup> Draft of letter from William E. Lang to Senator George A. Smathers, April 12, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (3).

support our allies in the free world.” The Navy intended AUTECH to serve as an anti-submarine laboratory to study the deep ocean, to test and hone weapons systems, and to refine underwater surveillance systems such as sonar. Although the Navy considered other locations for AUTECH, the deep, limpid waters of the Bahamian archipelago, in close proximity to the American mainland, proved ideal.<sup>67</sup>

The alacrity with which the British accepted the American request reflects the close Anglo-American partnership that defined the premiership of Harold Macmillan and the presidency of John F. Kennedy. Anglo-American relations between 1960 and 1963 have been labeled “a golden age,” a reviving of the “special relationship”—first initiated by Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt—that had frayed as a result of the Suez fiasco of 1956. Indeed, a close, “genuine cordiality and understanding” prevailed between Macmillan and Kennedy, which helped Anglo-American relations navigate the weighty crises of the early 1960s. In fact, the British played an ancillary, though not insignificant, role in resolving both the crises in Berlin in August 1961 and Cuba in October 1962.<sup>68</sup>

The Anglo-American partnership of the Macmillan-Kennedy years was especially close in matters of defense, particularly in the sharing of ballistic technology. The intensified weapons-sharing initiatives of the early 1960s have their roots in the Eisenhower years. In 1960, President Dwight Eisenhower agreed to sell Britain the Skybolt Missile, which, at the time, remained in the embryonic stages of development. With an 800-mile range, the Skybolt Missile, launched from bombers, enabled Britain to continue using its nearly obsolete V-bomber fleet and thus maintain “its independent

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<sup>67</sup> For strategic rationale of AUTECH, see Fact Sheet—Project AUTECH, undated, especially pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (6).

<sup>68</sup> Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, pp. 49-58.

nuclear strike force.” In the two years following Eisenhower’s promise, the Skybolt program encountered serious technical difficulties that prompted Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the DOD to abandon the project.<sup>69</sup>

For the British, the cancellation of Skybolt was unacceptable, as “losing the missile would jeopardize the existence of Britain’s independent deterrent.” Skybolt had become imbued with intense symbolic and political importance and deemed essential to both national security and the future of the Macmillan government. In a series of December 1962 Anglo-American talks convened, ironically, in Nassau, Macmillan rejected American offers for Skybolt and deftly maneuvered for the less problematic, submarine-launched Polaris Missile. Despite opposition, Kennedy, mainly because of the import he placed on Anglo-American relations and his personal affection for Macmillan, agreed to sell Britain the Polaris Missile at minimal cost. Thus, Macmillan scored a resounding diplomatic victory that preserved both Britain’s independent deterrence and his domestic prestige.<sup>70</sup>

The connection between the Macmillan-Kennedy talks in Nassau and the AUTEK naval base has been underappreciated. To be sure, the U.S. Navy’s August 1960 request for a naval facility in the Bahamas preceded the Kennedy-Macmillan talks by nearly two years.<sup>71</sup> Yet AUTEK, as the physical space in which the U.S. Navy and Royal Navy eventually tested Polaris missiles, became seen as a tangible extension of the agreement

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<sup>69</sup> Robert M. Hathaway, *Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations since World War II* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), pp. 60-64.

<sup>70</sup> Hathaway, *Great Britain and the United States*, pp. 64-67.

<sup>71</sup> Talking Points for Introductory Remarks at AUTEK Negotiations, February 7, 1963, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (5).

reached in Nassau between Kennedy and Macmillan.<sup>72</sup> More broadly, both the British and Americans saw AUTEK as a powerful symbol of Anglo-American cooperation in the defense of the so-called “free world.” “The AUTEK installation at Andros...will play a most important role in the testing of submarines which will be the mainstay of the Fre [sic] World’s first multi-national deterrent against Soviet Imperialism,” exults one document.<sup>73</sup> Despite the best efforts of American and British negotiators, however, the symbolic value of AUTEK proved insufficient in convincing the UBP to grant basing rights. Instead, the UBP, staking its political welfare on AUTEK, increasingly yoked the base to questions of financial remuneration and the repeal of the customs legislation.

#### *AUTEK Negotiations, 1960-1963*

The AUTEK negotiations began inauspiciously when the surveys occasioned tremors of opposition. The fact that British colonial authorities had not consulted the Bahamian House of Assembly before surveying rankled some both within Britain and the Bahamas. For example, Fenner Brockway, a Labor Party member for Eton and Slough, inquired of Iain Macleod, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in a House of Commons debate, why the CO had circumvented the Bahamian people.<sup>74</sup> Likewise, a vitriolic editorial in *The*

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<sup>72</sup> Talking Points for Opening Statement, AUTEK Negotiations, February 11, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (6).

<sup>73</sup> Talking Points for Introductory Remarks at AUTEK Negotiations, February 7, 1963, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (5).

<sup>74</sup> “Bahamas Govt. Will be Consulted on Undersea Rocket Centre—Macleod,” *The Nassau Guardian*, December 13, 1960, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, AV 14, Preclearance, 1975 THRU FN, Finance, 1975, Container #16, File DEF 15 AUTEK, 1960/66.

*Nassau Herald* penned by “Nationalist” denounced how Anglo-American negotiations thus far had excluded the Bahamian people.<sup>75</sup>

A much more ominous threat to AUTEK emerged in the spring of 1961 when the basing talks quickly became entwined with Bahamian, and particularly UBP efforts, to revise the controversial U.S. customs legislation of 1961. In the spring of 1961, while the customs legislation was still being debated in the U.S., Bahamians began strenuously opposing it. The Bahamian Development Board lobbied the U.S. Congress, which attracted enthusiastic support from the Bahamian public. At the same time, Bahamian newspapers buzzed with editorials calling for “preferential treatment from the US because of the several US bases in the Colony.” One editorialist even presciently proposed using the AUTEK negotiations “as a bargaining lever” to reverse the odious customs legislation. As of May 1961, the UBP-led House of Assembly had yet to call publicly for concessions on the tax legislation. However, some Bahamian politicians began privately voicing “hopes the US would consider the cooperative attitude of the Bahamas as regards US bases here when the tourist exemption bill comes to a vote.” The State Department eyed such developments uneasily, noting that “The US could easily become a convenient scapegoat for the many Bahamians whose dreams of personal prosperity are now endangered.”<sup>76</sup>

By January 1962, the Bahamian government began explicitly linking the AUTEK negotiations with customs revenues. In preliminary discussions, the issue of customs’ taxes on goods for the AUTEK base became the “Bahamas main objection to AUTEK

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<sup>75</sup> Foreign Service Despatch, Current Political Developments, September 23, 1960, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

<sup>76</sup> Foreign Service Despatch re Current Political Development, May 11, 1961, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

agreement.” While the Bahamian government was willing to allow American “military and scientific equipment” to enter the Bahamas duty free, they remained “adamant against free entry consumer goods and material that could be used for civilian purposes.” Bahamian authorities worried that goods admitted duty free would, through “civilian employees and contractors,” eventually infiltrate the local Bahamian economy having circumvented customs, thus denying the government a critically important source of revenue.<sup>77</sup> For the State Department, paying customs duties on goods entering American military bases abroad was unthinkable for its potentially far-reaching, adverse consequences. If the State Department agreed to Bahamian customs’ demands, it “would set an undesirable precedent” and “could have an unfortunate effect on our agreements throughout the world.”<sup>78</sup>

For Bahamian representatives, the American unwillingness to pay customs duties signified an effort to exploit Bahamian largesse. In an effort to persuade Bahamian representatives to grant customs concessions, the State Department repeatedly stressed that the proposed AUTEK agreement was congruent “with arrangements generally made elsewhere.” In particular, the State Department referenced the recent defense agreement with the West Indies Federation, which granted customs exemptions to American military forces operating in those islands. In discussions with both the British Colonial and

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<sup>77</sup> CA-702, January 12, 1962, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15—Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum of a Conversation between John A. Thomson and Rockwood H. Foster, February 8, 1962, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15—Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements.

Foreign Offices, Bahamian representatives dismissed this comparison by pointing out that unlike the West Indies Federation, the United States gave no aid to the Bahamas.<sup>79</sup>

Founded in 1958, the ill-fated West Indies Federation frequently intruded on the AUTEK basing talks. Until its implosion in 1962, the West Indies Federation bound ten British islands in the Eastern Caribbean (excluding the Bahamas) into a single, coherent federal territory.<sup>80</sup> Devised by the British in collaboration with indigenous elites as the means to transcend the economic and developmental problems associated with mini-states, the West Indies Federation received hearty support from the Eisenhower administration. Following the ousters of Jacobo Arbenz and Cheddi Jagan in Guatemala and British Guiana respectively, the U.S. seized upon the West Indies Federation as way to stabilize the region while simultaneously demonstrating the American commitment to anti-colonialism.<sup>81</sup>

Although many issues attended the West Indies Federation, unquestionably the most formidable for American policymakers was the aforementioned struggle between the historian-turned-politician Dr. Eric Williams and the U.S. government to close down the Chaguaramas naval base in Trinidad. As part of the December 1960 agreement that drastically curtailed the American military presence in Trinidad, Williams secured a handsome \$30 million in economic aid.<sup>82</sup> For Bahamians, the recent Defense Areas Agreement that the United States had concluded with Trinidad signaled the possibility of significant economic gain. As John Thomson of the British Embassy observed, the

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<sup>79</sup> Telegram No. 2731 from London to Secretary of State, January 23, 1964, p. 1, NARA RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15—Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements.

<sup>80</sup> Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 296-300.

<sup>81</sup> For British and indigenous perspectives on the West Indies Federation, see Palmer, *Eric Williams*, p. 40. For the American response to federation, see Parker, *Brother's Keeper*, pp. 93-118.

<sup>82</sup> Palmer, *Eric Williams*, p. 131.



Bahamian government “hoped for some economic benefit from the presence of the several U.S. military installations in the colony and certainly did not wish to be less favorably treated than the Federation.”<sup>83</sup>

For the moment, however, the most vexing issue remained customs duties. By late February 1962, after months of fruitless back-and-forth communication, the Bahamian government requested a meeting with American and British representatives in Nassau to resolve the lingering customs dispute.<sup>84</sup> Before the meeting, the State Department discussed the customs problem extensively. Although officially yielding little ground to the Bahamians on the customs issue, some within the State Department questioned the wisdom of the American position. For example, Raymond Courtney, First Secretary of the American Embassy, London, maintained that the United States was being insensitive to the Bahamian plight. In addition to the salience of customs revenues for the Bahamian government, many Bahamians held the “conviction that our people who are there now have been profiting from the privileges which have been granted.” Many Bahamians also resented that no aid “is coming out of the official U.S. horn of plenty to the Bahamas.” Courtney argued that the U.S. demanded too much of the Bahamians by conspicuously expanding its military presence in the archipelago without providing tangible benefit. Courtney advocated dispensing with this “piecemeal or ‘camel’s nose under the tent’

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<sup>83</sup> Memorandum of a Conversation between John A. Thomson and Rockwood H. Foster, February 8, 1962, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15—Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements. For an insightful discussion of how the Defense Areas Agreement affected the West Indies Federation, see High, *Base Colonies in the Western Hemisphere*, pp. 191-198.

<sup>84</sup> Telegram No. 3081, February 19, 1962, p. 1, NARA RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15—Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements.

techniques of negotiation” and offering the Bahamians a comprehensive, substantive agreement.<sup>85</sup>

On April 3, 1962, American, British, and Bahamian officials convened at the American Consulate in Nassau, Bahamas to discuss the customs dispute. Edward McKinney, Comptroller of Customs, used the opportunity to voice Bahamian frustration with the persistent problems associated with collecting duties on goods imported for use on American military installations. To mollify McKinney and the Bahamian position, Lieutenant Commander J. W. Robertson, U.S. Navy, discussed potential safeguards to prevent future leakages, which included requirements that contractors physically secure duty-free goods, report all duty-free goods to the U.S. Navy Resident Officer-in-Charge of Construction (ROICC) upon importation, and “obtain the written approval of the ROICC prior to removing materials, supplies, and equipment from the construction sites.” These measures, as well as an American promise to inquire about stationing a Bahamian customs official at Eleuthera, appeased the Bahamian representatives. Accordingly, John Barnard, American Consul General, Nassau, promised to convey the satisfactory conclusions of this meeting to the Bahamian Governor.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the successful conclusion of the April 3 meeting, the AUTEK negotiations nonetheless stalled. The Bahamian government rejected an American request to build DECCA positioning sites because the United States government had not yet bought the land on which the sites would be built. The ensuing debate between the U.S.

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<sup>85</sup> Letter from Raymond F. Courtney to Joseph Sweeney, March 21, 1962, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15—Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements.

<sup>86</sup> Letter from John L. Barnard to Kenneth Walmsley, April 5, 1962, p. 1; Memorandum of Conversation, American Consulate General, Nassau, pp. 1-4 Both in NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTEK Negotiations.

Navy and the Royal Navy about how to best procure the necessary land from the Bahamians delayed further discussion of AUTEK until after the Nassau Agreement of December 22, 1962. Eager to utilize AUTEK for the research and development of Polaris submarines, the Royal Navy renewed their efforts to conclude an agreement and sent an officer to negotiate with the Bahamians for the purchase of the necessary land. The Bahamians, however, again became intransigent on the customs issue, prompting the British Foreign Office to recommend trilateral talks between the U.S., U.K., and the Bahamas for February 11, 1963, to which all parties agreed.<sup>87</sup>

There are two likely explanations for the UBP's temporizing. First and foremost, despite the customs enforcement measures proposed, there were clearly reservations about the sufficiency of such safeguards. Second, AUTEK divided the UBP leadership. On the one hand, a minority of UBP members expressed serious misgivings about AUTEK. John Barnard detected a perceptibly "jingoistic attitude" among the controlling UBP elite, which, he believed, possibly stemmed from their increasing marginalization in the Bahamian political scene.<sup>88</sup> This belligerence manifested in surges of anti-Americanism. For example, Roland Symonette, leader of the UBP and Prime Minister of the Bahamas following internal self-government, displayed "Astounding ferocity towards US programs in Bahamas." Shortly after the April 3 customs meeting, Symonette bluntly informed Barnard that some members of the Executive Council thought AUTEK might

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<sup>87</sup> Background Paper for AUTEK Negotiations, pp. 4-5, in Draft United States Position Papers Relating to Negotiations with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Bahama Islands Concerning the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEK) in the Bahamas, February, 8, 1963, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (7).

<sup>88</sup> Foreign Service Despatch re Politico-Economic Assessment of the Bahamas, May 28, 1962, pp. 4-5, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File, 1960-63, from 741F.13/2-460 to 741G.00/1-2760, Box 1673, File 741G.00/1-2760.

make the Bahamas vulnerable to a Soviet strike and resented the U.S. presence in the archipelago because of the “apparent insensitivity to national pride.”<sup>89</sup> On another occasion, Stafford Sands “blew up” on a hapless American contractor, fulminating “I don’t know what kind of English they speak in Washington, apparently different from mine, because I’ve told them repeatedly we don’t want it [AUTECH].”<sup>90</sup>

On the other hand, however, many UBP members endorsed AUTECH as a panacea for Bay Street’s mounting woes. For example, on the eve of the February 11, 1963 trilateral talks, *The Nassau Guardian*, the UBP newspaper, ran a front-page story on the negotiations that emphasized the likely “substantial” financial demands of the Bahamian government.<sup>91</sup> Public statements such as these revealed to the State Department prior to the talks that “The Bahamians apparently wish to derive maximum financial benefit from AUTECH.”<sup>92</sup> This profit-seeking behavior irked many within the State Department, who held a jaundiced view of the UBP and its mostly Bay Street Boy composition. John Barnard, for example, believed that the Bay Street Boys lived by the invidious motto “What’s in it for me?” For this reason, Barnard quipped that the Bay Street Boys

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<sup>89</sup> Joint-State Defense Message, REF OURTEL 90, April 10, 1962, p. 1, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTECH Negotiations (2).

<sup>90</sup> Letter from John L. Barnard to Gordon Knox, March 11, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (4).

<sup>91</sup> Original quote in bold. “GOVT. DELEGATION FOR WASHINGTON: TALKS ON BAHAMAS UNDERSEA TESTING AREA BEGIN MONDAY,” *Nassau Guardian*, Friday, February 8, 1963, in Draft United States Position Papers Relating to Negotiations with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Bahama Islands Concerning the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (AUTECH) in the Bahamas, February, 8, 1963, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (7).

<sup>92</sup> Background Paper for AUTECH Negotiations, p. 5, in Draft United States Position Papers Relating to Negotiations with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Bahama Islands Concerning the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (AUTECH) in the Bahamas, February, 8, 1963, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (7).

reminded him of the avaricious Templeton the rat from E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*.

"The 'Bay Street Boys' are essentially opportunists as might be expected of a group whose forebears have been successively engaged in piracy, wrecking, blockade, and rum running," Barnard acerbically observed.<sup>93</sup>

Yet despite these unflattering assessments, the State Department also understood the partisan implications of the negotiations for the UBP. Party politics constrained Stafford Sands, UBP leader and chief negotiator, making it unlikely that Sands would consider granting customs exemptions without demonstrating tangible advantage for the UBP. As Gordon Knox of the State Department stressed, "there is little interest on Sands' part to have AUTEK located there unless he can show the voters that he has obtained 'something.'"<sup>94</sup> Likewise, John Barnard reported from Nassau that Sands was "motivated by need for money from somewhere since no taxation here and UBP promised public works program." The AUTEK negotiations had the potential to challenge the UBP's campaign slogans from the 1962 elections and consequently its legitimacy. As Barnard noted, the UBP "platform specifically calls for renegotiation all existing agreements [*sic*] between HMG and foreign govts to provide payment of compensation to Bahamas Govt for bases and payment of Bahamas customs duties on consumable goods used by base

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<sup>93</sup> Airgram re Politico-Economic Assessment, February 26, 1965, p. 4, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Political & Defense, Political Affairs & Relations, POL AUSTL-INDON 1/1/64 to POL BAH 1/1/64, Box 1908, File POL-Political Affairs & Rel. BAH, 1/1/64.

<sup>94</sup> Memorandum from Gordon Knox to Mr. Burdett, February 11, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (6).

personnel.”<sup>95</sup> As a result, Barnard warned that the political climate in the Bahamas “could go sour if UBP does not make good [on] election promises and economy falters.”<sup>96</sup>

However, neither the Americans nor the British had an interest in bolstering UBP rule through lavish material inducements. “The problem in essence, then is to go persuade Sands to allow AUTECH to be located in the Bahamas when in fact there is little interest either in DOD or in MOD (Ministry of Defense [*sic*]) to spending money in order to obtain this particular location,” Gordon Knox of the State Department neatly summarized.<sup>97</sup> Going into the February 1963 talks, the State Department continued to object strenuously to the imposition of customs duties for goods utilized in connection with AUTECH. The State Department bemoaned that “the mere presence of our forces and personnel in the territory of an ally for a project related to the common defense should not serve as a source of general revenue for the treasury of the receiving state.”<sup>98</sup>

Based on intelligence from the American Consul General, Nassau, the State Department considered propitiating the Bahamians with the offer of development projects or a sizeable (\$14-\$28 million) long-term loan. However, the State Department recognized that “it will be difficult to sell such a large loan to AID, and, since the

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<sup>95</sup> REF 2751, January 25, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTECH Negotiations (2).

<sup>96</sup> REF OURTEL 88, January 29, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTECH Negotiations (2).

<sup>97</sup> Memorandum from Gordon Knox to Mr. Burdett, February 11, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (6).

<sup>98</sup> Basic Customs Discussions Paper, p. 4, in Draft United States Position Papers Relating to Negotiations with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Bahama Islands Concerning the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (AUTECH) in the Bahamas, February, 8, 1963, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (7).

Bahamas do not need actual military assistance, equally difficult to obtain funds for such a loan for DOD.” Lastly, the State Department considered renting the land for AUTECH from the Bahamian government, but strongly preferred not to exacerbate the problem of large quantities of gold exiting the United States for national defense reasons.<sup>99</sup>

Unwilling to grant financial concessions, the State Department decided to emphasize how AUTECH would bolster the defenses of the “free world,” generate revenue for the economy, and, most far-fetched, transform Andros Island into a Bahamian Cape Canaveral with irresistible touristic appeal.<sup>100</sup>

Held in Washington, D.C. between February 11 and 13, 1963, the AUTECH negotiations rehashed familiar arguments. The Bahamian delegation evinced considerable skepticism about the economic profitability of AUTECH. Led by UBP party leader Stafford Sands, the Bahamian delegation advanced three requests. First, Sands informed the American delegation that the Bahamas would grant customs exemptions to American military activities concerned with AUTECH provided the United States abolished the Tariff Amendment of 1961, which, Sands alleged, had helped to precipitate an approximately 10.75 percent decline in revenue since enacted in the summer of 1961. The Bahamas needed infrastructure development, Sands stated, and “could not grant further concessions on customs duties unless assured of some additional revenue from

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<sup>99</sup> Basic Customs Discussions Paper, pp. 1-9, in Draft United States Position Papers Relating to Negotiations with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Bahama Islands Concerning the Atlantic Underwater Test and Evaluation Center (AUTECH) in the Bahamas, February, 8, 1963, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (7).

<sup>100</sup> Memorandum from Gordon Knox to William Burdett re Talking Points for Introductory Remarks at AUTECH Negotiations, February 7, 1963, pp. 2-3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (5).

elsewhere.” The Bahamian delegation consequently floated the option of economic assistance from the United States as a possible alternative solution to the customs issue.<sup>101</sup> Second, to improve communication between the islands in the Bahamian archipelago, the Bahamian delegation requested the use of the AFETR coaxial cable that linked the islands of Grand Bahamas, Eleuthera, and San Salvador. Third, the Bahamian delegation requested greater use of U.S. Air Force airfields dotting the islands.<sup>102</sup>

The American delegation balked at Bahamian requests for material incentives. On the stubborn customs issue, William Burdett, chief negotiator for the State Department, reiterated the impossibility of the United States paying duties on goods concerned with AUTEK, remarking that “this would be difficult to justify to Congress and would create embarrassing precedents for the USG elsewhere.” In response to the Bahamian inquiry about possible aid from the United States, Burdett voiced similar concerns, stating that “it would be extremely difficult for USG to justify to Congress any economic assistance for the GOBI in view of their high degree of prosperity and the gold flow problem facing the US.”<sup>103</sup> Indeed, by the early 1960s the Bahamas had the highest per-capita income and GDP in the Caribbean.<sup>104</sup> Concerning the use of AFETR’s coaxial cable, the State

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<sup>101</sup> Minutes of the First Plenary Session of the AUTEK Negotiations, 3:00 p.m., February 11, 1963, pp. 3-4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (2).

<sup>102</sup> Minutes of Second Plenary Session of AUTEK Negotiations, 3:30 p.m., February 12, 1963, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (2).

<sup>103</sup> Minutes of the First Plenary Session of the AUTEK Negotiations, 3:00 p.m., February 11, 1963, pp. 3-4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (2).

<sup>104</sup> See table 17 in Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 406; Economic Situation in the Bahamas, February 8, 1963, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base



Department tentatively agreed to allow Bahamian authorities access to “one channel on an interruptible basis,” but that such access would not extend to the U.S. mainland. Furthermore, the Bahamians would be required to develop inter-island connections with no U.S. government assistance.<sup>105</sup> Lastly, on the subject of greater Bahamian use of U.S. Air Force airfields associated with the AFETR, the American delegation tentatively acquiesced, but with important restrictions. Most notably, the State Department stipulated inter-island, not international, flights and barred Cuban, Soviet, or Eastern Bloc aircraft.<sup>106</sup>

The three-day talks ended pessimistically and failed to resolve the AUTEK impasse. The fact that the coaxial cable could accommodate “only one voice transmission at a time” rendered it inadequate for the Bahamians. Similarly, the American unwillingness to permit international air traffic on U.S. Air Force airfields negated their usefulness for the Bahamians.<sup>107</sup> The major sticking point, however, involved the degree to which AUTEK would economically benefit the Bahamas. Donald D’Albenas, UBP party member, summed up the Bahamian position when he opined “that the economic benefits the project would contribute to the local economy did not appear to be as great as

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Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (5).

<sup>105</sup> Minutes of Second Plenary Session of AUTEK Negotiations, 3:30 p.m., February 12, 1963, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (2).

<sup>106</sup> Minutes of the Third Plenary Session of the AUTEK Negotiations, 11:30 a.m., February 13, 1963, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (2).

<sup>107</sup> Minutes of the Third Plenary Session of the AUTEK Negotiations, 11:30 a.m., February 13, 1963, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (2).

that indicated by the US delegation.”<sup>108</sup> Compounding matters was the American decision, citing gold flow limitations, to exclude Bahamian and British contractors from bidding on the construction of AUTEK. This decision “seriously disturbed” the Bahamian delegation, squashing any prospect of successfully concluding the AUTEK negotiations. Immediately following the talks, American and British representatives recognized “that unless some arrangement could be made for competitive bidding, it was virtually certain that the Bahamians would refuse to accept AUTEK.”<sup>109</sup>

To satisfy both the British and Bahamians, Secretary of Defense McNamara raised the gold flow limitation to a “firm” \$5 million. By increasing the ceiling of the gold flow limitation, McNamara enabled American, British, and Bahamian contractors to have “an equal opportunity to bid on [the] construction of Autek [*sic*].” The DOD, however, stipulated that there be a cap “on foreign exchange costs successful contractors could incur.” Construction material and equipment purchased, as well as labor hired, from the United States would not detract from the \$5 million cap. Nor would the cost of accommodations or provisions for American workers imported into the Bahamas factor into the gold flow limit. Due to a paucity of construction materials and skilled labor in the Bahamas, the State Department anticipated that they “would have to come from another source.” Moreover, since it would be prohibitively costly for the British to import skilled

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<sup>108</sup> Minutes of Second Plenary Session of AUTEK Negotiations, 3:30 p.m., February 12, 1963, p. 4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (2).

<sup>109</sup> Minutes of the Third Plenary Session of the AUTEK Negotiations, 11:30 a.m., February 13, 1963, pp. 1-4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (2).

labor to the islands, the decision implied that American contractors and labor stood to benefit considerably from the project.<sup>110</sup>

Following the February 11-13, 1963 talks, the Bahamian delegation returned to the islands to debate AUTEK. Sir Robert Stapleton, British Governor of the Bahamas, noted that the Bahamian delegates returned home fuming because the State Department and British government had exerted “pressure on ‘poor little BI.’” While frustrated, Stapleton observed that McNamara’s decision to increase the gold flow limitation ceiling to \$5 million produced “some assuagement.”<sup>111</sup> John Barnard appealed to Governor Stapleton, writing that increasing the gold flow ceiling from \$1 million to \$5 million signified “an unusual concession on the part of the Secretary of Defense.” From the perspective of both Barnard and the U.S. government, increasing the gold flow limitation was “in no sense a ‘New Deal for Colony,’” but nonetheless “represents realistic plussage for Bahamian gain out of AUTEK.”<sup>112</sup>

While a significant concession, the raising of the gold flow limitation left the UBP leadership divided on how to best proceed. Prime Minister Roland Symonette remained “one of the prime movers against AUTEK.” In a February 19 meeting with Donald G. Iselin of the U.S. Navy, Symonette demonstrated his profound mistrust of the AUTEK project specifically and decried the American military presence in the islands broadly. Symonette “expressed a resentment that in the past United States personnel have not

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<sup>110</sup> Telegram NIACT 99, February 15, 1963, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTEK Negotiations (2).

<sup>111</sup> Memorandum from Gordon Knox to Mr. Burdett re AUTEK After the Talks, February 18, 1963, p. 1, NARA RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (8).

<sup>112</sup> Letter from John L. Barnard to Robert Stapleton, February 18, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTEK Negotiations (2).

shown by attitude or action sufficient respect for the dignity and rights of the Bahamians.” Based on this, Symonette feared AUTEK would erode Bahamian sovereignty for limited economic gain.<sup>113</sup> On the other end of the spectrum stood Donald D’Albenas, who pushed vigorously for a thirty-year, £15 million loan in exchange for AUTEK. However, according to John Barnard, who denigrated D’Albenas as “a little boy raised above his station,” no one else “with any real sense expects such a wild concession.” Furthermore, Barnard continued, “The sensible UBP people are now convinced that they cannot tie AUTEK on to a loan because AUTEK and a loan have no connection.” Sir George Roberts, President of the Legislative Council, represented this more moderate position. Citing a \$1 million aid request the U.S. granted the island of Antigua in exchange for an airfield, Roberts conjectured that a similar gift to the Bahamas could “sell the UBP leadership on AUTEK.”<sup>114</sup>

The debates within the UBP about AUTEK mirrored broader debates occurring within Bahamian society. In general, many Bahamians rued that the United States undervalued the Bahamian support for the Western security regime. John Barnard summarized the prevailing mood thus: “Frequently one hears the cry that the US pours money into countries that show their gratitude by throwing rocks at our embassies and that the Bahamas, a good friend, is discriminated against and gets no aid whatsoever from

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<sup>113</sup> Report of Conversation with Sir Roland Symonette, 1200 February 19, 1963, pp. 1-4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (8).

<sup>114</sup> Memorandum from Gordon Knox to Burdett, February 20, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (8).

the US.”<sup>115</sup> Editorials conveying this message proliferated within Bahamian papers. One such editorial, in a thinly veiled reference to Trinidad, lamented that the United States and Britain did not appreciate the Bahamian contribution to Western security. In contrast to other Caribbean countries, Bahamians “are pleased to have them keep their bases here although we all recognize that the presence of military establishments in these islands make us a target in the event of the outbreak of hostilities with Russia.” Despite this stalwart support, upon receiving a loan request from the Bahamas, “eyebrows are raised in Washington and British nostrils dilate as though they detect some evil-smelling object around the corner.”<sup>116</sup>

Responding to these public pressures, the UBP party caucus unanimously rejected AUTEK on February 18.<sup>117</sup> Within the UBP party caucus, one-third remained implacably hostile to AUTEK, voting “to reject AUTEK under any circumstances.” The remaining two-thirds voted against AUTEK “unless BI [Bahama Islands] received a 15 million pound loan for 30 years at 2%.”<sup>118</sup> The UBP voted against AUTEK for two reasons. First, the fact that supposedly “undeserving” nations, but not the Bahamas, received loans rankled the UBP leadership. Second, AUTEK did not offer enough direct, tangible economic benefits and, therefore, could not fund public development. Their “political survival” predicated on public development, the UBP desperately needed capital from

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<sup>115</sup> Politico-Economic Assessment, February 26, 1965, p. 4, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Political & Defense, Political Affairs & Relations, POL AUSTL-INDON 1/1/64 to POL BAH 1/1/64, Box 1908, File POL-Political Affairs & Rel. BAH, 1/1/64.

<sup>116</sup> Editorial “Friendship...No Value?” *The Nassau Daily Tribune*, April 17, 1963, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTEK Negotiations.

<sup>117</sup> Joint State-Defense Message re Status of AUTEK Negotiations, March 5, 1963, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1963, DEF 15 Base Installations AUSTL to DEF Balkan States 2/1/63, Box 3713, File Def-Defense Affairs BAH IS, 2/1/63.

<sup>118</sup> Memorandum from Gordon Knox to Burdett, February 20, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (8).

AUTEC.<sup>119</sup> Ultimately, the decision of the majority of the UBP to reject AUTEC reflected an astute sensitivity to public opinion and a keen awareness of the UBP's precarious political position vis-à-vis the PLP's growing political clout.

Neither the Americans nor the British could entertain the UBP's exorbitant counteroffer. For the U.S., the problem was the relative prosperity of the Bahamas. As McNamara lamented in a letter to Thorneycroft, "It would be most difficult, if not impossible to justify economic assistance to the Bahamas, a colony of the United Kingdom which enjoys a much better economic position than other islands in the area."<sup>120</sup> The UBP's intransigence on AUTEC infuriated the British. In a meeting of the Executive Council shortly after the rejection, Louis Mountbatten, British Chief of Defense, "read [the] riot act," fuming that Britain had no alternative sites for the AUTEC facility and "if Bahamas stand in way it would queer whole deal resulting [in] great loss to Britain."<sup>121</sup> With such British prodding, the UBP eventually adopted a more conciliatory stance of "a long-term low interest loan of £5 million for its economic development schemes." This involved either the British or Americans "making good the difference between a low interest loan and the rates payable on the market, and would amount to payment of about £3 million spread over twenty years."<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Telegram from Barnard re AUTEC vote, undated, p. 1, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTEC Negotiations (2).

<sup>120</sup> Letter from Robert McNamara to Peter Thorneycroft, February 25, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (8).

<sup>121</sup> Telegram re Mountbatten's Meeting with Bahamian Executive Council, February 26, 1963, p. 1, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTEC Negotiations (2).

<sup>122</sup> Letter from Peter Thorneycroft to Robert McNamara, March 14, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (4).

The British maintained that they could ill afford such a sum without American support. Accordingly, Thorneycroft proposed to McNamara that “if you [the U.S.] would be prepared to contribute half the sum, we [the U.K.] will provide the balance.” Similar to the Americans, Bahamian prosperity proved problematic to the British. “We could not justify a direct payment to the Bahamas,” observed Thorneycroft, “which would be represented as an unwarranted economic subvention to a prosperous colony and would have unfortunate repercussions elsewhere.” As a result, the British requested that the Americans serve as a financial intermediary. This meant that the British would transfer the funds to the Americans, who, in turn, would deliver those funds to the Bahamians.<sup>123</sup>

The Americans understood the potentially unsavory international implications for the British providing a loan to the Bahamas. As Gordon Knox of the State Department so aptly summarized, “it is politically unrealistic for the US to insist that the UK get into trouble with its African and other poor colonies by making the equivalent of a low interest rate loan to a comparatively rich colony dominated by white settlers.”<sup>124</sup>

Although sympathetic to the British plight, the Americans refused to split the interest on the loan payments, which, they conjectured, amounted to \$210,000 per annum. The U.S. objected to paying the interest for two reasons. First, the U.S. already assumed “the burden of paying for AUTECH,” which the DOD anticipated costing a hefty \$95.6 million.

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<sup>123</sup> Letter from Peter Thorneycroft to Robert McNamara, March 14, 1963, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (4).

<sup>124</sup> Note from M. Gordon Knox to William C. Burdett, March 26, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (4).

Second, as a British colony, the U.S. maintained that it had no obligation to provide for the Bahamas.<sup>125</sup>

Regarding the secrecy clause, the Americans had no objection, but deemed such a request quixotic. Since the General Accounting Office, which had publicly available records, scrutinized Export-Import Bank transactions, any loan would be readily accessible to the general public. Moreover, the U.S. highlighted that the UBP would most likely expose any deal because of the keen desire “to boast to the Bahama [*sic*] electorate how skillful they had been to obtain a low-interest rate loan.” The British, however, did not actually seek absolute secrecy; rather, they merely sought to “show that its contribution was being paid to the United States Government.”<sup>126</sup> This enabled the British to participate in AUTEK without attracting the ire of Britain’s other colonies.

Ultimately, on May 7, 1963 the UBP-controlled Executive Council agreed to locate AUTEK on the island of Andros in exchange for financial assistance raising a £5 million commercial loan to be used “for development purposes.” In the end, despite their protestations, the British assumed unilateral responsibility for the interest that such a loan entailed. The British agreed to yearly payments of either “the difference between interest payment at 2% over 20 years and the actual interest payments required to be paid by the Government of the Bahamas...or £150,000 per annum, whichever is less.” As requested, the British government would annually transfer the requisite funds to the U.S. Treasury, which, in turn, would bequeath them to the Bahamian government. Despite a hard-fought

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<sup>125</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, April 3, 1963, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTEK Negotiations.

<sup>126</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, April 3, 1963, p. 2, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTEK Negotiations.



battle, the UBP capitulated on the customs issue, thus granting U.S. military forces associated with AUTEK exemption from the coveted customs duties.<sup>127</sup>

As predicted, AUTEK attracted considerable attention in the press. In the U.K., while most of London's papers celebrated the cooperative dimensions of the base, the secret arrangement prompted the *Daily Mail* to label AUTEK a "no-rent base," which "will not cost the Americans a cent in rent or compensation."<sup>128</sup> The Soviets predictably excoriated the project, inveighing "A rocket base near the Island of Freedom is yet another serious hot bed of provocations."<sup>129</sup> For the Bahamian public, AUTEK provoked a wide array of responses that demonstrated its multivalent status in the archipelago. Some Bahamians celebrated AUTEK as an economic boon, a source of protection, and a deterrent against Cuban aggression. Others, however, held more jaundiced views of AUTEK. For example, one Nassau resident laconically observed that "It might make the Russians mad at us." Another denizen of Nassau expressed a more ambiguous, though nonetheless perturbed view that "It'll either get us further away from or closer to the final war which is shaping up."<sup>130</sup>

While not insignificant, the gains of the AUTEK agreement fell woefully short of the UBP's professed objectives at the outset. Both the lofty £15 million loan and a

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<sup>127</sup> A.U.T.E.C. Points for Agreement between the British and the Bahamas Government, May 7, 1963, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (3).

<sup>128</sup> Telegram No. 4559, May 15, 1963, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1963, DEF 15 Base Installations AUSTL to DEF Balkan States 2/1/63, Box 3713, File Def-Defense Affairs BAH IS, 2/1/63.

<sup>129</sup> "Andros Base Would Add to Tension Says Moscow," *The Nassau Daily Tribune*, April 17, 1963, NARA, RG 84, Entry #P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, Visas, 1956-1964 THRU POL, Bahamas for 1966 (Gambling), Container #1, File 430 AUTEK Negotiations.

<sup>130</sup> "What Do You Think?," *Nassau Guardian*, April 21, 1963, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (1).

revision of the customs legislation proved frustratingly elusive. As a result, the AUTEK agreement must be regarded as a stinging diplomatic defeat for the UBP leadership. Although an imperfect comparison, when put in perspective with the Defense Areas Agreement between Trinidad and the United States, the failure of the AUTEK agreement becomes readily apparent. In exchange for the gradual withdraw of American forces from Trinidad and emergency, wartime access to 1,400 acres of military installations, the United States essentially gifted Trinidad \$30 million.<sup>131</sup> In contrast, the Bahamas, which had several American bases in its territory, occupying a roughly similar acreage, received a pittance for AUTEK.

The inability of the UBP to leverage the extensive base network in the archipelago into tangible benefits resulted from the prosperity of the Bahamas relative to other islands in the Caribbean Commonwealth and, ironically, its commitment to anti-communism. By the early 1960s, the Bahamas occupied an anomalous position in the Caribbean. According to the empirical data, the Bahamas was easily the wealthiest island in the Caribbean basin, having a much higher GNP than any other nation. In fact, the Bahamas received no economic assistance from the British, a rarity among Commonwealth members.<sup>132</sup> However, as the Bahamians often groused, this relatively high GNP, skewed by the extreme wealth of a small oligarchy, obscured the fact that poverty remained an all-too-common reality for many Bahamians. In 1964, for example, over half of the Bahamian population received poverty-level wages, 75 percent lacked

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<sup>131</sup> Palmer, *Eric Williams*, p. 131.

<sup>132</sup> See table 17 in Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 406; Economic Situation in the Bahamas, February 8, 1963, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 1504-Base Agreements, 1963 to FN-9-Foreign Investment, 1973, Box 5, File, DEF-Defense Affairs, DEF 15-4 Base Agreements, 1963 (5).

plumbing and relied on outhouses, and fewer than 10 percent of Bahamian children attended secondary school. The Bahamas was also abnormal in the Caribbean for its unambiguous pro-Americanism, which as John Barnard noted was “a fairly unique phenomenon in the Caribbean today.”<sup>133</sup> In sum, as a small archipelago nation with a middle-class, firmly pro-American mentality, the Bahamas could not exercise the same leverage as the larger, poorer, left-leaning, and potentially ominous Trinidad. By continually exploiting Bahamian largesse, though, Anglo-American policies threatened to undermine this goodwill. After more than three decades of militarization without tangible benefits, the move toward independence initiated a more truculent, defiant stance toward the Anglo-American bases in the archipelago.

### **Basing and Operating Rights, 1970-1973**

As the Bahamas negotiated the tortuous decolonization process in the early 1970s, many Bahamians began reconsidering their relationship with the constellation of Anglo-American military installations that dotted the archipelago. These Anglo-American basing agreements, begun in earnest during the dark days of World War II in the destroyers-for-bases deal, merited close scrutiny in the heady period leading up to and following independence. On the eve of independence, the Americans recognized that the terms of the various basing agreements dissatisfied the Bahamians because they did not furnish “enough tangible benefits.” As one report summarized it: “the Bahamians have historically been unhappy with the US/UK Agreements of 1941, regarding them as ones in which the US got bases, the UK received badly needed destroyers and the Bahamians

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<sup>133</sup> Airgram re Political-Economic Assessment of the Bahamas, April 3, 1964, pp. 4-5, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Political & Defense, Political Affairs & Relations, POL AUSTL-INDON 1/1/64 to POL BAH 1/1/64, Box 1908, File POL-Political Affairs & Rel. BAH, 1/1/64.

paid for the deal with their lands.”<sup>134</sup> The editorialist and future lawyer Peter D. Maynard voiced the sentiments of many aggrieved Bahamians when he rhetorically asked: “Now, is there a place for military bases in an independent Bahamas?” While urging a careful weighing of the facts, Maynard regarded the basing question as basically “a political one.” “If they remain,” Maynard concluded, “government takes up the great responsibility of ensuring that their continued presence serves the best interest of the Bahamas.”<sup>135</sup>

Indeed, as Maynard observed, the transition from colony to independent statehood politicized the question of Anglo-American basing rights in the Bahamas. In the midst of a sharp economic downturn and growing political opposition in the early 1970s, the ruling PLP, led by Lynden Pindling, seized upon national independence as a political ploy to rally public support for the flagging fortunes of the PLP. Unfortunately for Pindling and the PLP, national independence did not initially engender mass support. Bahamians raised a litany of reasons against independence, worrying that the Bahamas had neither the funds nor the defensive capabilities to become independent. Facing such resistance to independence, Pindling and the PLP employed the Anglo-American basing negotiations as a campaign theme to reshape public perceptions of independence. The Anglo-American bases, the PLP touted, represented both financial and defensive security. The PLP sought to leverage the Anglo-American bases for financial assistance, a multilateral defense commitment, and endorsement of their Law of the Sea position.

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<sup>134</sup> Bahamas Options Paper, December 7, 1972, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, AGR-Agriculture, 1971 to DEF 15-1—Security Arrangements, 1974, Box 1, File DEF Defense Affairs (Gen.) 1972.

<sup>135</sup> Peter D. Maynard, Editorial “Destroyers for Bases,” *The Nassau Guardian*, December 14, 1974, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, AGR-Agriculture, 1971 to DEF 15-1—Security Arrangements, 1974, Box 1, File Bahamas 1974, DEF-15-1 Base Negotiations.

These themes, honed in the election campaign of 1972, became the negotiating strategy of the PLP in the tripartite basing talks.

### *The Politics of Independence*

The paltry AUTEK loan did little to arrest the decline of the UBP and concurrent rise of the PLP throughout the 1960s. The UBP's demise stemmed from the growing salience of race as well as the venality and turpitude of the UBP leadership, which included very public allegations of connections with American organized crime. In an exceptionally close election on January 10, 1967, Symonette's UBP and Pindling's PLP both won eighteen seats in the House of Assembly, with an additional two going to an Independent and a Labor candidate. It took more scandal and another general election, however, to completely efface the UBP power base. In the aftermath of the Bacon Commission, which investigated and eventually indicted a number of eminent UBP (as well as some PLP) politicians for corruption, Pindling called for another general election intended to "bury the UBP." The general election of April 10, 1968 resulted in a resounding PLP victory over the beleaguered and discredited UBP. Of the thirty-eight seats in the House of Assembly, the PLP won an overwhelming twenty-nine in contrast to the UBP's paltry seven (an Independent and a Labor candidate won the remaining two seats). Pindling's election inaugurated a two-year "honeymoon period" that corresponded with a flurry of popular PLP initiatives in healthcare, education, and public works.<sup>136</sup>

Despite these impressive strides in social welfare and finance in the late 1960s, the international economic downturn of the early 1970s and a spate of domestic crises gravely affected the Bahamas. The two most significant economic developments were in the vital tourism and banking industries. Although the government vigorously promoted

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<sup>136</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, pp. 337-346, 348-353.

tourism, despite modest gains in 1971, leisure travel to the Bahamas declined precipitously until the late 1970s. Banking experienced a similar decline as a result of an “unfortunate combination of slackness and interference and by the infiltration of less than impeccable financial operators, money, and methods.” Exacerbating these larger structural trends were a number of high-profile crises. One such crisis was the disintegration of Bahamas Airways in October 1970, which precipitated an 800-person layoff. The avowed reason for the folding of the Bahamas Airways was that the Bahamian government declined to buy out the majority shareholder, the British Overseas Airways Corporation, from “a losing operation.” Unofficially, however, many blamed the machinations of Everett Bannister, a personal friend of Lynden Pindling, who launched Bahamas World Airlines as a competitor. Whatever the reason, economic decline and scandal convinced many Bahamians “that too many in government were intent on feathering their own nests rather than tackling basic ills”<sup>137</sup>

These crises, coupled with the diminishing credibility of Pindling and the PLP, helped to spur the development of the Free National Movement (FNM) as a viable opposition party under the leadership of former PLP party member and minister of education, Cecil Wallace-Whitfield.<sup>138</sup> The FNM represented a union between the “Free PLP” and the UBP. The Free PLP splintered from the PLP because of intraparty squabbling and personality conflicts, most notably between Pindling and Wallace-Whitfield. Disillusioned with Pindling and the PLP, Wallace-Whitfield and his supporters charged the government with incompetence, claiming that the PLP had degenerated into

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<sup>137</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, pp. 348-352, 356-357. This economic downturn, of course, occurred on a truly global level. For an insightful look at the 1970s in global perspective, see *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective*, eds. Niall Ferguson et al. (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>138</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 357.

despotism and sycophancy. These polarizing, intraparty polemics culminated in the Pindling government punishing Wallace-Whitfield and seven of his supporters with a two-year suspension from the party for insubordination. Suspended from the PLP, the Free PLP adopted the Free National Movement appellation in October 1971 and “issued an invitation to all to joint it.” Within a few months, the FNM and the historically all-white UBP had merged.<sup>139</sup>

The coalescing of white and black politicians in opposition to Pindling was momentous. As Moncrieff Spear, American Consul General, Nassau observed, the founding of the FMN as “a multi-racial opposition” represented “a watershed in Bahamian politics.” The partnership between these erstwhile rivals was shrewd politics. Realizing the impossibility of existing as an all-white party in the predominantly black Bahamas, the UBP sought to revive their political fortunes through a partnership with the Free PLP. A partnership with the UBP also proved advantageous to the Free PLP because it enabled the group to expand its conservative support base.<sup>140</sup> The coming together of the Free PLP and UBP under the banner of the FNM was thus a potent new threat to Pindling’s rule. Prior to the consolidation of the Free PLP and UBP, there existed in the Bahamas no group powerful enough to challenge the PLP. However, the FNM, by aggregating the conservative white and black support bases of the UBP and Free PLP, offered “the possibility of a much broader united front to capitalize on the signs of economic stagnation that were mounting.”<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, pp. 159-162, 186-188.

<sup>140</sup> Airgram re The Bahamas: From Now to Independence, December 4, 1971, pp. 5-6, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 8-25-71.

<sup>141</sup> Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, p. 162

With a general election looming in 1972, both the PLP and FNM began appealing to their respective constituencies.<sup>142</sup> In the early 1970s, the PLP, always one of the Bahamas' more progressive parties, became increasingly radical, initiating a shift away from the "moderate left" toward the "left" in consonance with the archipelago's economic downturn and intensifying domestic opposition. As part of this shift, the PLP stressed "emotional" themes of race, nationalism, and, above all, independence.<sup>143</sup> When the penultimate British governor of the Bahamas announced in March 1972 Britain's intention to grant independence should the current Pindling government be "returned with a working majority at the election," Pindling wasted no time in producing a "Green Paper" outlining his party's plan for independence.<sup>144</sup>

Unsurprisingly, national independence proved an especially powerful rhetorical theme, which Pindling exploited to deflect criticism and to rally public support for himself and the PLP.<sup>145</sup> Invoking an "emotional" rhetoric of national self-discovery and betterment with references to "re-humanisation," the PLP pleaded for immediate independence.<sup>146</sup> In phrasing independence in such visceral terms, the PLP primarily appealed to the more radical, leftist segments of Bahamian society, especially the young and lower classes. The ideology and rhetoric of the FNM stood in sharp contrast to that of the PLP. Unlike the PLP, the FNM emphasized neither race nor immediate independence.

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<sup>142</sup> The Bahamian Constitution stipulated that a general election be held every five years. See Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>143</sup> Airgram re The Bahamas: From Now to Independence, December 4, 1971, pp. 5-7, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 8-25-71.

<sup>144</sup> Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, pp. 182-183.

<sup>145</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 358.

<sup>146</sup> For an example of the emotional rhetoric the PLP employed, see Lynden O. Pindling, "Building a Nation through Peace, Understanding and Love," p. 32, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 17-1 AUSTL-US to POL 12 BAH, Box 2110, File POL BAH. For a discussion of the "emotional" character of PLP campaign rhetoric, see Airgram re The Bahamas: From Now to Independence, December 4, 1971, pp. 5-7, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 8-25-71.



Instead, the FNM favored delaying independence with the mantra, as depicted on one laconic and memorable FNM campaign poster, that “Independence Stinks.” Befitting its “more conservative, intellectual, middle-class” roots, the FNM sought middle-class votes by stressing more sedate themes of “the ‘pocket book’” and economic stagnation under PLP rule.<sup>147</sup>

The PLP campaign strategy of black racial unity, nationalism, and independence rendered it vulnerable in two ways. First, whatever the magnetism of race and nationalism as campaign tropes, the PLP’s support base of the young and poor were the “hardest hit by the current economic decline.”<sup>148</sup> The Bahamas’ economic woes and its salience to the PLP constituency meant Pindling’s political fortunes, to an extent, depended on obtaining “necessary loans” and improving the “financial condition” of the Bahamian government.<sup>149</sup> Second, independence did not garner support across all segments of Bahamian society. As William Broderick of the State Department noted, “apart from some PLP politicians and the young, independence is an unpopular issue in the conservative, middle-class oriented Bahamas.” Broderick believed that should the PLP secure victory in the upcoming general election, it would be in spite of the PLP’s

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<sup>147</sup> For a discussion of the respective PLP and FNM campaign platforms and support bases, see Airgram re The Bahamas: From Now to Independence, December 4, 1971, pp. 5-7, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 8-25-71. For the quote “Independence Stinks,” see the Editorial “How the PLP Won,” *The People*, September 23, 1972, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, POL-Political Affairs and Relations, General, 1970 to SOC 11-5—Narcotics, 1974, Box 7, File POL-14 Elections.

<sup>148</sup> Airgram re The Bahamas: From Now to Independence, December 4, 1971, p. 5, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 8-25-71.

<sup>149</sup> Airgram re Pindling Moves to Bolster Confidence in GOBI and his Position in the PLP, September 24, 1970, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 2-18-70.

independence stance, not because of it.<sup>150</sup> In fact, independence was so unpopular on Abaco Island, a white enclave fiercely loyal to Britain, that its denizens abortively attempted to secede from the Bahamas to remain British.<sup>151</sup>

While independence was the most unpopular with the conservative constituencies of Out Islands such as Abaco, many Bahamians on the larger island of New Providence also opposed independence.<sup>152</sup> A June 6, 1970 public meeting of PLP supporters on the prospect of independence offers insight into the thinking of regular Bahamian citizens as well as the challenges facing Pindling and the PLP. In general, most meeting participants believed that the current PLP-led government lacked the skill and bureaucratic capacity to preside over an independent Bahamas and, consequently, “were almost unanimously opposed to independence.” The participants raised numerous concerns, including fears of PLP despotism and a perilous descent into poverty akin to that of Jamaica or Trinidad. Most significantly, however, participants stressed financial and security concerns. In financial terms, these New Provident constituents complained that independence represented a currently insurmountable “economic burden.” With few natural resources, the government would invariably increase taxes to fund the transition to independence. The constituents also lamented that “the Bahamas cannot defend itself from Castro and

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<sup>150</sup> Memorandum re US Security Commitment to the Bahamas and Base Arrangements: Some Thoughts, April 10, 1972, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meeting, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15 Base, Meetings, Installations, 1972.

<sup>151</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, pp. 358-359. For another account of the Abaco secession movement, see Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, pp. 182-183. See also Steve Dodge, “Independence and Separatism” in *Modern Bahamian Society*, eds. Dean W. Collinwood and Steve Dodge (Parkersburg, IA: Caribbean Books, 1989), pp. 39-68.

<sup>152</sup> Airgram re The Bahamas: From Now to Independence, December 4, 1971, p. 7, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 8-25-71.

other threats and should not count on the U.S. or U.K. for defense, as these powers have ‘their fingers in too many other pies.’”<sup>153</sup>

These pockets of resistance to independence presented Lynden Pindling and the PLP with a vexing political challenge. As one observer opined, the “PLP leaders clearly are looking for strong methods to deal with the lack of popular support for the PLP independence stand.”<sup>154</sup> Facing opposition to independence, Pindling and the PLP regarded the renegotiation of the tripartite basing agreements between the Bahamas, Britain, and the United States as an excellent opportunity to allay the economic and security concerns of the public associated with independence. As a result, Pindling and the PLP began very publicly linking Bahamian economic and security imperatives with the impending base negotiations. From the beginning of his 1972 reelection bid and the push for independence, Pindling and PLP presented the renegotiation of the Anglo-American military installations in the Bahamas as a central campaign issue. The Green Book, which outlined the Pindling government’s stance on independence in March 1972, explicitly stated that “it will be necessary for the Bahamas to re-negotiate foreign military base[s] and related agreements and this will be done not only in the light of financial consideration but, particularly with regard to our defences in the event of attack by outside forces.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Airgram re PLP Public Meetings on Independence, June 6, 1970, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 2-18-70.

<sup>154</sup> Airgram re PLP Concern Over Independence Issue, July 8, 1970, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 18 BAH, 8-10-71.

<sup>155</sup> Memorandum re GOBI’s Views on Post-Independence Security Arrangements and US Base Rights, June 30, 1972, pp. 2-3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meeting, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15 Base, Meetings, Installations, 1972.

Due to the divergent PLP and FNM positions on independence, issues of finance and defense assumed partisan overtones during the election campaign of 1972. The FNM, seeking to capitalize on widespread security fears, emphasized Bahamian vulnerability to external forces. The FNM pointed out that independence, by severing the connection with Britain, would also sever the link with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).<sup>156</sup> The consequences of such a security vacuum, the FNM advanced, could be dangerous. As one FNM advertisement rhetorically asked: “Will it be Red China, will it be Russia or Cuba that will swallow us after independence?”<sup>157</sup> In response to such charges, Pindling and the PLP consistently stressed to the electorate that the PLP had their security interests firmly in mind. When the FNM focused attention on the lapsing NATO security commitment, the PLP asserted that Pindling had acted preemptively, publicly stating—albeit spuriously—that the PLP-led government intended to join both the Organization of American States (OAS) and NATO and had already made moves to do so.<sup>158</sup> Pindling also downplayed the security threat that the Bahamas faced, particularly in regard to Cuba, noting that North America would surely come to the defense of the Bahamas in the event of Cuban aggression.<sup>159</sup>

The FNM similarly highlighted the high financial costs of independence. Throughout the election campaign, FNM “hecklers” regularly asked the PLP how they intended “to foot the bill for independence.” To such inquiries, “PLP spokesmen

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<sup>156</sup> Telegram re Election Campaign, September 15, 1972, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 8-25-71.

<sup>157</sup> Quoted in Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, p. 189.

<sup>158</sup> Telegram re Election Campaign, September 15, 1972, p. 1, NARA, Source: RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 8-25-71.

<sup>159</sup> Memorandum re GOBI’s Views on Post-Independence Security Arrangements and US Base Rights, June 30, 1972, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meeting, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15 Base, Meetings, Installations, 1972.

invariably replied that the United States would.”<sup>160</sup> Pindling and the PLP frequently gestured in political speeches at the potential financial contribution of American bases in funding the transition from colony to independent statehood. In one such speech at the Bahamian Students’ Association of the University of the West Indies on August 6, 1971, Pindling avowed that “the Bahamas receives no direct benefit from these treaties” and, because of this, they needed renegotiation.<sup>161</sup> In the independence seminars in the conservative Out Islands, the PLP made the potential financial contribution of American bases to Bahamian independence unabashedly explicit. As one observer reported, “a major theme at PLP rallies is that the GOBI’s lack of funds will be made up by exploiting to the fullest the presence of US bases in the Bahamas.”<sup>162</sup>

Ultimately, anxiety over independence did not prevent Lynden Pindling and the PLP from winning a resounding victory. In the September 19 election, Pindling and the PLP secured twenty-nine seats in the House of Assembly compared to the FNM’s nine.<sup>163</sup> The triumph of the PLP as the pro-independence party meant, in the words of Sir Duncan Watson, Deputy Undersecretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), “HMG now had no alternative but to grant independence to the Bahamas.”<sup>164</sup> While Pindling’s victory set Bahamian independence for July 10, 1973, it did nothing to solve the financial

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<sup>160</sup> Bahamas Paper: Briefing Memorandum, November 3, 1972, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meeting, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15-1 Security Arrangements (Bahamas Options Paper).

<sup>161</sup> Memorandum re GOBI’s Views on Post-Independence Security Arrangements and US Base Rights, June 30, 1972, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meeting, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15 Base, Meetings, Installations, 1972.

<sup>162</sup> Telegram re Base Rights Negotiations, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, DEF 15-3 AUSTL-US to DEF 15 BAH-US, Box 1689, File DEF 15, BAH-US, 1/1/70. See also

<sup>163</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 359.

<sup>164</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, re Bahamian Independence—Its Implications for US Security, November 30, 1972, pp. 2-3, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 18 BAH, 8-10-71.

and defense questions that had complicated his campaign. The financial condition of the Bahamian government remained “very bleak.” In addition to a \$20 million deficit, the national debt of the Bahamas climbed a staggering 75 percent between 1967 and 1970.<sup>165</sup> In fact, the financial condition of the Bahamas was so execrable that Clive Rose, Assistant Under Secretary, FCO, noted that “Bahamian financial solvency presents the major problems [*sic*] for UK concerns now that elections have passed without incident.” The defense prospects of the Pindling government were equally bleak, as the British had informed Pindling that there were “zero prospects of a UK defense guarantee” for a post-independence Bahamas.<sup>166</sup> Robert Hurwitch, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, consequently perceived “a certain uneasiness in the Bahamas over defense matters and independence.”<sup>167</sup>

Nearly one month after Pindling’s election, he released the so-called White Paper to the House of Assembly. The White Paper, which represented a hardening of the independence issues outlined in the Green Book, reaffirmed the Bahamian government’s interest in renegotiating “base treaties immediately upon independence” based on both financial and defense needs.<sup>168</sup> However, the White Paper diverged significantly from the Green Book by announcing the intention of the Bahamian government “to strive to have

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<sup>165</sup> Memorandum re Meeting with British, April 4-5, 1973, April 19, 1973, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>166</sup> Memorandum of Conversation re US-UK Preparations for Bahamian Independence, September 25, 1972, pp. 1-3, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 18 BAH, 8-10-71.

<sup>167</sup> Memorandum re Meeting with British, April 4-5, 1973, April 19, 1973, p. 5, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>168</sup> Memorandum re Bahamian Government White Paper on Independence, October 25, 1972, p. 1, NARA, Source: RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, POL-Political Affairs and Relations, General, 1970 to SOC 11-5—Narcotics, 1974, Box 7, File POL-16 Independence, Recognition, 1972.

the archipelagic principle applied in determining the territorial sea.”<sup>169</sup> In general, the archipelagic principle called for reconceiving the territorial boundaries of archipelagic nations such as the Bahamas. International organizations such as the United Nations traditionally conceived of territoriality as comprising the boundaries of one individual island within a given archipelago. The archipelagic principle, however, advocated for understanding archipelagoes more capaciously. The archipelagic principle “is about a group of islands and the waters surrounding them as a single entity for the purpose of delimiting the maritime zones of the island group as a single unit.” “The underlying basis of the archipelagic concept is the unity of land, water, the resources and the people into a single entity,” notes one source.<sup>170</sup> The White Paper, with its support for base renegotiations and the archipelagic principle, formed the basis of Bahamian domestic and foreign policy following independence from Britain.<sup>171</sup> The ideas reflected in the White Paper, debated in the election of 1972, would shape the trilateral talks between the U.S., U.K., and Bahamas.

#### *Anglo-American Planning for a Post-Independence Bahamas*

Pindling’s 1972 electoral triumph coincided with the final wave of decolonization. By the end of 1968, the British military had initiated the withdrawal of its forces “East of Suez,” the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) had dissolved, and Swaziland, Britain’s last

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<sup>169</sup> Telegram re GOBI White Paper on Independence, October 19, 1972, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 18 BAH 8-10-71.

<sup>170</sup> Mohamed Munavvar, *Ocean States: Archipelagic Regimes in the Law of the Sea* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1995), pp. 5-8.

<sup>171</sup> Tripartite Talks Opening Statement by Mr. R. E. Bain on Behalf of the Bahamian Delegation, Annex B, Agreed Record of Tripartite Talks between the Government of the Bahamas, United States and United Kingdom, Held in Government House, Nassau, 10 and 11 May, 1973, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—Nassau 10 and 11 May 1973.

African colony, had achieved independence. According to the popular view, aside from the troubles in Rhodesia, the empire was quiescent. “Although in a technical sense the empire was not entirely finished by 1968,” historian Ronald Hyam observes, “its rulers were thereafter only playing out a coda.”<sup>172</sup> Such a sanguine view of empire’s dissolution, however, downplays the manifold tensions and conflicts of last-wave decolonization. In addition to the thorny issue of Rhodesia, a smaller, though enduring, empire provoked serious diplomatic and military clashes in the Falklands, Gibraltar, Malta, Northern Ireland, and elsewhere.<sup>173</sup> Even Britain’s meager Caribbean possessions presented British and American policymakers with vexing problems well into the Thatcher and Reagan years, as evidenced by the American invasion of Grenada, the Anguillan secession crisis, and Belizean independence and its long-standing border dispute with Guatemala.<sup>174</sup> Thus, although the empire essentially comprised only small islands in the South Pacific and Caribbean by the 1970s, the imperial project nevertheless retained a prominent position in British and American foreign policy.<sup>175</sup>

Britain’s remaining possessions as of 1970, a far-flung network of so-called “limpet colonies,” were of little value and deleteriously impacted British prestige abroad. Keen to liquidate them, the British granted independence to any colony that requested it and, in some circumstances, cajoled “reluctant colonial politicians into asserting the

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<sup>172</sup> Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire*, pp. 328-330.

<sup>173</sup> See, for example, Wm. Roger Louis, “The Dissolution of the British Empire in the Era of Vietnam,” in *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 557-558.

<sup>174</sup> Gary Williams, “‘Keeping a Line Open’: Britain and the 1979 Coup in Grenada,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:3 (Sept. 2011), pp. 479-508; Spencer Mawby, “Overwhelmed in a Very Small Place: The Wilson Government and the Crisis Over Anguilla,” *Twentieth-Century British History*, 23:2 (2012), pp. 246-274; Assad Shoman, *Belize’s Independence and Decolonization in Latin America: Guatemala, Britain, and the UN* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>175</sup> For a list of British colonies as of 1970, see Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire*, pp. 411-412.



demand for a full and final transfer of power.”<sup>176</sup> Upon the accession of Edward Heath and the Conservative Party in 1970, the dismantling of empire intensified. Heath shared the opinion of many of his contemporaries, who deemed empire a waste of resources and believed that Britain “should spend its money on things of direct interest to [the] British and stop spending on things of interest to others.”<sup>177</sup> In contrast to his Labor Party predecessor Harold Wilson, Heath also had little interest in the Commonwealth or matters beyond Europe. As an unabashed “Europeanist,” Heath believed “Britain’s destiny lay in Europe.”<sup>178</sup> To recapture the international influence and economic clout the British had lost by the late 1960s, Heath focused on securing British membership in the European Economic Community (EEC). Heath thought that British EEC membership, by developing stronger trade and diplomatic relationships with continental Europe, could revive Britain domestically and internationally. EEC membership had the added benefit of bolstering European power generally, perhaps rendering Europe “a highly influential actor on the global stage.”<sup>179</sup>

In keeping with these dual trends in British foreign policy—decolonization and the strategic shift toward Europe—the Heath government looked to withdraw from the Caribbean, “where the vestiges of empire represent political and economic liabilities.” As part of this general policy of Caribbean disengagement, Britain anticipated granting the Bahamas independence by 1972. The end of British rule in the Bahamas threatened to

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<sup>176</sup> John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, p. 307

<sup>177</sup> Telegram re British Views on Caribbean, November 10, 1970, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 18 BAH, 8-10-71.

<sup>178</sup> Andrea Benvenuti and Moreen Dee, “The Five Power Defence Arrangements and the Reappraisal of the British and Australian Policy Interests in Southeast Asia, 1970-75,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 41:1 (2010), p. 104.

<sup>179</sup> Matthew Jones, “‘A Man in a Hurry’: Henry Kissinger, Transatlantic Relations, and the British Origins of the Year of Europe Dispute,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24:77 (2013), p. 79.

create a security vacuum because the British, averse to further security commitments, intended to remove their meager naval force from the region. The British disavowed all responsibility for Bahamian security upon independence, noting, in the words of Joseph Godber, Minister of State at the FCO, that “security of this area seems to Whitehall to be more matter for US than UK.”<sup>180</sup> Aside from limited training for internal Bahamian security forces, the British envisioned a minimal role in the future of the Bahamas. With Bahamian independence approaching, the primary concern of the British was “to withdraw in as graceful and orderly manner as possible.” The only significant interests the British had in the Bahamas pertained to security.<sup>181</sup> In addition to continued operating and overflight rights in the region, the British sought to retain the use of the joint Anglo-American AUTEK naval facility, the U.S. Air Force Eastern Test Range, and the Joint Relay Station in Nassau.<sup>182</sup> By the early 1970s, the British military continued to employ the AUTEK and AFETR facilities as laboratories to test weapons systems such as Polaris.<sup>183</sup>

Across the Atlantic, the Republican administration of Richard Nixon was also grappling with weighty strategic issues and flagging international prestige. While the

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<sup>180</sup> Telegram re British Views on Caribbean, November 10, 1970, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 18 BAH, 8-10-71.

<sup>181</sup> NSSM-117-Bahamas Options Paper, February 26, 1973, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1973, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Books, Tripartite Talks, Part II, 1973.

<sup>182</sup> United Kingdom/United States Talks 30 January to 1 February 1973 Agreed Record, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1973, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Books, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>183</sup> Memorandum from John Burke to Jonathan D. Stoddart, February 5, 1973, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.

Heath government looked to EEC membership as a panacea for its domestic and foreign policy woes, the Nixon administration struggled to extricate the U.S. from Vietnam. The abortive conflict in Vietnam precipitated a paradigmatic shift in American foreign policy encapsulated in the so-called Nixon Doctrine. The Nixon Doctrine, which President Nixon extemporaneously unveiled at a press conference at a U.S. Air Force base on Guam on July 25, 1969, outlined a scaling back of American military commitments overseas. The Nixon Doctrine called on American allies in Asia to take up the mantle of their own defense. American allies could continue to rely on the American nuclear shield as well as air and sea power, but the Nixon Doctrine eschewed committing ground troops.<sup>184</sup> Rather than direct military support for American allies, the Nixon Doctrine endorsed the indigenization of defense through transfers of American military hardware.<sup>185</sup> The Nixon Doctrine signified “Nixon’s push to limit American commitments and conserve American strength.”<sup>186</sup>

The Nixon Doctrine entailed drastically downscaling American military bases at home and abroad. Between 1969 and 1973, the DOD closed, consolidated, or otherwise realigned 249 military bases, which affected domestic bases as well as foreign bases in nineteen countries. While the DOD still oversaw a massive basing complex in excess of 3,000 installations abroad, the realignment initiated under the Nixon Doctrine reduced

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<sup>184</sup> Fintan Hoey, “The Nixon Doctrine and Nakasone Yasuhiro’s Unsuccessful Challenge to Japan’s Defense Policy, 1969-1971,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 19:1 (January 2012), pp. 52-53. Some scholars have challenged the idea that the Nixon Doctrine represented a deliberate or fundamental break with American foreign policy antecedents. For an insightful discussion, see Jeffrey Kimball, “The Nixon Doctrine: A Saga of Misunderstanding,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 36:1 (March 2006), pp. 59-74.

<sup>185</sup> Daniel W. B. Chua, “Becoming a ‘Good Nixon Doctrine Country’: Political Relations between the United States and Singapore during the Nixon Presidency,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 60:4 (December 2014), pp. 534-535.

<sup>186</sup> Hoey, “The Nixon Doctrine and Nakasone Yasuhiro’s Unsuccessful Challenge to Japan’s Defense Policy,” p. 53.

DOD expenditures by approximately \$670 million.<sup>187</sup> This basing realignment had implications for American military bases in the Bahamas. As a result of the Nixon Doctrine, American policymakers evinced considerable reluctance to extend financial or defense assistance to the Bahamas upon independence. Robert Hurwitch, Deputy Assistant Secretary, in a meeting with members of the British FCO, summarized the American position when he remarked that the U.S. had “a growing reluctance to assume further obligations overseas.” The U.S. wanted to retain its basing rights in the Bahamas, but there were “serious budgetary constraints facing the USG and for this reason exorbitant demands by the GOBI could not be seriously entertained.”<sup>188</sup>

Overall, American security objectives in the Bahamas closely aligned with those of the British. American policymakers wanted to ensure the political and economic stability of the Bahamas and maintain the largely pro-American stance of the Bahamian people.<sup>189</sup> The departure of the British, coupled with an end to NATO protection through Britain, created “a defense vacuum.” With its close proximity to the U.S., the State Department argued forcefully “against any flaccidity in our [U.S.] position.”<sup>190</sup> Like their British counterparts, American policymakers sought to preserve American basing,

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<sup>187</sup> Richardson Press Conference: Q and A on Overseas Bases, undated, p. 8, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1973, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Books, Tripartite Talks, Part II, 1973.

<sup>188</sup> Memorandum of Conversation re Bahamian Independence, November 30, 1972, pp. 2-3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>189</sup> NSSM-117-Bahamas Options Paper, February 26, 1973, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1973, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Books, Tripartite Talks, Part II, 1973.

<sup>190</sup> Study of U.S. Bilateral Security Commitment to the Bahamas, May 18, 1972, p. 4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meeting, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15 Base, Meetings, Installations, 1972.

overflight, and navigation rights in the archipelago. In particular, the U.S. wanted to retain the use of AUTEK, AFETR, and the NAVFAC facility on Eleuthera Island.<sup>191</sup>

While policymakers agreed on the importance of these American military facilities in the Bahamas, they could not agree on the best course of action to secure their continued use. In fact, a serious rift developed between the State Department and Department of Defense on the type of relationship the U.S. wanted with an independent Bahamas. The State Department favored an independent Bahamas, whereas the DOD advocated for “some form of association with the US under which responsibility for defense and foreign affairs would be delegated to us.”<sup>192</sup> The DOD’s imprudent insistence on exploring association stemmed from its belief that association offered the strongest protection for American security interests in the archipelago.<sup>193</sup> The DOD’s position understandably generated widespread opposition within the State Department, which regarded “protectorate-type relationships” as wildly “anachronistic” in the international environment of the 1970s.<sup>194</sup> One astute State Department employee

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<sup>191</sup> United Kingdom/United States Talks 30 January to 1 February 1973 Agreed Record, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1973, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Books, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>192</sup> Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger, the White House, re U.S. Negotiating Position Toward an Independent Bahamas, December 21, 1972, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15-1 Security Arrangements (Bahamas Options Papers).

<sup>193</sup> Memorandum for the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs re DOD Supplement 2 to the Response to the NSSM 117, the Future US-Bahamas Relationship, undated, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15-1 Security Arrangements (Bahamas Options Papers).

<sup>194</sup> Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger, the White House, re U.S. Negotiating Position Toward an Independent Bahamas, December 21, 1972, pp. 3-5, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15-1 Security Arrangements (Bahamas Options Papers).

feliculously compared it “to a reenactment of the annexations of Hawaii and Texas.”<sup>195</sup> Eventually the State Department’s position prevailed and the DOD desisted with the association talk, but not before unsuccessfully floating the idea of a Puerto Rico-style association with the Bahamas to both the British and Pindling.<sup>196</sup> Tensions between the two agencies periodically flared throughout the planning process, often reflecting what the State Department perceived as the DOD’s tendency “to confuse defense interests with security concerns.”<sup>197</sup>

Both agencies, however, recognized from the campaign rhetoric of 1972 the political symbolism Pindling and the PLP attached to the Anglo-American bases in the archipelago. As one report summarized, “Prime Minister Pindling is undoubtedly looking for a formula that will enable him to satisfy the contradictory demands of his polarized constituency.” The basing negotiations, the report continued, promised to reconcile the divergent independence views of the FNM and PLP. Pindling “may seek to satisfy those apprehensive of independence by trying to negotiate a bilateral security agreement with the US; for partisans of independence, he may try to obtain as large as possible financial quid pro quo.” In sum, the State Department understood that the basing negotiations

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<sup>195</sup> Memorandum re IG Recommendations on Bahamas Negotiations, November 20, 1972, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, DEF 15-3 AUSTL-US to DEF 15 BAH-US, Box 1689, File DEF 15, BAH-US, 1/1/70.

<sup>196</sup> For Pindling’s reaction, see Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger, the White House, re U.S. Negotiating Position Toward an Independent Bahamas, December 21, 1972, p. 4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15-1 Security Arrangements (Bahamas Options Papers). For the resolution of the association debates, see Memorandum for Mr. Henry A. Kissinger, the White House, re DOD Supplement 2 to the Response of NSSM 117, the Future US-Bahamas Relationship, December 13, 1972, pp. 1-3, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, AGR-Agriculture, 1971 to DEF 15-1—Security Arrangements, 1974, Box 1, File DEF Defense Affairs (Gen.) 1972.

<sup>197</sup> Note re Proposed Kendall Opening Address, undated, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meeting, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15-1 Security Arrangements.

potentially offered Pindling the means to assuage the security concerns of anti-independence factions and a source of revenue with which to pay down the \$15 million and growing deficit facing the Bahamian government.<sup>198</sup> Although hesitant to offer security commitments for the continued use of the Eleuthera, AUTEK, and AFETR facilities because of the constraints of the Nixon Doctrine, the State Department considered exploiting the security fears of the Bahamian population to reduce the overall quid pro quo. By extending a bilateral security commitment to the Bahamas, many within the State Department thought that the U.S. could offer less money as part of a comprehensive basing agreement.<sup>199</sup>

Given the overlapping interests in the Bahamas, it was logical that the British and Americans initially worked closely in the early stages of the Bahamian decolonization process, which included several high-level talks between the autumn of 1972 to the spring of 1973. In general, the Americans regarded the British as a source of stability and wanted them “to continue their presence in the area as long as possible.”<sup>200</sup> The British, however, had no such interest. At a November 30, 1972 Anglo-American talk, Sir Duncan Watson of the FCO expressed the British position, stating “that independence for the Bahamas was a decision that fitted into current HMG policy to withdraw from the Caribbean.” The British government, Watson continued, did not want to foist

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<sup>198</sup>Overseas Bases: Prospects for the Bahamas, November 15, 1972, pp. 3-5, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, DEF 15-3 AUSTL-US to DEF 15 BAH-US, Box 1689, File DEF 15, BAH-US, 1/1/70.

<sup>199</sup> See Memorandum re US Security Commitment to the Bahamas and Base Arrangements: Some Thoughts, April 10, 1972, pp. 1-3; Study of U.S. Bilateral Security Commitment to the Bahamas, May 18, 1972, p. 4. Both in NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15 Base, Meetings, Installations, 1972.

<sup>200</sup> Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger, the White House, re U.S. Negotiating Position Toward an Independent Bahamas, December 21, 1972, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meetings, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15-1 Security Arrangements (Bahamas Options Papers).

independence on an unwilling colony, but “it had become increasingly awkward and difficult to exercise continuing responsibility for defense and foreign affairs in those colonies where Britain had so little actual control over the local government.” The Bahamas was one such colony and the PLP’s resounding election triumph “appeared to furnish the Pindling government with all the mandate it needed to seek independence and London did not intend to stand in the way of such a move.”<sup>201</sup>

With the British departure looming, the State Department at first welcomed close Anglo-American cooperation. In fact, the State Department hoped that the British could “get it [Bahamian government] to be as reasonable as possible on the base matter.”<sup>202</sup> The State Department even urged the British to contemplate making the continued free use of Anglo-American bases in the Bahamas a condition of independence. The British recoiled at such a coercive suggestion, opining “such a position ran the serious risk of souring the atmosphere at a critical time.”<sup>203</sup> While opposed to making independence conditional, the British also initially favored close cooperation and suggested tripartite basing talks prior to independence between the U.S., the U.K., and the Bahamas. The British believed that by initiating these parleys before independence, they could shape the talks and secure an

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<sup>201</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, November 30, 1972, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>202</sup> Briefing Memorandum from Charles A. Meyer to Deputy Secretary, October 18, 1972, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meeting, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15-1 Security Arrangements (Bahamas Options Paper).

<sup>203</sup> Memorandum of Conversation re Bahamian Independence—Its Implications for US Security, November 30, 1972, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.



agreement more favorable to the U.S.<sup>204</sup> The British advocated often and zealously for making a joint Anglo-American offer to the Bahamians prior to independence.<sup>205</sup> The fervor with which the British pushed for the trilateral talks probably stemmed from the “pernicious anemia” of the prospective British offer. By advancing a collective Anglo-American basing offer, the British could exploit American largesse and obscure the paltriness of their singularly unimpressive quid pro quo.<sup>206</sup>

Some within the State Department readily discerned the British intention to profit from American bounty. For example, John Stoddart, Office Director, State Department, questioned the soundness of working within the tripartite framework as proposed by the British. Stoddart cautioned his superiors that a joint Anglo-American offer “may well serve to exert pressure on us for a more munificent quid” to compensate for the meagerness of the British quid pro quo. Overall, Stoddart challenged the Anglo-American partnership in the Bahamas, expressing “considerable doubt...as to whether the British can bring to bear any consequential influence on the GOBI in securing our negotiating objectives at a minimum cost.”<sup>207</sup> Indeed, several months before the first round of tripartite talks, a number of high-level officials in the State Department surmised

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<sup>204</sup> Memorandum of Conversation re US-UK Preparations for Bahamian Independence, September 27, 1972, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 18 BAH, 8-10-71.

<sup>205</sup> See, for example, Memorandum of Conversation re Bahamian Independence, November 30, 1972, p. 3-4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>206</sup> Memorandum from Jonathan D. Stoddart to John Burke, April 5, 1973, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks, GOBI/UK Working File.

<sup>207</sup> Memorandum from Jonathan D. Stoddart to John Burke, April 5, 1973, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks, GOBI/UK Working File.

that Pindling favored negotiating with the Americans rather than the British for “political and psychological” reasons. Such a statement implied that Pindling, worried about his own political fortunes and the mounting anti-imperialism in Bahamian society, sought to marginalize the British in the basing talks. Some within the State Department saw this as an opportunity to begin forging a new post-independence relationship with the Bahamas. Accordingly, although such a tactic would undoubtedly cause “headaches with the British,” Moncrieff Spear pressed for negotiating with Pindling directly, a so-called “‘down and dirty’ solution.”<sup>208</sup>

Other concerns with the tripartite formula emerged as well. Some within the State Department regarded the FCO as insufficiently tough on compelling the Bahamians to respect American overflight and landing rights that had been negotiated with British colonial authorities in 1941 and 1949, respectively.<sup>209</sup> Another reason for the initially tepid response to the tripartite talks was that the State Department needed time to consider the international implications of continued Anglo-American military cooperation in the Bahamas. The State Department worried that a post-independence British military presence in the Bahamas was incongruent with the values expressed in the Monroe Doctrine, OAS charter, and Rio Treaty.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Letter from Moncrieff J. Spear to John R. Burke, January 12, 1973, p. 1. See also letter from John R. Burke to Moncrieff J. Spear, January 19, 1973, pp. 1-2. Both in NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meeting, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15-1 Security Arrangements.

<sup>209</sup> US-UK Technical Talks-London, January 30-February 2, pp. 2-3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.

<sup>210</sup> Memorandum from David A. Gantz to Mark B. Feldman, February 16 1973, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 19 BAH 8-25-71.

On a broader level, the sentiments encapsulated in the comments of Stoddart and Spear speak to the chill in Anglo-American relations during the Heath years, which marked the transition from the “special relationship” forged through World War II to the “natural relationship.”<sup>211</sup> Heath’s preoccupation with Europe and the EEC largely explains this widening Anglo-American schism. Internalizing “the Gaullist argument that London’s special ties to the United States rendered Britain insufficiently European,” Heath regarded the close Anglo-American partnership as an impediment to EEC membership and consciously cultivated distance. Heath was not necessarily anti-American, but he nonetheless took pains to intentionally guide British foreign policy away from the U.S.<sup>212</sup> As John Dumbrell notes, “Edward Heath’s personal orientation towards the US was far more idiosyncratic and ambivalent than that of any other post-1945 British leader.” The Heath years witnessed a number of Anglo-American diplomatic clashes on issues such as the Indo-Pakistan War (1970-1974), the Yom Kippur War (1973), and NATO “burden sharing.”<sup>213</sup>

Despite the shift in British foreign policy, it is important not to exaggerate the Anglo-American rift. As Robert Hathaway observes, “a substantial similarity of perceptions and harmony of interests still bound the two Atlantic democracies.” The Anglo-American alliance remained connected through robust intelligence sharing and a mutual enmity for the Soviet Union. Moreover, Heath, unlike many other Western European heads of state, lent support to the U.S. position in Vietnam.<sup>214</sup> Yet, Anglo-American relations during the Heath years were qualitatively different from the Wilson or

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<sup>211</sup> Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, p. 73.

<sup>212</sup> Hathaway, *Great Britain and the United States*, p. 95.

<sup>213</sup> Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship*, pp. 73-78.

<sup>214</sup> Hathaway, *Great Britain and the United States*, p. 96.

Macmillan years. During the earlier AUTEK negotiations, despite moments of minor frustration, the State Department had been unified in the belief that the British represented a negotiating asset in the Bahamas. By the early 1970s, however, that consensus began to fragment, beginning with the issues of the British quid pro quo and support for American overflight rights. While such sentiments did not rupture the Anglo-American partnership, they did suggest a waning American faith in British power. These feelings of British weakness intensified during the negotiations, ultimately culminating in the American decision to continue the basing talks independently of the British.

Whatever misgivings some within the State Department and DOD had, the U.S. had no choice but to cooperate with the British. Following Bahamian independence, the British held the rights to the vast majority of the land upon which AUTEK sat. This rendered the U.S. virtually “a British tenant,” which meant that the continued American use of AUTEK depended on British consent.<sup>215</sup> Thus the Americans accepted the meager British quid pro quo, assenting for the moment to work cooperatively with the British through the proposed tripartite framework, which produced a joint Anglo-American agreement by the April 4-5, 1973 bilateral talks. The April talks affirmed, despite the moments of Anglophobia, that the U.K. and U.S. “had no antithetical interests and thus should try, wherever possible, to work in concert with each other.”<sup>216</sup>

Indeed, the British and American delegations agreed on the three fundamental issues of the basing talks. First, both the U.S. and U.K. sought to maintain their joint

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<sup>215</sup> Memorandum from Jonathan D. Stoddart to John Burke, February 5, 1973, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.

<sup>216</sup> Memorandum re Meeting with British, April 4-5, 1973, April 19, 1973, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

basing rights in the Bahamas “at the least possible cost.” Second, both the U.S. and U.K. strenuously opposed NATO membership for the Bahamas. Instead, both sides endorsed safeguarding Bahamian security, in the absence of a bilateral security commitment, through membership in the OAS. Lastly, both delegations vociferously resisted the Bahamian adoption of the archipelagic principle.<sup>217</sup> The U.S. vehemently opposed the archipelagic principle mainly for reasons of defense. By enclosing and consequently prohibiting navigation in large portions of the British Caribbean, the potential Bahamian adoption of the archipelagic principle threatened to hinder American military movements throughout the region.<sup>218</sup>

The American offer, as Stoddart had predicted, was considerably more magnanimous than that of the British. For the continued use of the AUTEK, NAVFAC, and AFETR facilities until 1988, as well as the retention of operating rights in the archipelago, the U.S. offered, among other things, to endorse Bahamian candidacy in the OAS, to fund infrastructural and development projects worth over \$10 million, and to continue regional Coast Guard patrols. Although reluctant to pay rent for the facilities, the U.S. agreed to the sum of \$500,000 per annum as “fair rental value” and, if necessary, \$1 million per annum as “‘political’ rental.” For the continued use of AUTEK, AFETR, the Joint Relay Station, Nassau, and operating rights, the British advanced an offer, which included honoring the AUTEK loans payments (£150,000 per annum) until their

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<sup>217</sup> Memorandum re Meeting with British, April 4-5, 1973, April 19, 1973, pp. 1-5, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>218</sup> Memorandum re Preservation of U.S. Military Rights in the Bahamas Following Bahamian Independence, May 4, 1973, pp.12-13, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I, 1973.

conclusion in 1983, continuing to conduct hydrographic surveys in the Bahamas and to train Bahamians how to do so, forgiving £40,000 of debt, and infusions of cash for the maintenance of internal security forces. While supportive of OAS membership for the Bahamas, the lingering border dispute between British Honduras (Belize) and Guatemala meant the British had little clout within the organization and could not formally support such a measure.<sup>219</sup>

*The Tripartite Talks of 1973 and their Aftermath*

The U.S., U.K., and the Bahamas convened several rounds of tripartite talks in Nassau in the spring and summer months leading up to independence. From the start, the American and British delegations stressed the shifts in Anglo-American foreign policy and the consequent limits on defense spending abroad. Such limits, both sides emphasized, meant that in face of unreasonable demands, “The functions performed at the Bahamas bases could be performed elsewhere and, in fact, this entire matter was under constant review.” In keeping with the joint package as discussed at the Anglo-American bilateral talks of April 4-5, the U.S. offer included endorsing OAS membership and the Rio Treaty, maintaining a Coast Guard presence, and the prospect of returning unused land associated with defunct American military installations in the archipelago. The American delegation initially withheld an offer for renting the bases, observing that “the US side hoped that the provision of land free of cost would be considered the Bahamian contribution to the defense of the hemisphere.” If essential, however, the U.S. would “consider rental payment at fair market value for the land as part of an acceptable package.” For their part,

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<sup>219</sup> Memorandum re Meeting with British, April 4-5, 1973, April 19, 1973, pp. 4-7, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

the British, among other things, expressed a willingness to continue paying the AUTEK loan and forgiving select Bahamian debt as well as funding further hydrographic studies and training.<sup>220</sup>

In the few brief accounts of the basing negotiations, scholars have emphasized the financial dimensions of the talks.<sup>221</sup> To be sure, throughout the basing negotiations the Bahamian delegation pressed forcefully for financial remuneration in the form of rental payments, loans, and infrastructural development. However, the Bahamian delegation also argued repeatedly and stubbornly for some form of connection with NATO.<sup>222</sup> As Jack Kubisch, Assistant Secretary of State, Inter-American Affairs, State Department, observed, “Quite candidly both the British delegation as well as our own have been surprised at the tenacity with which the Bahamians have pursued this topic.”<sup>223</sup>

The Bahamian delegation sought NATO membership for several reasons. First, the Bahamian delegation believed “that, in an economic sense, their interests were centered more firmly in the Atlantic than the Caribbean.”<sup>224</sup> This belief that the Bahamas,

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<sup>220</sup> Agreed Record of Tripartite Talks between the Government of the Bahamas, United States and United Kingdom Held in Government House, Nassau, 10 and 11 May, 1973, pp. 2-3, 11-15, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—Nassau 10 and 11 May 1973.

<sup>221</sup> See, for example, Dean W. Collingwood, *The Bahamas between Worlds* (Decatur, IL: White Sound Press, 1989), p. 49.

<sup>222</sup> Agreed Record of Tripartite Talks between the Government of the Bahamas, United States and United Kingdom Held in Government House, Nassau, 10 and 11 May, 1973, pp. 4-5, 8, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—Nassau 10 and 11 May 1973.

<sup>223</sup> Memorandum re NATO Resolution Regarding an Independent Bahamas, June 6, 1973, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—GOBI-UK.

<sup>224</sup> Agreed Record of Tripartite Talks between the Government of the Bahamas, United States and United Kingdom Held in Government House, Nassau, 10 and 11 May, 1973, p. 4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—Nassau 10 and 11 May 1973.

despite its geography, had closer ties with North America than the Caribbean was pervasive. As Turner Shelton remarked, many Bahamians “do not consider themselves a part of the Caribbean and, as a matter of fact, are quite sensitive about being referred to in any way in connection with the Caribbean.”<sup>225</sup> Indeed, this “Bahamian exceptionalism” colored the worldview of Bahamians, producing an air of superiority that sometimes manifested in ethnocentrism or chauvinism toward other Caribbean islanders.<sup>226</sup> NATO membership, by forging closer ties—actual and symbolic—with the Atlantic world, offered Bahamians a tangible way to assert their supposed cultural superiority. This was especially important in the period leading up to and following independence, when the Bahamian government worried about how both other Caribbean nations and the developing world perceived the Bahamas.<sup>227</sup>

Second, NATO membership offered a security alternative to OAS membership. The Bahamian delegation initially recoiled at OAS membership and resisted joining until 1982. Scholars have explained the long Bahamian delay in OAS membership as resistance to the American domination of the organization.<sup>228</sup> However, a close examination of the diplomatic record before and during the 1973 tripartite talks reveals

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<sup>225</sup> Airgram re A Year-End Assessment of the Political and Economic Trends in the Bahamas, Feb. 12, 1968, p. 7, NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1967-1969, Political and Defense, POL 23 BAH to POL BALTIC ST, Box 1865, File Political Aff. & Rel. BAH-A 1-1-67.

<sup>226</sup> Memorandum re Pot Luck: Racial Attitudes in the Bahamas, May 6, 1974, p. 3, NARA, RG 84, Entry#P41: U.S. Embassy, Bahamas: Classified Central Subject Files, 1956-1975, POL 12, Political Parties, 1974 THRU TP, Trade Promotion & Assistance, 1974, Container #15, File SOC, Social Conditions, 1974.

<sup>227</sup> Bahamas Defense Facilities, July 30, 1973, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, AGR-Agriculture, 1971 to DEF 15-1—Security Arrangements, 1974, Box 1, File Bahamas 1974, DEF-15-1 Base Negotiations. For Bahamian concerns of their image in the developing world, see Base Negotiations: Reaction to Meeting of June 28, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.

<sup>228</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, pp. 366-368.



concerns with both the composition and perceived efficacy of the OAS and Rio Treaty. As Britain's Caribbean colonies gained independence, they increasingly joined the OAS to preserve their post-independence security. The influx of Commonwealth states engendered sharp resentment among the Spanish-speaking nations of the OAS, which deemed it a "dilution" of the Latin content of the OAS."<sup>229</sup> More importantly, the Bahamians expressed considerable concern with the very efficacy of the OAS. The Bahamian delegation worried that the OAS could not effectively deter Cuban aggression, remarking that the Castro regime "would be more impressed with Bahamian NATO membership than OAS membership."<sup>230</sup> The Bahamians regarded the Rio Pact with similar skepticism claiming, in the words of Arthur Barnett, Permanent Secretary, Bahamian Ministry of External Affairs, "that the Rio Pact umbrella would not be sufficient for psychological reasons."<sup>231</sup>

Lastly, the Bahamian delegation complained that the basing agreements implied a de facto NATO association and the Bahamas "preferred to be part of an organization rather than to provide facilities for another state who was a member of that organisation."<sup>232</sup> Such a position undoubtedly reflected growing nationalist sentiment in

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<sup>229</sup> Memorandum re Meeting with British, April 4-5, 1973, April 19, 1973, p. 4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>230</sup> Agreed Record of Tripartite Talks between the Government of the Bahamas, United States and United Kingdom Held in Government House, Nassau, 10 and 11 May, 1973, p. 7, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—Nassau 10 and 11 May 1973.

<sup>231</sup> Overseas Bases: Prospects for the Bahamas, November 15, 1972, p. 4, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, DEF 15-3 AUSTL-US to DEF 15 BAH-US, Box 1689, File DEF 15, BAH-US, 1/1/70.

<sup>232</sup> Agreed Record of Tripartite Talks between the Government of the Bahamas, United States and United Kingdom Held in Government House, Nassau, 10 and 11 May, 1973, p. 4, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-

the post-independence period, which exerted “pressure” on Pindling.<sup>233</sup> Given this mounting nationalism, Pindling worried about the political consequences of a defense arrangement with the hegemonic United States.<sup>234</sup> NATO membership thus offered security without offending the nationalist sensibilities of Pindling’s constituency.

More than NATO membership, however, the Bahamian delegation recurrently and vigorously sought Anglo-American support for its archipelagic principle. The Bahamian delegation clearly believed that such support, particularly from the United States, could secure international recognition of the application of the archipelagic principle to the Bahamas.<sup>235</sup> The Bahamians had several reasons to push for Anglo-American support of their archipelagic principle. First and foremost, proposed not long after the Abaco secession movement, the archipelagic principle offered safety against disunion and political fragmentation. As Arthur Barnett told the public, “any concept to treat the Family Islands as separate entities geographically or otherwise must necessarily have a divisive political effect, especially when there is some nonsensical talk of secession as we approach independence.”<sup>236</sup>

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1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—Nassau 10 and 11 May 1973.

<sup>233</sup> Bahamas Bases-Technical Talks, undated, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-Bases, Installations, Meeting, 1972 to DEF 15-4-Base Agreements, 1962-1963, Box 4, File DEF-15-1 Security Arrangements.

<sup>234</sup> US-UK Technical Talks-London, January 30-February 2, p.3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities.

<sup>235</sup> See, for example, Agreed Record of Tripartite Talks between the Government of the Bahamas, United States and United Kingdom, Held in Government House, Nassau, May 28, 1973, pp. 8-9, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks, GOBI/UK Working File.

<sup>236</sup> “Govt. Official Addresses Kiwanis: Need for Archipelago Principle Emphasised,” *Nassau Guardian*, November 13, 1972, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 18 BAH 8-10-71.

Second, if adopted, the archipelagic principle afforded the Bahamas greater protection of its natural resources. As an island nation, seafood and fish were the most important resources for the livelihood of many Bahamians. Largely unenforced during the colonial era, in the period leading up to and following independence the Bahamian government increasingly enforced fishing laws in its territorial waters. Referred to as the “Lobster Wars,” the Bahamian government became embroiled in acrimonious disputes with mostly Cuban-American fishermen operating out of Florida that culminated in a number of highly publicized legal cases.<sup>237</sup> These fishing disputes, particularly their ramifications for the fishing constituency, deeply troubled Pindling and his ministers and reinforced their belief in the archipelagic principle.<sup>238</sup> Lastly and relatedly, the Bahamian government worried more broadly about external security. The Bahamas close proximity to Cuba and the fact that it often served as a refuge for Cuban exiles to launch raids proved especially discomfiting for the Pindling government.<sup>239</sup> These external security concerns were, in the words of Arthur Barnett, “the most compelling argument in favour of the archipelagic principle.”<sup>240</sup>

In general terms, NATO membership served as international platform for Bahamian national aggrandizement and a means for Pindling to reimagine what was politically possible for the archipelago. Pindling styled himself as a Caribbean Dominic

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<sup>237</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, pp. 369-371.

<sup>238</sup> Memorandum of Conversation re U.S.-Bahamian Relations, March 5, 1973, pp. 1-3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Books, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>239</sup> Memorandum of Conversation re U.S.-Bahamian Relations, March 5, 1973 at 11:30 a.m., pp. 1-3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1—Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Books, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>240</sup> “Govt. Official Addresses Kiwanis: Need for Archipelago Principle Emphasised,” *Nassau Guardian*, November 13, 1972, NARA, RG 59, Subject Numeric Files, 1970-73, Political & Defense, POL 13-2 BAH to POL 1 BAH-US, Box 2111, File POL 18 BAH 8-10-71.

(“Dom”) Mintoff, the contemporaneous Prime Minister of Malta.<sup>241</sup> Pindling’s Bahamas and Mintoff’s Malta had a number of striking parallels. First, like the Bahamas, the small island of Malta, with its excellent harbors, was essential for British and NATO forces to track the movement of Soviet submarines in the Mediterranean. Second, Mintoff’s Malta, analogous to Pindling’s Bahamas, suffered from an imploding tourist industry and flagging economy. Lastly, both Malta and the Bahamas had endured centuries of British dominion. Detesting the British and Malta’s colonial past, “Mintoff was determined to assert Maltese identity, and by so doing, give the country a pride in itself.” Mintoff recognized that the bases on the island could further his nationalist agenda while simultaneously helping to render Malta economically independent. In the end, after months of adroit diplomacy, Mintoff secured a robust financial concession from the Heath government. According to the March 1972 agreement, Malta agreed to lease the naval base to British and NATO forces for a seven-year period for £14 million annually.<sup>242</sup> Unfolding in consonance with the basing talks, Pindling drew inspiration about the symbolic and financial perquisites of foreign bases in the archipelago.

The British did not welcome the prospect of a tropical Mintoff clamoring for greater concessions.<sup>243</sup> In an effort to contain Bahamian ambitions, both the American

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<sup>241</sup> US-UK Technical Talks-London, January 30-February 2, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.

<sup>242</sup> James Craig, “Escape from the Fortress Colony: The Politics of Economic Diversification in Malta,” in *The Fallacies of Hope: The Post-Colonial Record of the Commonwealth Third World*, eds. James Mayall and Anthony Payne (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 137-141.

<sup>243</sup> For British references to Mintoff, see US-UK Technical Talks-London, January 30-February 2, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations; Memorandum of Conversation re Bahamian Independence, November 30, 1972, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part I to DEF 15-1-Briefing

and British delegations emphatically opposed any attempts at Bahamian aggrandizement through NATO membership or the adoption of the archipelagic principle. Regarding NATO membership, in addition to lacking the resources and capabilities, the American delegation pointed out that the Bahamas “could not derive NATO membership from association with a member state,” but needed the unanimous support of member states, a distinction reserved for European states. The British delegation portrayed Bahamian NATO membership in a similarly negative fashion. Echoing the American observation, the British questioned the Bahamian ability to project power abroad. Like the Americans, the British delegation characterized NATO as an organization concerned with “the Soviet threat in Europe” rather than the Caribbean. Such factors, the British pointed out, militated against convincing the current member states of the value of Bahamian NATO membership. In response to Bahamian calls for support for the archipelagic principle, both the American and British delegations demurred, favoring to deal with the subject in the upcoming multilateral Law of the Sea Conference.<sup>244</sup>

The Bahamian delegation nonetheless persisted in its calls for NATO membership and support for their archipelagic principle in multiple trilateral talks. In the second trilateral talks of May 28, for example, the Bahamian delegation maintained that they “did not accept the view that the position of the Tropic of Cancer was a barrier to NATO association” and defiantly announced its continued commitment to NATO association.

The Bahamians remained committed to the archipelagic principle, but softened their

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Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part II, Box 3, File Briefing Book, Bahamas, Tripartite Talks, Part III, 1973.

<sup>244</sup> Agreed Record of Tripartite Talks between the Government of the Bahamas, United States and United Kingdom Held in Government House, Nassau, 10 and 11 May, 1973, pp. 4-5, 9, 13, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—Nassau 10 and 11 May 1973.

stance somewhat in the second round of trilateral talks by informing their British and American counterparts, in amorphous language, of a willingness to accept “a modified archipelagic concept.” While the contours of such a concept remained vague, it presumably meant that archipelagic principle “need not be applied in its extreme form” and that the Pindling government wanted to advance Bahamian security interests “without committing the U.S. and U.K. to positions in conflict with their Law of the Sea policy.” In the face of Bahamian recalcitrance, the American delegation extended the offer, hinted at in the first tripartite talks, of an annual rental of \$500,000. This financial inducement, though, did little to sway the Bahamian delegation, which deemed such an offer “a bit undervalued.” As the second round of talks concluded, the American delegation increasingly grasped that “without agreement on the Bahamian definition of territorial integrity, there could not be further progress in the talks.”<sup>245</sup>

Following the second round of talks, the Americans and British sought a means to mollify the Bahamians without compromising Anglo-American security interests. Although both the British and Americans remained committed to OAS membership for the Bahamas, they discussed the possibility of an agreement similar to the “Malta resolution” of 1965 to placate the Bahamians. According to the Malta Resolution, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) affirmed that NATO cared deeply about Maltese security and pledged close cooperation in the event of an external security threat.<sup>246</sup> An analogous

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<sup>245</sup> Agreed Record of Tripartite Talks between the Government of the Bahamas, United States and United Kingdom, Held in Government House, Nassau, May 28, 1973, pp. 1, 3-9, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks, GOBI/UK Working File.

<sup>246</sup> Draft Telegram re Bahamian Independence and NATO, June 5, 1973, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—GOBI-UK.

arrangement for the Bahamas, some believed, “might be commitment enough for Nassau.” Such an arrangement also had the added benefit of ameliorating Bahamian security anxieties while diminishing the “security or monetary demands they might make of us.”<sup>247</sup> Significantly, however, some within the DOD urged that the U.S. not be so quick to dismiss Bahamian NATO membership. Harrison Lobdell, Jr., Brigadier General, U.S. Air Force and Regional Director for European Affairs for the DOD, recommended carefully considering NATO membership, arguing that denying Bahamian NATO membership without careful scrutiny would be a violation of the “regionalism and self-help” that the Nixon Doctrine exalted.<sup>248</sup> Lobdell’s thoughts on NATO membership for the Bahamas, reminiscent of the earlier debates between the State Department and DOD about association, attest to the divergent opinions of the two agencies throughout the decolonization process in the Bahamas.

Ultimately, however, the pleas of Lobdell and the suggestion of a Malta-style arrangement with the Bahamas did not materialize. Nor did the Bahamian demands for a form of association with NATO abate in the final trilateral talks in June. In addition to continued calls for NATO membership, the Bahamians aggressively pushed for a secret

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<sup>247</sup> Memorandum re NATO Resolution Regarding an Independent Bahamas, June 6, 1973, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—GOBI-UK. The State Department eventually produced a draft of such a “fig-leaf” agreement, which symbolically recognized “the deep interest of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.” See Memorandum re Bahamian Interest in Some Form of Association with NATO, undated, p. 1; Draft of Joint State of the North Atlantic Council and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, undated, p. 1. Both in NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.

<sup>248</sup> Memorandum for Director, Inter-American Region, OASD (ISA) re Bahamian Membership in NATO (C), May 22, 1973, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau Box 2, File Tripartite Talks—GOBI-UK.

endorsement of their archipelago position in advance of the upcoming Law of the Sea Conference. Both the U.S. and U.K., however, remained implacably hostile to NATO membership and the archipelagic principle. The talks laid the groundwork for a tentative carryover agreement that preserved Anglo-American security arrangements with the Bahamas upon independence until they could be firmly renegotiated, but nothing more definitive or substantive.<sup>249</sup>

After the abortive tripartite talks in June, the Americans sought to distance themselves from the British. In an Anglo-American bilateral meeting held shortly after Bahamian independence in July 1973, Harry Shlaudeman, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of State, informed the British delegation of the American intention to move forward separately in the negotiating process. The American delegation retained its commitment “to a continuation of an approach based on a joint package to fulfill GCOB security requirements,” but jettisoned the tripartite approach. This signaled an unwelcome shift in American strategy for the British. The British delegation cautioned that “the GCOB might seek to drive a wedge between the U.S. and U.K.” and affirmed “HMG had no intention of making a separate deal.” While the U.S. pledged “consultation and cooperation with the British,” the U.S. “could not state that the failure of HMG to reach

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<sup>249</sup> Agreed Record of Tripartite Talks between the Governments of the Bahamas, United States and United Kingdom held in Government House, Nassau, June 22, 1973, pp. 4-6. For an overview of Bahamian demands, see Appendix A, Tripartite Talks, 1973 Aide Memoire, June 22, 1973, especially pp. 2-3. For the details of the carryover agreement, see Appendix B, US-Bahamas Carry-Over Agreement, June 25, 1973, pp. 1-2. All in NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1-Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1-Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Tripartite Talks at Govt. House-Nassau-on 22, 25 June 1973.



agreement with the GCOB would necessarily mean no agreement between the USG and GCOB.”<sup>250</sup>

A growing awareness of the diminution of British influence in the Caribbean generally and the Bahamas specifically likely spurred the American decision to proceed independently. Although some within the State Department had sporadically questioned the negotiating strength of the British, independence amplified this tendency. The fact that the U.S. had easily concluded an interim carryover agreement with the Bahamas, whereas the British had not, proved especially persuasive in advancing the image of British weakness. The American delegation attributed its rapid negotiating success with the Bahamians to the importance of American investment and tourism to the archipelago’s economy. In contrast, the British attributed their failure to growing anti-imperial sentiment in the Bahamas. Watkins of the FCO opined that “the GCOB considers the interim agreement with the U.S. as a ‘business deal,’ while British efforts for a similar agreement are viewed as a perpetuation of colonialism.” In short, Watkins believed, “the U.K. is at a disadvantage because of their position as the former colonial masters.”<sup>251</sup> The ease with which the Americans reached an interim agreement with the Bahamians was symptomatic of the larger, decades-long trend of growing American influence and the gradual erosion of British power in the Caribbean. The American delegation understood that the Union Jack now represented not an asset, but a liability.

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<sup>250</sup> Memorandum re Bahamas Defense Facilities, July 30, 1973, p. 3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, AGR-Agriculture, 1971 to DEF 15-1—Security Arrangements, 1974, Box 1, File Bahamas 1974, DEF-15-1 Base Negotiations.

<sup>251</sup> Memorandum re Bahamas Defense Facilities, July 30, 1973, p. 2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, AGR-Agriculture, 1971 to DEF 15-1—Security Arrangements, 1974, Box 1, File Bahamas 1974, DEF-15-1 Base Negotiations.

## Conclusion

Following Bahamian independence on July 10, 1973, the basing talks languished for nearly a year.<sup>252</sup> Ronald Spiers, American Consul General, Nassau, expressed the frustrated consensus of the State Department when he lamented that “the negotiating pace has been very slow, almost agonizingly so.”<sup>253</sup> After the long delay, the Bahamians finally revealed their post-independence position on the bilateral basing talks between the U.S. and the Bahamas at a June 28, 1974 meeting in Nassau between Ronald Spiers and Paul Adderley, Minister of External Affairs. In broad terms, the Bahamians now deemed the basing and operating rights as distinct and sought to disentangle them. Of the two sets of issues, Adderley regarded operating rights as much more problematic for the Bahamian government because the rights, as construed, ceded too much sovereignty to American military forces operating in the archipelago. As Adderley put it to Spiers, the proposed operating rights “would grant USG greater powers within the Bahamas than the USG has within its own fifty states.” For the Bahamian government, the fundamental issue was that it could not agree “on operating rights without coming to agreement on precisely (not vaguely) what the jurisdictional area in which operating rights are exercised.” Hence, the Bahamian government remained committed to some iteration of the archipelagic principle.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Telegram 1192 re Facilities Negotiations, July 1974, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1—Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1—Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.

<sup>253</sup> Letter from Ronald Spiers to Eileen R. Donovan, March 28, 1974, p. 1, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, AGR-Agriculture, 1971 to DEF 15-1—Security Arrangements, 1974, Box 1, File Bahamas 1974, DEF-15-1 Base Negotiations.

<sup>254</sup> Telegram 1177 re Facilities Talks: Adderley Talks Maximal, Section 1 of 3, July 2, 1974, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records

The specific conditions for successfully concluding basing or operating rights also changed dramatically after independence. Adderley, for example, related to Spears that membership in international organizations such as the OAS or even NATO “were of little interest to the GCOB now.”<sup>255</sup> Adderley did not elaborate on the rationale for this stark shift in Bahamian policy, but there are three possible explanations. First, the Bahamian government may have realized, after facing determined resistance from the American and British delegations at the trilateral talks the previous summer, that NATO membership was extremely unlikely. Second, having achieved election on an independence platform, the salience of a post-independence security agreement may have declined for Pindling and the PLP government. Finally, this newfound nonchalance to Western security regimes may have been a negotiating tactic to portray the Bahamas as an emerging non-aligned nation, thus potentially extracting greater concessions from an American foreign policy establishment striving to curry favor with the Bahamas.

While the professed relevance of security arrangements evidently declined for the Pindling government, the salience of financial considerations waxed. Indeed, Adderley conveyed that financial considerations were now “key to whole issue of facilities talks.” Adderley, reflecting the views of the Bahamian government, noted two principal reasons for the increased importance of financial remuneration. First, Adderley observed that concluding bilateral operating and basing rights agreements with the U.S. would occasion “a variety of problems” for the PLP leadership, which included “domestic political

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Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1—Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1—Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.  
<sup>255</sup> Telegram 1177 re Facilities Talks: Adderley Talks Maximal, Section 2 of 3, July 2, 1974, p. 1, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1—Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1—Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.

problems.” Since providing basing and operating rights gratis proved politically untenable, the Bahamian government required “compensation in some form” to make it palatable to the public. Second, as a newly independent nation in the volatile economic climate of the 1970s, the Pindling government had a pressing need “to ‘survive economically.’” With the British gone, the Bahamian government now pursued “economic security” through bilateral relations with the U.S. Lacking effective financial infrastructures, Adderley rued “that even if the US gave the GCOB -100 million in cash the latter wouldn’t know how to handle it.” Adderley did little to obscure the Bahamian economic dependence on the U.S. “It was precisely on this need for economic security and the building of economic institutions that the focus of our bilateral relationship must rest,” Adderley remarked.<sup>256</sup>

This new focus on obtaining a sizeable financial quid pro quo from the Americans reflects the tremendous post-colonial economic difficulties of the Caribbean Commonwealth. As a mini-state, the Bahamas, like other former and current British dependencies in the Caribbean and elsewhere, lacks extensive “material and human resources.”<sup>257</sup> Since independence, the Bahamas has grappled with the economic dilemmas common to mini-states, such as contending with the fact that the “sun, sea, and sand,” and to a lesser extent gambling and offshore banking activities, are its main resources and sources of revenue. As of 1989, for example, 75 percent of the Bahamian GNP derived from the tourist industry, which also provided jobs for two-thirds of the Bahamian workforce. In short, the Bahamas’ lack of economic diversity as well as

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<sup>256</sup> Telegram 1177 re Facilities Talks: Adderley Talks Maximal, Section 2 of 3, July 2, 1974, pp. 1-3, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1—Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1—Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.

<sup>257</sup> Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1990), p. 48.

limited tax and anemic manufacturing bases render the archipelago dependent on foreign, particularly American, dollars and imports. Thus, while always better off than the other islands of the Caribbean, the Bahamas “entered the world of independent nations amidst a great deal of internal self-doubt” regarding its economic viability as a sovereign nation.<sup>258</sup> The presence of lucrative Anglo-American bases, therefore, afforded the Bahamas the means to achieve a modicum of post-independence economic viability. However, in consenting to the foreign bases, the Bahamians essentially reconstituted colonialism in the archipelago. Instead of a British colony, the Bahamas became an American dependent.

Nationalist sentiments and the desire for sovereignty after centuries of British domination coexisted uneasily with the realization that, in order to survive, the Bahamas needed to transform itself into an American client state. This tension, always simmering below the surface, became readily apparent in the years following independence. While Adderley plaintively disclosed the precarious financial situation of the Bahamas, he also revealed his nation’s craving for regional and international respectability and autonomy. Adderley informed Spiers that the Bahamian government cared deeply about its international image, particularly in the Caribbean Commonwealth, the developing world, and Cuba. As Adderley related, “the status, credibility and sovereignty of the Bahamas must be maintained in such eyes.” The other nations of the Commonwealth, Adderley alleged, regarded the Bahamas as “foolish” to consider a basing arrangement with the United States. Acutely aware of the unsavory regional and international implications of

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<sup>258</sup> For an insightful overview of the post-colonial economic situation of the Bahamas, see Ramesh Ramsaran, “The Bahamas: An Assessment of Post-Independence Economic Experience” in *Modern Bahamian Society*, especially pp. 110-113.

granting the U.S. extensive operating rights in the Bahamas, the Pindling government was keen not to be perceived as “‘a bastard fifty-first state’ of the US.”<sup>259</sup>

The Bahamian search for a path between acquiescence and hegemony as well as independence and dependence guided the basing talks over the next decade. During this decade-long negotiation, Bahamian-American relations experienced periods of great tension. The nadir of Bahamian-American relations came in 1976, when External Affairs Minister Adderley threatened to close the American facilities in the archipelago if a satisfactory agreement could not be reached. Pindling defused the situation in 1978, assuring the Americans that the Bahamian government did not want them to withdraw from the archipelago.<sup>260</sup> Nonetheless, the intractable basing talks lingered, eventually precipitating a high-profile 1978 meeting between President Carter and Prime Minister Pindling.<sup>261</sup> In July 1983, the two nations finally concluded an agreement that reaffirmed the American lease on AUTEK, but significantly limited the size of the NAVFAC and AFETR facilities. For a ten-year lease, the U.S. agreed to pay the Bahamian government a substantial \$100 million.<sup>262</sup>

The story of the AUTEK, NAVFAC, and AFETR facilities reveals the relationship between Anglo-American military installations and the long process of decolonization in the Bahamas. Between 1960 and 1963, the political party of the white settler elite, the UBP, sustained an intense political challenge from the PLP. In an effort to buoy its attenuated power base, the UBP feebly attempted to leverage the AUTEK

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<sup>259</sup> Telegram 1177 re Facilities Talks: Adderley Talks Maximal, Section 2 of 3, July 2, 1974, pp. 1-2, NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of the Director for Caribbean Countries, Records Relating to the Bahamas, 1963-1974, DEF 15-1—Base Negotiations, Working Files, 1973 to DEF 15-1—Tripartite Talks at Govt. House, Nassau, Box 2, File Mr. Burke’s Files: Base Facilities Negotiations.

<sup>260</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 375.

<sup>261</sup> “Islands Reject Free U.S. Bases,” *The Afro-American*, January 14, 1978, 16.

<sup>262</sup> Craton and Saunders, *Islanders in the Stream*, p. 375; Muñiz, “Decolonization, Demilitarization, and Denuclearization in the Caribbean”, p. 32.

talks to extract financial concessions and the repeal of the odious customs legislation of 1961. Between 1970 and 1973, the PLP, now the dominant political party, likewise experienced a formidable challenge from the multiracial FNM. To deflect growing domestic criticism occasioned by the economic malaise of the early 1970s and exposed, shady backroom deals, the PLP endorsed immediate independence. Initially an unpopular proposition, the PLP employed the expanded basing talks to calm financial and defense anxieties about a post-independence future. The basing talks also served as a platform to express nationalist sentiment, as evidenced by the insistence on the archipelagic principle.

The extended decolonization process in the Bahamas also sheds light on the nature of the joint Anglo-American imperial project and allows for comparisons between the pre- and post-1965 period. During the Kennedy-Macmillan years, close Anglo-American relations and a mutual interest in the imperial project ensured smooth and effective collaboration in the Bahamas. During the Heath-Nixon years, Anglo-American interests did not become inimical, but the bilateralism of empire noticeably diminished. Preoccupied with Europe, Britain rapidly and rather haphazardly jettisoned the Bahamas with little regard for its security or economic future. Smarting from its defeat in Vietnam, the U.S. assumed a less visible overseas posture. While at first amenable to close cooperation, tensions over the size of the British quid pro quo, overflight rights, and the stark realization that British clout in the Caribbean had diminished militated against further bilateralism in the Bahamas after 1973. Following Bahamian independence, the Americans pursued their security interests in the archipelago independently, though not antithetically, of the British.

The basing struggles in the Bahamas, situated within a broader Caribbean context, reveal a decades-long project to uproot empire or constitute it anew. Stretching from Bermuda in the north to British Guiana in the south, at the end of World War II the U.S. controlled 87,000 acres of land across the British Commonwealth. This rapid and immense wartime basing accretion diminished with the end of hostilities, shrinking to some 10,000 acres by the end of the Eisenhower years. Beginning with the successful Chaguaramas campaign in the late 1950s and early 1960s, American military installations in the Anglophone Caribbean, buffeted by technological change and nationalist forces, withered further. Technological obsolescence, for example, impelled the closure of American facilities in Jamaica, St. Lucia, and the Turks and Caicos. Elsewhere in the Commonwealth Caribbean, countries attempted and sometimes failed to transmute American military installations into economic security. In 1977, for example, Antigua concluded an eleven-year lease with the U.S. that secured \$1.2 million annually for facilities on the island. In contrast, in 1979, the U.S., following a rancorous diplomatic contest, withdrew from Barbados because of an inability to reach a mutually satisfactory *quid pro quo*.<sup>263</sup>

Whereas Antigua acquiesced to American militarization and Trinidad and Barbados rejected it, the Bahamas, befitting its maverick position in the British Caribbean, balanced autonomy with the pressing need of economic viability as a mini-state in a post-colonial landscape. As a result, after a ten-year battle that powerfully demonstrated its sovereignty, the Bahamas achieved the massive economic windfall that had eluded the country during the colonial years.<sup>264</sup> As of 2014, the U.S. military retains

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<sup>263</sup> Muñiz, “Decolonization, Demilitarization, and Denuclearization in the Caribbean,” pp. 30-32.

<sup>264</sup> Muñiz, “Decolonization, Demilitarization, and Denuclearization in the Caribbean,” p. 32.



a visible, albeit diminished, presence in the British Caribbean, as evidenced by the U.S. Air Force base in Antigua and the AUTECH naval facility in the Bahamas. The continued presence of the AUTECH naval base, nearly fifty years after its construction, attests to the Bahamian struggle as a mini-state to chart a course between acquiescence and outright resistance to American hegemony.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> For a complete list of American military installations at home and abroad as of 2014, see Department of Defense Base Structure Report, FY 2014 Baseline, available at <http://www.acq.osd.mil/ie/download/bsr/Base%20Structure%20Report%20FY14.pdf>.

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