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978-1-107-61310-2 - The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865–1914

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Excerpt

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## Introduction

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‘So that’s your Diary – that’s your private mind  
Translated into shirt-sleeved History. That  
Is what diplomacy left behind  
For after-ages to peruse, and find  
What passed beneath your elegant silk-hat.

...

But I, for one, am grateful, overjoyed  
And unindignant that your punctual pen  
Should have been so constructively employed  
In manifesting to unprivileged men  
The visionless officialized fatuity  
That once made Europe safe for Perpetuity.’

Siegfried Sassoon, ‘On Reading the War Diary of a  
Defunct Ambassador’<sup>1</sup>

For those who share the poet’s sentiments, this book is already too long. Those who take a more detached, possibly even cynical, view of the diplomatic machinations before the Great War may well judge it to be too short. This book is not intended as an exploration of past international relations as such. It does not seek to probe into every nook and cranny of Britain’s foreign affairs in the second half of the long nineteenth century. Neither does it offer an administrative history of ‘the quill-driving life of the F.O.’ and the then still separate diplomatic service.<sup>2</sup> It seeks, instead, to explore an aspect of British foreign policy, to which historians have frequently alluded, but which still remains hidden in the darker recesses of the past: the ‘official mind’.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Poems* (London, 1968), 42–3.

<sup>2</sup> Lister to A.F. Lascelles, 1 Oct. 1911, [T. Lister] Lord Ribblesdale, *Charles Lister: Letters and Recollections* (London, 1917), 43.

<sup>3</sup> To simplify the nomenclature here, the ‘Foreign Office’ or ‘foreign service’ are deemed to include the members of the Foreign Office and the diplomatic service, though officially these were two separate branches of the civil service until 1919; see Z.S. Steiner and M.L. Dockrill, ‘The Foreign Office Reforms, 1919–1921’, *HJ* xvii, 1 (1974), 131–56; C. Larner, ‘The Amalgamation of the Diplomatic Service with the Foreign Office’, *JCH* vii, 1–2 (1976), 107–26.

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At its best, diplomatic history has never been the preserve of painstaking plodders who merely chart the waxing and waning of foreign relations, without any pretence at understanding their wider context or significance. It would be a bloodless analysis of diplomatic activity, indeed, that did not trouble itself to relate that activity to contemporary norms of behaviour and contemporary conceptions of what was politically permissible or practically possible. Without taking into account ‘the manner in which contemporaries tried to explain their situation in time and place and ... the language and concepts in which such explanations are formulated’ no real understanding of past politics is possible.<sup>4</sup>

International historians usually have referred to, or commented on, the British ‘official mind’ in more general terms; occasionally they have elucidated certain aspects of it.<sup>5</sup> But mostly, it is taken as a convenient short-hand for an administrative rather than a political outlook.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, Robinson and Gallagher in their pioneering study of the dynamics of late-Victorian expansionism in Africa blurred any dividing line between the administrative and the political fields so much that anyone who ever held public office, from the Prime Minister of the day to lowly officials at far-flung consular outposts, became a representative of the ‘official mind’.<sup>7</sup> Outside Britain, and more narrowly conceived, Robert D. Schulzinger has sought to explain a form of collective mindset, peculiar to the United States foreign service, as a product of professional training and certain ingrained habits of style.<sup>8</sup> Others have

<sup>4</sup> K.T. Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846–1886* (Oxford, 1998), 92; also M. Bentley, *The Liberal Mind, 1914–1929* (Cambridge, 1977), 2.

<sup>5</sup> See, *inter alios*, Z.S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898–1914* (Cambridge, 1969); Z.S. Steiner, ‘Foreign Office Views, Germany and the Great War’, in R.J. Bullen, H. Pogge von Strandmann and A.B. Polonsky (eds.), *Ideas into Politics: Aspects of European History, 1880–1950* (London, 1984), 36–50; E. Goldstein, ‘Neville Chamberlain, the British Official Mind and the Munich Crisis’, *D&S* x, 2–3 (1999), 276–92; K. Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919–1939* (Cambridge, 2006), 24–42; T.G. Otte, ‘Old Diplomacy: Reflections on the Foreign Office before 1914’, in G. Johnson (ed.), *The Foreign Office and British Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2005), 31–52.

<sup>6</sup> See for instance Ronald Hyam’s characterization of the Earl of Elgin, *Elgin and Churchill at the Colonial Office, 1905–1908: The Watershed of the Empire-Commonwealth* (London, 1968), 477; R. Hyam, ‘The Colonial Office Mind, 1900–1914’, *JICH* viii, 1 (1979), 30–55; see also the more recent term of ‘epistemic community’, D. Stone, *Captivating the Political Imagination: Think Tanks and the Policy Process* (London, 1996), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Their chief concern, of course, was to anchor imperial expansion in contemporary thinking rather than theory-driven concepts: R. Robinson and J. Gallagher (with A. Denny), *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London, 2nd edn, 1981), xi.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, R.D. Schulzinger, *The Making of the Diplomatic Mind: The Training, Outlook, and Style of United States Foreign Service Officers, 1908–1951* (Middletown,

offered analyses of special ‘subcultures’ within the American diplomatic establishment, or of intellectual currents that shaped the French ‘military mind’.<sup>9</sup> There is as yet no comprehensive analysis of the British ‘Foreign Office mind’.

More telling than any historiographical or conceptual justification for this book, however, is the fact that the term ‘Foreign Office mind’ was very much part of contemporary political parlance. Nineteenth-century diplomats frequently referred to collective ‘state[s] of mind’, whether of nations or larger groups.<sup>10</sup> More narrowly conceived, the term ‘Foreign Office mind’ is usually associated with Harold Nicolson’s spirited defence of traditional Foreign Office views against the new ‘realism’ of Neville Chamberlain in the heady days after the Munich crisis:

I know that those of us who believe in the traditions of our policy, who believe in the precepts which we have inherited from our ancestors, who believe that one great function of our country is to maintain moral standards in Europe, to maintain a settled pattern in international relations ..., I know that those who hold such views are accused of possessing the Foreign Office mind.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, already in the 1880s, the term had gained wide currency. As one, albeit unfriendly, commentator noted, the Foreign Office and the diplomatic service formed ‘a mysterious fraternity’. Its members, he averred, shared certain habits of thought – and of secrecy – that had become ‘so ingrained in the Foreign Office mind as to have become second nature’.<sup>12</sup>

An analysis of the outlook of the foreign policy-making élite is of obvious intrinsic interest. It is the role of governmental bureaucracies generally to prepare political decisions. This they do by reducing the complexity of policy options in order to make policy outcomes more predictable. In turn, this can lead to the presentation of certain options as practical or necessary, dictated by the perceived logic of any given situation, and of others as impracticable or undesirable in light of that same situation. How senior officials reacted to developing situations

CT, 1975). In more general terms also A.K. Hendrickson, ‘The Geographical “Mental Maps” of American Foreign Policy Makers’, *IPSR* i, 3 (1980), 496–530.

<sup>9</sup> R.D. Kaplan, *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite* (New York, 1995 (pb.)), xiii; J.C. Cairns, ‘International Politics and the Military Mind: The Case of the French Republic, 1911–1914’, *JMH* xxv, 3 (1953), 273–85.

<sup>10</sup> Lyons to Granville (private), 1 June 1883, Granville Mss, PRO 30/29/173.

<sup>11</sup> Nicolson House of Commons speech, 5 Nov. 1938, copy in Attlee Mss, MS Attlee dep. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Anon. [T.G. Bowles?], *Foreign Office, Diplomatic and Consular Sketches* (London, 1883), 2–3.

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reflected their core belief system. Every political action, be it as a recommendation or as an actual deed, is based on a set of values and ideas. The ‘Foreign Office mind’, with its accepted understandings and, more often still, ‘unspoken assumptions’, is therefore central to the study of foreign policy.<sup>13</sup>

The focus of this study is firmly on the clerks who wandered the corridors of the Foreign Office and the diplomatists who represented their country abroad. Unkind souls may criticize this as ‘views of the under-secretary’ or history of foreign policy without the politicians, just as G.M. Trevelyan sought to write social history ‘as the history of a people with the politics left out’.<sup>14</sup> So be it. This study is guided by two considerations, the first of which is that a study of Britain’s foreign policy élite at the end of the long nineteenth century is long overdue. The other is that the diplomats of the period were not the ‘ambassador[s] *à la mode*’ of popular fiction, ‘clerk[s] in gold lace at the end of a telegraph wire, only acting on order from Whitehall, and daily reporting to the Foreign Secretary’, their ‘public conduct ... absolutely under the control of telegraph wires’.<sup>15</sup> On the contrary, as Rosebery observed, ‘the policy of Great Britain is not dictated in reality by this man or that; it is dictated by broad considerations which compel any Minister who holds the office of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs’.<sup>16</sup> The Foreign Office was the repository of these broad considerations and the nerve centre of British diplomacy. Without understanding the ‘Foreign Office mind’, British foreign policy itself will continue to show the observer a mask of ‘visionless officialized fatuity’.

Analysing the collective mindset of the Victorian and Edwardian diplomatic élite is nevertheless not without conceptual and methodological problems. Certainly, those with a more philosophical bent of mind might well wonder whether the concept of the mind is not one

<sup>13</sup> J. Joll, ‘1914: The Unspoken Assumptions’, in H.W. Koch (ed.), *The Origins of the First World War* (London, repr. 1977), 307–28; Z.S. Steiner, ‘On Writing International History: Chaps, Maps and Much More’, *IA* lxxiii, 3 (1997), 531; T.G. Otte, *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894–1905* (Oxford, 2007), 8–9.

<sup>14</sup> G.M. Trevelyan, *Illustrated English Social History* (4 vols., London, repr. 1964), xi.

<sup>15</sup> Quotes from T.H.S. Escott, *The Story of British Diplomacy: Its Makers and Movements* (London, 1908), 368; and E.C.G. Murray, *Sidelights on English Society: Sketches from Life, Social and Satirical* (London, 1884), 98; for a thorough analysis of the problem see K. Neilson, ‘“Only a d...d marionette”?: The Influence of Ambassadors on British Foreign Policy, 1904–1914’, in M.L. Dockrill and B.J.C. McKercher (eds.), *Diplomacy and World Power: Studies in British Foreign Policy, 1890–1950* (Cambridge, 1996), 56–78.

<sup>16</sup> *The Times* (10 Mar. 1905).

that is applicable only to the individual rather than to a collective.<sup>17</sup> This, however, is not the place for a ‘high flown think piece’ on abstract elite *mentalités* or bloodless world-political *Weltanschauungen*.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, the broad parameters of this study need to be established at the outset. By its very nature, the mind is an elusive phenomenon. For the historian there is no corpse upon which a scholarly post-mortem can be performed. But there are traces and footprints, sometimes even only the merest whiff of a suggestion. To appreciate their significance is not to ignore ‘the evidential and *événementiel* nature’ of history.<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, there seems to be more truth to be discovered in contemporary perceptions than in later theories and concepts. It is in the private letters and diaries of Victorian and Edwardian diplomatists, and in the official minutes and memoranda, that these footprints can be found.<sup>20</sup>

The ‘Foreign Office mind’, though reflecting a wider contemporary context, was focused on the practicalities of international politics. Nor could it have been otherwise. In this it merely reflected the nature of the Foreign Office itself. The department was a ‘knowledge-based organization’. In R.B.D. Morier’s colourful, if unappetizing, phrase, it was the ‘digestive organ’ in London connected with ‘the diplomatic feeding organs [the representatives abroad]’.<sup>21</sup> The chief function of this organism was the gathering, storing, analysing and retrieving of policy-relevant information so as to ensure informed decision-making. The connexion of the Kissingerian ‘objective realities’ of international politics and the ‘thought-world’ of diplomats, then, is axiomatic to this study.<sup>22</sup> Just as the account ledgers of Florentine merchants may offer

<sup>17</sup> Implicit in Gilbert Ryle’s powerful anti-Descartian critique, *The Concept of Mind* (Harmondsworth, 1963 (pb.)).

<sup>18</sup> See G.R. Elton’s trenchant critique in *Political History: Principles and Practice* (London, 1970), 114.

<sup>19</sup> D.C. Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America and Britain’s Place in the World, 1900–1975* (Cambridge, 1984), 5.

<sup>20</sup> For further philosophical speculations on the subject see my ‘Diplomacy and Decision-Making’, in P. Finney (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in International History* (Basingstoke and New York, 2005), 36–57. For an instructive insight into this *problématique* in the different fields of the history of thought and literature, see Owen Chadwick’s reflections in his *The Mind of the Oxford Movement* (London, 1960), here esp. 11–12, and T. Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London, 1993), *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> Morier to father, ? 1868, as quoted in [V.] Rosslyn Wemyss, *Memoirs and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Robert Morier, G.C.B., from 1826 to 1876* (2 vols., London, 1911) ii, 131. For the concept of ‘knowledge-based organizations’ see N. Stehrs, *Knowledge Societies* (London, 1994), 172–4; see also M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss einer verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen, 4th edn, 1956), 128–9.

<sup>22</sup> T.G. Otte, ‘Personalities and Impersonal Forces in History’, in T.G. Otte and C.A. Pagedas (eds.), *Personalities, War and Diplomacy: Essays in International History* (London, 1997), 9.

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a greater insight into economic thought in sixteenth-century Italy than does a whole library of Renaissance treatises,<sup>23</sup> so the official mind is to be discovered in the practices of past politics. Its study must be rooted in the minutiae of practical foreign policy and in the diplomatic milieu of the time.

The ‘Foreign Office mind’, then, may be defined, in the words of the French ambassador Jean-Jules Jusserand, as ‘*une certaine habitude du monde*’.<sup>24</sup> This reflected a set of broad-based departmental principles, experiences and traditions that had seeped into institutional memory. It was a departmental view of the world, and Britain’s place in it. But it acquired real political substance in the policy submissions and recommendations by senior officials and diplomats, some of whom remained so long in office or attained such influence that their pronouncements acquired almost sibylline status. Sir Thomas Sanderson, for instance, one of the great Permanent Under-secretaries (PUSs) of the period, ‘acquired the reputation of being a walking encyclopaedia of Foreign Office lore ... [as] he carried ... in his head all the archives of that venerable institution’.<sup>25</sup> Lord Rosebery, indeed, nicknamed him ‘the Sanderson dictionary’.<sup>26</sup>

The ‘Foreign Office mind’ was not a monolithic mindset, unalterable and inflexible, and with a ready-made set of Procrustean policy precepts. On the contrary, it was a broadly constructed frame of mind that reflected the social, political and intellectual concerns of Britain’s foreign policy élite. Above all, it was also the latter’s principal political tool. Its way of thinking equipped it to detect in the fast-flowing stream of international politics those currents that had the potential to upset Britain’s diplomatic boat. This was a dynamic process. How to reconstruct it poses a significant methodological challenge. Following the departmental paper trail, to cast fresh light on desired or attained policy outcomes, is an integral part of diplomatic history. Necessary though this is, it can only ever offer a partial picture of the wider field of foreign policy. It seemed more appropriate, then, to reconstruct the evolution of the ‘Foreign Office mind’ as an analysis of the ongoing internal conversation within the diplomatic élite. Since this internal debate tended to react to developments, so this reconstruction reflects the ebb and

<sup>23</sup> See the pertinent comments by E. Roll, *A History of Economic Thought* (London, rev. edn, 1954), 12–13.

<sup>24</sup> As quoted in Schulzinger, *Diplomatic Mind*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Sanderson obituary, *The Times* (22 Mar. 1923).

<sup>26</sup> Sanderson to Rosebery (private), 5 Aug. 1885, Rosebery Mss, MS 10132; K. Neilson and T.G. Otte, *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854–1946* (London, 2009), 96.

flow of Great Power politics, with fast-moving events of great density alternating with broader sweeps of more gradual developments. This is done not out of subservience to some latter-day conceptual fad, but out of respect for the subject of investigation and the material on which this study is based. Senior officials at the Foreign Office and diplomats abroad spoke the same language: ‘they understood each other quickly and at a subtle level. Information could be collected with economy and despatch; advice given quickly and with a minimum of elaboration.’<sup>27</sup> For the student of British foreign policy in this period it means that this language needs to be decoded before it can be understood.<sup>28</sup>

Britain’s foreign policy élite was a small and self-contained establishment. This made for social exclusivity, and it reinforced the principal tenets of the ‘official mind’. Its tone and ethos reflected the section of society from which it was recruited. The Foreign Office was one of the smaller Whitehall departments. In 1848, its establishment numbered no more than forty-four officials; by 1914, it had risen slightly to fifty-one (first-class) clerks. As for the diplomatic service, on the eve of the Great War, it had within its ranks some 135 diplomats. In practice, as the 1914 Royal Commission on the civil service concluded, ‘[t]he diplomatic establishment of the Foreign Office is the same as it was 50 years ago’.<sup>29</sup> Subtle differences between Foreign Office ‘grubs’ and ‘diplomatic butterflies’ notwithstanding, the high degree of social homogeneity created a special sense of ‘brotherhood’.<sup>30</sup> In that, too, it reflected the political and social realities of Victorian and Edwardian Britain.<sup>31</sup> It was also, however, the result of a deliberate recruitment strategy aimed at preserving that exclusivity. Senior officials were fiercely opposed to open examinations, as had been introduced in the Indian civil service

<sup>27</sup> Steiner, *Foreign Office*, 210.

<sup>28</sup> Z. S. Steiner, ‘Elitism and Foreign Policy: The Foreign Office before the Great War’, in B.J.C. McKercher and D.J. Moss (eds.), *Shadow and Substance in British Foreign Policy, 1895–1939* (Edmonton, Alberta, 1984), 19–55; see also Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics* (3 vols., Cambridge, 3rd edn, 2005) i, 102–27.

<sup>29</sup> *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service, 1914* (C. 7748), 8; *The Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Year Book for 1914* (London, 1914), 7–11 (the number of diplomats excludes the service attachés and consular officials in the East holding local diplomatic rank).

<sup>30</sup> O. O’Malley, *Phantom Caravan* (London, 1954), 157. For the link between the collective pursuit of a common purpose (*‘Zweckgemeinschaft’*) and the emergence of an emotional association (*‘Gefühlsgemeinschaft’*) see A. Vierkant, *Gesellschaftslehre: Hauptprobleme der philosophischen Soziologie* (Stuttgart, 1923), 201 and 219.

<sup>31</sup> Sir H. Beaumont, ‘Diplomatic Butterfly’ (unpublished TS memoir), Beaumont Mss, PP/MCR/113; see also Gertrude Himmelfarb’s comments on the nexus between class and the Victorian ethic, *Victorian Minds: A Study of Intellectuals in Crisis and Ideologies in Transition* (Chicago, IL, repr. 1995), 277.

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earlier. In consequence, noted the Parliamentary Under-secretary Sir James Fergusson in 1890,

many young men of the middle and lower classes, indefatigable workers in grammar school, crammed at high pressure, obtain appointments: and come out without the moral & physical training of the best public schools, the social habits of the upper classes, or the active habits of country gentlemen ... Less cram & book learning: and more saddle and *savoir faire* would serve the State better.<sup>32</sup>

Attempts were made to improve the quality of applicants, but recruits to the Foreign Office and diplomatic service tended to come from a small section of British society. The official requirement, for instance, for all new entrants to the diplomatic service to have an independent private income of at least £400 *per annum* until they reached a salaried rank in the profession effectively barred entry to many young men from the rising middle classes and sons of the impoverished gentry.<sup>33</sup>

Fergusson's minute is suggestive also of the importance of the educational background of diplomats and officials in reinforcing the 'Foreign Office mind'. Indeed, J.D. Gregory, who joined the Foreign Office in 1902, later reflected that there was in that department 'a tradition of public spirit in civil life, as there is indisputably in a great public school'.<sup>34</sup> The 'gentlemen' of this period passed through a long period of education. That process itself was nevertheless haphazard before the middle of the nineteenth century. According to Jones, around a third of the entrants before 1860 were educated privately, mostly in smaller establishments run by Anglican clergymen, sometimes abroad.<sup>35</sup> From the mid-Victorian period onwards, however, with a few exceptions, recruits to the service were educated at public schools, that prominent 'feature of the English cultural landscape'.<sup>36</sup> In practice this meant

<sup>32</sup> Min. Fergusson, 31 May 1890, on White to Salisbury (no. 40, confidential), 26 May 1890, FO 78/4281; for some further discussion see T.G. Otte, "'Outdoor Relief for the Aristocracy?': European Nobility and Diplomacy, 1850–1914", in M. Mösslang and T. Riotte (eds.), *The Diplomats' World: A Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815–1914* (Oxford, 2008), 23–57.

<sup>33</sup> Parliamentary Question Noel Buxton, and min. Cartwright, 14 Dec. 1911, FO 366/786/50765; Beaumont, 'Diplomatic Butterfly', fo. 25. For detailed discussions see Steiner, *Foreign Office*, 10–23; R.A. Jones, *The Nineteenth-Century Foreign Office: An Administrative History* (London, 1971), 41–64; R.A. Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service, 1815–1914* (Gerrards Cross, 1983), 139–51. See also the useful comments on aristocratic influence in H.L. Malchow, *Gentlemen Capitalists: The Social and Political World of the Victorian Businessman* (Stanford, CA, 1992), 363–81.

<sup>34</sup> J.D. Gregory, *On the Edge of Diplomacy: Rambles and Reflections, 1902–1928* (London, s.a. [1928]), 76.

<sup>35</sup> Jones, *Foreign Office*, 14–16.

<sup>36</sup> V. Ogilvie, *The English Public School* (London, 1957), 1; E.C. Mack, *Public Schools and British Public Opinion since 1860* (London, 1941), 3–49.



one of ‘the Nine Public Schools’ identified by the 1864 Clarendon Commission as ‘places of instruction for the wealthier classes’ – Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Westminster, Rugby, Charterhouse, Shrewsbury, Merchant Taylor’s and St Paul’s.<sup>37</sup>

Only men from a certain social background tended to apply for the still prerequisite nomination by the Foreign Secretary to become candidates for the entrance examination. As one observer noted in the 1880s, the Foreign Office and diplomatic service were in the hands of ‘a fraternity of gentlemen clerks, born and brought up in the official purple’.<sup>38</sup> Men whose families were unknown to the Foreign Secretary or his private secretary did not seek nomination, nor would they have obtained it, had they applied. The Secretary of State’s power of patronage was abolished in 1907, and the nominations transferred to a Board of Selection. In terms of recruitment, however, little changed, as the 1914 Royal Commission confirmed: the Foreign Office still appointed mostly Etonians to vacant posts. Of the twenty-one entrants between 1907 and 1913, sixteen were educated at Eton.<sup>39</sup> This was not a case of deliberate bias in favour of one particular educational establishment; it was a question of size. Eton was the largest institution of its kind, and the larger proportion of Old Etonians among budding diplomats reflected this. But it was nevertheless indicative of their social background.

Of greater importance still were the links between ‘the values and beliefs inculcated at school and the presuppositions on which [members of the foreign policy élite] acted in later life’.<sup>40</sup> As Edward Thring, headmaster of Uppingham and one of the great educational reformers of the mid-Victorian period, noted, ‘under powerful impulses, a great public school may ... have a very perceptible influence on moulding the national character’.<sup>41</sup> This was not a question of specific curricular content. Education at the public schools of the period was more than that peculiar amalgam of legend, a little classical scholarship, much rugged athleticism, and some birching thrown in for good and generous measure. Academic attainment compared unfavourably with that commonly achieved at French *lycées* and more especially at the *Gymnasien*

<sup>37</sup> *Report of Royal Commission on Public Schools, 1864* (C. 3288), 327–37; for a ranking of the schools according to social prestige see T.W. Bamford, ‘Public Schools and Social Class, 1801–1850’, *BJS* xii, 2 (1961), 224–35. Merchant Taylor’s and St Paul’s were removed from that list in the Public Schools Acts of 1868, 1869, 1871 and 1873.

<sup>38</sup> Anon., *Foreign Office Sketches*, 4; M.L. Bush, *The English Aristocracy: A Comparative Synthesis* (Manchester, 1984), 203–6.

<sup>39</sup> *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service, 1914, Minutes of Evidence* (C. 7749), qq. 40972, 41018–24, and app. 84.

<sup>40</sup> Joll, ‘Unspoken Assumptions’, 316.

<sup>41</sup> G.R. Parkin, *Edward Thring, Headmaster of Uppingham School: Life, Diary and Letters* (2 vols., London, 1898) i, 56.

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of German-speaking central Europe. As Lord Robert Cecil reflected, after some twelve years' tuition, 'I was unable to read the easiest Latin for pleasure. The same was true of Greek ... Nor did I gain much in other ways from my time at Eton.'<sup>42</sup>

More significant was the value system, reflecting the general Victorian ethic that was inculcated at the public schools. It emphasized 'character' more than 'brains'; it was based on a code of honour that was itself partly Christian, and partly feudal, and that placed service before self-advancement. Thomas Arnold's educational ideals were centred on religious and moral principles, gentlemanly conduct, and, as a somewhat distant third, on intellectual ability.<sup>43</sup> By the 1840s, Arnold's pedagogical notions spread from Rugby to other public schools, older ones like Eton or Winchester as much as the new foundations such as Marlborough and Wellington.<sup>44</sup> While the teaching of classics and of ancient history was to introduce pupils to critical thinking and to the problems they would encounter in their lives, the main emphasis of a public school education remained on values. The reflections on his own Wykehamist education by one of the diplomats of this period underline this point:

The basis of education was religion ... Schooling was almost entirely classical & at least half of our time was given to Latin & Greek, & much attention was paid to scholarship. History stopped for us in the Middle Ages, & I left school without ever having heard of the French Revolution. The teaching of science was perfunctory, of foreign languages purely farcical. Looking back ..., I think the double basis of religion & classics must have been good for a boy, for whom the mere acquisition of knowledge is unimportant. We learned to use our brains, & how to educate ourselves.<sup>45</sup>

Public school education had another important characteristic: 'the corporate spirit engendered in Englishmen by their training'. One aspect of this spirit was the 'tradition among University and public school men,

<sup>42</sup> [R.] Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, *All the Way* (London, 1949), 17; see also the pertinent comments by F.M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, CT, 1984), 5–6.

<sup>43</sup> Ogilvie, *Public School*, 142–5; J.R. de S. Honey, *Tom Brown's Universe: The Development of the Victorian Public School* (London, 1977), 1–46.

<sup>44</sup> J.D'E. Frith, *Winchester College* (Winchester, 1961), 150–6; D. McLean, *Education and Empire: Naval Tradition and England's Elite Schooling* (London and New York, 1999), 3–5; also M. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, CT, 1981); and G. Himmelfarb, *Marriage and Morals among the Victorians* (London and New York, 1986), 50–75.

<sup>45</sup> Sir R. Lindsay, 'Sic Fatur Nuntius' (unpublished memoir MS, 1941), Crawford and Balcarres Mss, fo. 32.