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

T. G. Otte

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The Foreign Office Mind

With this pioneering approach to the study of international history, T. G. Otte reconstructs the underlying principles, élite perceptions and ‘unspoken assumptions’ that shaped British foreign policy between the death of Palmerston and the outbreak of the First World War. Grounded in a wide range of public and private archival sources, and drawing on sociological insights, *The Foreign Office Mind* presents a comprehensive analysis of the foreign service as a ‘knowledge-based organization’, rooted in the social and educational background of the diplomatic élite, and the broader political, social and cultural fabric of Victorian and Edwardian Britain. The book charts how the collective mindset of successive generations of professional diplomats evolved, and reacted to and shaped changes in international relations during the second half of the nineteenth century, including the balance of power and arms races, the origins of appeasement and the causes of the First World War.

T. G. OTTE is Senior Lecturer in Diplomatic History at the University of East Anglia. His recent publications include *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894–1905* (2007), *The Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1854–1946* (with Keith Neilson, 2009) and *Coalition Government in Britain: From Glorious Revolution to Cameron–Clegg* (as editor, 2011).

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[More information](#)

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T. G. Otte

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Ioannae uxori amabili

Offero hoc libellum,

Amoris mei signum.

Nec notat et designat

Neque nobilitari vult

Amorem profundum auctoris.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

In
 Memory of
 A. K C S.¹
 who departed this official life
 on the
 2nd March 1867.
 Scrupulous in the avoidance
 of every duty
 He gracefully escaped all
 obligations of
 this transitory life.
 Regarding
 virtue as a thing beyond
 price he was careful
 not
 to degrade it by practice.
 His mind
 was a storehouse of
 knowledge
 of which he lost the
 key
 and
 in finally discharging
 the debt of nature
 He left to his sorrowing
 friends
 the consolation of meeting
 his other
 Liabilities.
 This memorial is
 erected by his Colleagues.
 Pax Nobis.
 C. Spr**g R**e²

¹ Presumably Sir (Emile Algernon) Arthur Keppel **Cowell Stepney** (1834–1909), 2nd Bart., 1877; joined Foreign Office, 26 Sept. 1852; Assistant Clerk, 1862–7; contested (Lib.) Carmarthen District, 1874; MP (Lib., Carmarthen District), 1876–8 and 1886–92.

² Wodehouse of Kimberley Mss, Norfolk Record Office, KIM 7/11. The author was Cecil Spring-Rice.

Cambridge University Press

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

T. G. Otte

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Preface and acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xii
Introduction	1
1 Illusions of supremacy: the ‘Foreign Office mind’, 1865–1874	23
2 The problems of isolation: the ‘Foreign Office mind’, 1874–1885	80
3 Problems of consolidation: the ‘Foreign Office mind’, 1885–1892	150
4 Two Eastern Questions: the ‘Foreign Office mind’ and the period of flux in Great Power politics, 1892–1900	186
5 The transformation of Great Power politics: the Edwardian ‘Foreign Office mind’, 1900–1907	240
6 The end of an era: the late-Edwardian ‘Foreign Office mind’, 1907–1914	314
Conclusion	393
<i>Select bibliography</i>	409
<i>Index</i>	431

Cambridge University Press

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

T. G. Otte

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Illustrations (to be found between pages 146 and 147)

- 1 Lord Cowley
- 2 Edmund Hammond
- 3 Foreign Office staff, *c.* 1870
- 4 Odo Russell
- 5 Lord Lyons
- 6 Sir Robert Morier
- 7 Sir Thomas Sanderson
- 8 Sir William White and staff at Constantinople, 1891
- 9 Sir Horace Rumbold (the Elder)
- 10 Sir Francis Bertie
- 11 Sir Charles Hardinge
- 12 Sir Arthur Nicolson
- 13 Sir James Rennell Rodd
- 14 Sir Eyre Crowe
- 15 Sir William Tyrrell

Preface and acknowledgements

‘And there were some things about the old Foreign Office Prose Style – the early Nicolson type.’

Lawrence Durrell, *Esprit de Corps*³

This book is not a work of diplomatic history in the traditional sense. It is not concerned with charting the course of past bilateral relations with any particular foreign country; nor does it seek to reconstruct decision-making during a particular diplomatic crisis. Rather, it aims to examine the underlying principles and the élite perceptions that shaped British foreign policy during the second half of the long nineteenth century. Whether or not one agrees with Balzac that bureaucracy is a vast apparatus operated by pygmies, bureaucracy matters in the life of nations. This includes the field of international history, too. Even so, it is individual people, be they pygmies or giants, who make institutions work. Without understanding them, what ‘made them tick’, and how they acted together as a group, no real understanding of the past is possible. But this book goes beyond individuals. It attempts to reconstruct the collective mindset of professional diplomats as part of the political, social and intellectual fabric of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, their *esprit de corps* – that peculiarly, quintessentially perhaps, English trait, for which, perhaps typically, the English language has yet to find an appropriate word.

People also matter in a less abstract sense. In the course of writing this book I have incurred debts of gratitude to a number of people and it is a great pleasure to acknowledge this debt. Anyone working in the field of nineteenth-century Great Power politics knows the immense intellectual debt owed to the legions of scholars who have worked in the many far-flung corners of this field before. To an extent the bibliography of this book must serve as a monument of my debt to the wider historical community. I must, however, single out a number of friends and colleagues. Though they may not always have realized it, I have greatly

³ *Esprit de Corps: Sketches from Diplomatic Life* (London, 1957), 22.

Cambridge University Press

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

T. G. Otte

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x Preface and acknowledgements

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Archival research requires material support. I should have liked to be able to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council for providing funding to complete this book. Alas, like so many quangos, the AHRC is a law unto itself. It decreed that this type of history should have ‘no priority’ in its funding strategy. However, I was fortunate in having a supportive head of department in John Charmley, though he may be horrified to discover that there are actually things on which we agree.

For their gracious permission to quote from material to which they hold the copyright, I am indebted to the following: the Alpine Club, London; the Birmingham University Library; the Bodleian Library; the Bristol University Library; the British Library; the Syndics of Cambridge University Library; the Master and Fellows of Churchill College, Cambridge; the Rt. Hon. the Lord Cobbold; the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres; Sir Brian Crowe, KCMG; the Cumbria Record Office; the Hampshire Record Office; the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, Vienna; the Hertfordshire Record Office; the Houghton Library, Harvard University; the Imperial War Museum; the Lambeth Palace Library; the Library of Congress, Washington, DC; the Liverpool Record Office; the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA; the Mitchell Library, Glasgow; the National Archive of Canada, Ottawa; the National Library of Scotland; the late Nigel Nicolson; the Northamptonshire Record Office; the Nottingham University Library; the Most Noble the Duke of Norfolk; the Norfolk Record Office; the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland; the Most Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury; the Somerset Record Office; the West Sussex Record Office; the Wiltshire Record Office.

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Cambridge University Press

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

T. G. Otte

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface and acknowledgements

xi

copyrighted material. My sincerest apologies for any lapses. If there are any, they are entirely inadvertent.

My greatest debt, however, I owe to Joanna. She kept me on the straight and narrow while I communed with long-defunct diplomats. It is to her, and to our *esprit de corps*, that I dedicate this book.

TGO

List of abbreviations

<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
AUS	Assistant Under-secretary
<i>BD</i>	<i>British Documents on the Origins of the War</i> , ed. Gooch and Temperley
<i>BIHR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
<i>BJIS</i>	<i>British Journal of International Studies</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
CAB	Cabinet Papers
<i>CBH</i>	<i>Contemporary British History</i>
<i>CEH</i>	<i>Central European History</i>
<i>CHJ</i>	<i>Cambridge Historical Journal</i>
<i>CJH</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of History</i>
<i>D&S</i>	<i>Diplomacy and Statecraft</i>
<i>DD</i>	<i>Derby Diaries</i> , ed. J.R. Vincent
<i>DDF</i>	<i>Documents Diplomatiques Français</i> , ed. Ministère des Affaires Étrangères
<i>EHQ</i>	<i>European History Quarterly</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>ESR</i>	<i>European Studies Review</i>
FO	Foreign Office
<i>G&G</i>	<i>Geschichte und Gesellschaft</i>
<i>GG</i>	<i>Gladstone–Granville Correspondence, 1868–76</i> , ed. Ramm
<i>GGC</i>	<i>Gladstone–Granville Correspondence, 1876–90</i> , ed. Ramm
<i>HEI</i>	<i>History of European Ideas</i>
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>Historical Research</i>
<i>IA</i>	<i>International Affairs</i>
<i>IHR</i>	<i>International History Review</i>
<i>IPSR</i>	<i>International Political Science Review</i>
<i>IR</i>	<i>International Relations</i>

Cambridge University Press

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

T. G. Otte

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

List of abbreviations

xiii

<i>JAH</i>	<i>Journal of African History</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>JCEA</i>	<i>Journal of Central European Affairs</i>
<i>JCH</i>	<i>Journal of Contemporary History</i>
<i>JICH</i>	<i>Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Strategic Studies</i>
<i>LQV</i>	<i>Letters of Queen Victoria</i> , ed. Buckle
<i>MAS</i>	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
<i>MGM</i>	<i>Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen</i>
memo./mema.	memorandum/memoranda
min.	minute
<i>MM</i>	<i>Mariner's Mirror</i>
<i>MöSA</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs</i>
<i>OTC</i>	Officer Training Corps
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>PA</i>	<i>Politisches Archiv</i>
<i>PBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
<i>PCC</i>	<i>Paul Cambon: Correspondance</i> , ed. Cambon
<i>PD</i>	<i>Parliamentary Debates</i> , ed. Hansard Society
<i>PRO</i>	Public Record Office (Kew, Richmond, Surrey)
<i>PUS</i>	Permanent Under-secretary
q./qq.	question/s
<i>RHM</i>	<i>Revue d'Histoire Moderne</i>
<i>RP</i>	<i>Rheinpolitik</i> , ed. Oncken
<i>SEER</i>	<i>Slavonic and Eastern European Review</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Slavonic Review</i>
tel.	telegram
<i>TH</i>	<i>The Historian</i>
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>W&S</i>	<i>War & Society</i>