



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S42. International Relations and Foreign Policies

Friday 1 September: 9.30-11.30am

Convenor: Professor Michael Parsons (University of Pau)

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The sense of permanence which characterised Victorian foreign policy has been challenged by the enormous changes in Britain's place in the world. With the progressive waning of the Empire, Britain's foreign policy-makers reluctantly but increasingly reflected the need to rely on a new set of values. This seminar will address some of the issues and problems of British foreign policy since Palmerston's day, as Britain has evolved from being the "biggest Empire the world had ever seen" to its present status as a regional power involved in a variety of sometimes conflicting networks of relationships overseas.

The Effect of Britain's Refusal to Integrate the Euro Zone on Britain's Influence over the European Union

Nathalie Champroux (University of Paris 12)

New Labour has repeatedly expressed its ambition to "give Britain leadership in Europe". Yet despite their efforts to build a network of alliances within the European Union, the British have failed to impose their liberal social and economic theories and achieve reform of the Stability and Growth Pact, the European Central Bank, the labour market and the CAP. At every negotiation between Britain and other EU members, the issue of Britain joining the euro zone is raised in the British press. The question is whether Britain can still have a voice in Europe despite its choice to remain an outsider. We try to determine the real impact of Britain's decision not to join the euro zone on its influence within the EU. It would appear that this is no longer a major issue and the real question is why.

Britain, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria during the Eastern Question Crisis of the mid-1870s

Roumen Genov (New Bulgarian University of Sofia)

The author challenges the long-term relevance and viability of the national stereotyping of political friendships, enmities and regional policies. In a case study of the perceptions of the two iconic opposites of British Victorian foreign policy, the paper examines the motives, consequences and reception in the Balkans of late 19th century British foreign policy as conducted by Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone. The author recalls that Disraeli's attitude to the Eastern Question has been universally condemned as thoroughly anti-Russian and anti-Bulgarian, bearing as it did the stamp of naïve and

romantic Orientalism for its unquestioning support of Ottoman Turkey, and that, by contrast, Gladstone acquired the status of a people's tribune for his well-known advocacy of the plight of the Bulgarians. At closer look, however, the paper concludes that both Liberal and Conservative foreign policies served the same pragmatic purposes, and the differences in rhetoric and discourse led to misconceived public perceptions in the Balkans.

Genocide or Historicide?: the Great Debate over Australia's Past.

Victoria Nagy (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)

In Australia, like elsewhere, there is a strong link between history and identity. But in Australia there is a dilemma: no one can agree about what exactly Australian history is. Where change from Imperial to local self-perception begins is difficult if not impossible to pin down and there appears, therefore, no coherent idea about the distinct contours of history and identity. There is an ever-growing divide between two historical camps that claim to 'own' Australian history. The result is a dislocation of the virtual self of the modern Australian citizen. Everyone knows that Australia has shaken off her direct political bonds with Britain but just where this has led in terms of identity, the perception and self-perception of white people and native aborigines, and the extent to which this should be reflected in the teaching of history in Australia remains contested territory.

Coping with the Decline of Empire: a Study of Attitudes within the British Foreign Service Community

Elizabeth Swain (University of Trieste)

This paper presents some results of a linguistic study of British diplomacy in the post-WWII Middle East. The study is based on official records concerning crisis situations locatable within the wider historical context of Britain's decline as a world power. The findings presented illustrate patterns in the representation of Britain and of Middle Eastern nations asserting their freedom from forms of British control, which shed light on the Foreign Service community's view of Britain and of other, less powerful countries which it had dominated. These patterns suggest that elements in the Foreign Service at this time still shared stereotypical views of the Middle East which were both a cause and a result of imperialism.

The British Empire: *Sonderweg*, 'Manifest Destiny' or Locomotive of Reform?

Trevor Harris (University of Tours)

The Empire and, more especially, the 'end' of Empire, was a significant influence on the evolution of late-Victorian and Edwardian political culture in Britain. Whether it was in relation to the role of the State within Britain or the role of Britain in the world, the incorporation of a modified "imperial" dimension into the discussion attempted to prolong and expand *within* Britain a vision of the polity which was necessarily in contraction *without*. The arguments used, that is, in a sense imported a negative definition of the British State. Any genuine alternative to this political culture of the negative definition of national role or "place" is still proving difficult to articulate. Some historians working on imperial history or foreign policy have contributed to this barrenness, though declinism is now clearly in decline. Other historians appear more prepared to explore

areas beyond economics, diplomacy and political science. And perhaps this is where English Studies can make a viable contribution: not as literary studies, but as a variety of history which, by the nature of the structure of our discipline, has a privileged input from its “cultural” side.