



On the Fringes of Diplomacy

John Fisher, Antony Best

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In recent decades the study of British foreign policy and diplomacy has broadened in focus. No longer is it enough for historians to look at the actions of the elite figures - diplomats and foreign secretaries - in isolation; increasingly the role of their advisers and subordinates, and those on the fringes of the diplomatic world, is recognised as having exerted critical influence on key decisions and policies. This volume gives further impetus to this revelation, honing in on the fringes of British diplomacy through a selection of case studies of individuals who were able to influence policy. By contextualising each study, the volume explores the wider circles in which these individuals moved, exploring the broader issues affecting the processes of foreign policy. Not the least of these is the issue of official mindsets and of networks of influence in Britain and overseas, inculcated, for example, in the leading public schools, at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and in gentlemen's clubs in London's West End. As such the volume contributes to the growing literature on human agency as well as mentalite studies in the history of international relations. Moreover it also highlights related themes which have been insufficiently studied by international historians, for example, the influence that outside groups such as missionaries and the press had on the shaping of foreign policy and the role that strategy, intelligence and the experience of war played in the diplomatic process. Through such an approach the workings of British diplomacy during the high-tide of empire is revealed in new and intriguing ways.

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