



Historical Dictionary of British Foreign Policy (Historical Dictionaries of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations)

By Peter Neville

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British foreign policy has always been based on distinctive principles since the setting up of the Foreign Office in 1782 as one of the two original offices of state, the other being the Home Office. As a small island nation, Britain was historically fearful of over mighty continental powers, which might seek to menace its trade routes, and naval primacy was essential. Britain must dominate at sea while avoiding, involvement in major continental wars and Britain accomplished this successfully until the end of the 19th century. After World War II and the Cold War Britain was no longer the global naval super power and they had to adapt to a secondary, supportive role. This was to be based on its membership of regional defense and economic organizations in Europe.

The *Historical Dictionary of British Foreign Policy* provides an overview of the conduct of British diplomacy since the setting up of the Foreign Office in 1782. This is done through a chronology, an introductory essay, appendixes, an extensive bibliography, and over 300 cross-referenced dictionary entries on British prime ministers, foreign secretaries, foreign office staff and leading diplomats, but also on related military and political-economic aspects. This book is an excellent access point for students, researchers, and anyone wanting to know more about British foreign policy.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

British foreign policy has changed dramatically since the creation of the country's foreign office, in 1792. This book is an informational starting point for covering more than 200 years of dramatic history. Neville, a research associate of the University of Westminster and a fellow of the Royal Historical Society, applies his knowledge of British diplomacy to the creation of this work. The book opens with a list of acronyms and abbreviations, a chronology listing key historical events, and an extensive introduction. The introduction is a quick synopsis of British history, covering a wide swath of time—including the times when the country was a global power, its position in both world wars, a discussion of the Cold War era, and a glimpse back at 2012. The dictionary provides various levels of additional information about significant people, topics, and places in British foreign policy, with some entries coming in at around 50 words and others closer to 300. For example, the entry for Afghanistan is quite extensive, while the Westland affair, concerning the then prime minister Margaret Thatcher, is very short. The dictionary concludes with appendixes listing British prime ministers and foreign secretaries, a list of permanent undersecretaries at the foreign office, and a bibliography. This reference on a specialized topic is recommended as a starting point in researching topics related to British foreign affairs and would be a great addition to the humanities collections of most academic and larger public libraries. --Paula Webb

Review

Britain has had a foreign office since 1782. Most of its early policies involved protecting British naval supremacy and the trade routes to its empire. Since WW II and the Cold War, Britain has been a secondary power, but with an interest in regional defense and economic organization in Europe. The entries in this dictionary by Neville reflect these changing realities of British foreign policy. The volume opens with a chronology of events from 1702 to 2012. These are fleshed out in an extensive introduction to British history in this time period. The dictionary itself has detailed entries on British prime ministers; foreign secretaries/undersecretaries; both British and foreign diplomats; other foreign figures (such as American presidents who have impacted British foreign policy); and countries, places, and events that have played a role in its history. Other features are appendixes of prime ministers, foreign secretaries, and permanent undersecretaries, with their dates in office, and an extensive bibliography of resources, also arranged chronologically. This would be a useful resource for both students and researchers of British foreign policy. Summing Up: Recommended. Lower-level undergraduates and above; general readers. (*CHOICE*)

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related to British foreign affairs and would be a great addition to the humanities collections of most academic and larger public libraries. (*Booklist*)

A chronology covers events from the beginning of the War of Spanish Succession in 1702 until the May 2012 expulsion of Syrian diplomats from London following a massacre during the ongoing Syrian civil war. An introductory contextual essay begins with the 1782 establishment of the Foreign Office and stresses this institution's preeminent foreign policy objective as maintaining a European balance of power to prevent any single European power from dominating Europe including countries such as Belgium and Holland bordering the North Sea. This introduction also details Britain's rise to global power through its colonial empire, the influence of World War I, the interwar period, World War II in weakening British global preeminence, and post-World War II developments including decolonization, the rise of the European Union and London's complicated relationship with that entity, the post-Cold War policy developments including Britain's relationship with the United States and its participation in controversial military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The dictionary section includes detailed but succinctly written entries on topics such as American Bases in Britain, the British Commonwealth, Eton College, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, India, Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson, Russia, Margaret Thatcher, and the 1921-1922 Washington Naval Conference. Appendixes include a list of Foreign Secretaries and Permanent Undersecretaries at the Foreign Office. A bibliography of scholarly secondary sources covering various periods of British diplomatic history concludes the work. . . .[T]his will serve as a useful introduction to those desiring to study British diplomatic history. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

This is the fourteenth contribution to Scarecrow's Historical Dictionaries of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations series begun in 2006 and only the second volume to cover the foreign policy of a specific country. ... [T]he Chronology provides useful factual detail to support the Dictionary entries. ... Neville recognises the extent of the literature and does provide a useful narrative introduction describing some of the key works listed in the five main chronological sections by which the Bibliography is arranged. ... [T]his book is a useful and up to date contribution to the reference literature on British foreign relations. It belongs in any library where modern British history or politics is studied. It could also have a place in a general reference library where there is a need for a factual backdrop to other works on Britain's relationship with the wider world. (*Reference Reviews*)

About the Author

Peter Neville is a research associate of the University of Westminster and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He has spent more than two decades researching and writing about British diplomacy. He is the author of numerous works on modern British and European History.

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