

INTRODUCTION

In 1897, the concluding year of this editorial project, British envoys posted to the *Kaiserreich* remained as watchful as ever of Germany and were duly attentive to changes and developments in its constituent states. In this respect their correspondence differs only by degrees from what had been reported by earlier generations of diplomats. In 1816, the first year of the preceding series *British Envoys to Germany, 1816–1866*,¹ as well as in 1871, the starting point of *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich, 1871–1897*, Anglo-German-relations had been similarly marked by apprehensions about what lay ahead. Yet at the end of the nineteenth century the shift to global politics, Germany's increasing economic power, aspirations in terms of *Weltpolitik* and plans for a fleet – reinforced by ministerial appointments, and accompanied by an Anglophobic press and public opinion – heralded a new quality of bi-lateral and international relations. Indeed, almost forty years ago Paul M. Kennedy, in his classic study *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism*, pointed out that 'in 1897, despite the confused political scene which confronted contemporaries, it is possible for the historian – aided quite unashamedly by the benefit of hindsight – to detect the most significant pointers to the future'.²

While many historians have argued that the fate of Anglo-German rivalry was not inevitable and the years to 1914, in fact, saw many elements of rapprochement, the significance of the chronological caesura in 1897–1898 is still widely recognized.³ It is no coincidence that the two long-standing editions of British diplomatic reports from Germany before 1914 start – as is the case with *British Documents on the Origins of War* – in 1898 and likewise concentrate – as in the case of *British Documents on Foreign Affairs* – on the years after 1897.⁴ This book,

¹ *British Envoys to Germany, 1818–1866*, Royal Historical Society, Camden Fifth Series, 4 vols (Cambridge, 2000–2010).

² Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914* (London, 1980), p. 223.

³ For more recent historiography on Anglo-German relations before 1914, see Jan Rüger, 'Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism', *The Journal of Modern History*, 83 (2011), pp. 579–617.

⁴ *British Documents on the Origins of War, 1898–1914*, 11 vols (London 1926–1938); *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print: Part I, Series F, Europe*, 35 vols (Frederick, MD, 1987–1991). The Foreign Office correspondence

the second installment of a two-volume mini-series, presents a selection of diplomatic correspondence sent from Germany in the years 1884 to 1897 that complements this traditional and often teleological focus on Anglo-German relations before the First World War. As part of the *British Envoys* editorial project as a whole, that is, from 1816 to 1897,⁵ it is integrated into a broad chronological framework and thus challenges any attempt to explain the volatile Anglo-German history of the long nineteenth century as a linear story of deteriorating relations, and estrangement between formerly close cousins.

As material records from the past, the handwritten dispatches of 1897 – with a margin on the inner side of the page, folded three times (when sent), and inscribed with a docket on the wider side of the back – look much the same as those sent eighty years earlier and are collected in thick, worn, and sometimes crumbling leather bound volumes, which can be consulted in the National Archives at Kew.⁶ Although Her Majesty's Stationery Office supplied the Berlin embassy with a Remington typewriter in 1892, lack of able junior secretaries or attachés meant that this innovation caught on only slowly, and, until 1905, fair copies of dispatches in typescript retained the traditional folio format and layout.⁷ The understaffed missions at the smaller German capitals did not, initially, participate in this technological progress and in 1907 the Foreign Office responded to the request of the British representative at Munich, that 'one typewriter ought to be amply sufficient for the work of the Legation'.⁸

The formal conventions of dispatch writing demonstrate the persistence of traditional ways of operating in the Foreign Office bureaucracy, but the dispatches from the German *Kaiserreich* also reveal more important continuities in terms of content and substance. This applies to the patterns of perception and the mindsets of British diplomats – for example regarding the general superiority of British political institutions or the global approach to international affairs

on Germany is available on microfilm from 1906 onwards: *Confidential British Foreign Office Political Correspondence: Germany, Series 1, 1906–1925: Part 1, 1906–1919* (Bethesda, MD, 2005).

⁵ The omission of the contested years 1867 to 1870 is intended to enable the publication of a substantial selection of dispatches on the *Kaiserreich* (1871–1897) in two coherent and balanced volumes, an aim that would have been compromised by the inclusion of the extensive reportage that was produced on the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. This gap will be closed in an additional volume.

⁶ See Michael Roper, *The Records of the Foreign Office, 1782–1968* (Kew, 2002), pp. 15–18.

⁷ Malet to Rosebery, 25 September 1893, The National Archives, Kew (TNA), FO 64/1294 [unless otherwise stated dispatches of the years 1884 to 1897 are printed in this volume].

⁸ Note, dated 7 April 1907, TNA, FO 371/900/10715.

– and no less importantly to the wide thematic scope of their reportage.⁹ Just like their predecessors in 1816, who were instructed to provide information about ‘the events as they arise at the Court at which you reside’ and ‘to convey home whatever further information you may judge likely to prove useful to H.R. Highness’ Government’,¹⁰ British envoys to the *Kaiserreich* reported on an astonishing array both of inner-German events, and of facets of Anglo-German entanglements and encounters which are not normally taken into account in thematically focused narratives. Examples include the repercussions of an incident which took place on a Dresden lawn-tennis court in 1885,¹¹ or, in the same year, a query made by a German ‘sub-officer’ ‘on what conditions he would be admitted to serve in the British army [...], if possible, in the present Egyptian campaign’.¹² While this edition of documents allows only for a small selection from the diplomatic coverage of seemingly secondary topics, anecdotal observations form a substantial part of the diplomatic correspondence and shed light on everyday and more mundane diplomatic activities, as well as on those more out of the ordinary occasions. Arguably, reports by British envoys thus make more entertaining reading than the, sometimes, technocratic reportage from their German counterparts.¹³

Central to the diverse and often colourful testimonies from Germany is the fact that Great Britain, in addition to the embassy at Berlin, was individually represented at four smaller German capitals of the twenty-seven constituent states of the empire.¹⁴ These second-tier, not second-ranking, missions were located in

⁹ For a detailed account of the mind-set and principles behind foreign policy before 1914, see T.G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865–1914* (Cambridge, 2011). For perceptions of Germany, see Richard Scully, *British Images of Germany: Admiration, Antagonism & Ambivalence, 1860–1914* (Basingstoke, 2012) and the chapter ‘British Views of Germany, 1815–1914’, in James Retallack, *Germany’s Second Reich: Portraits and Pathways* (Toronto, 2015), pp. 44–85.

¹⁰ Castlereagh, Circular No 2, 1 January 1816, TNA, FO 244/6.

¹¹ Strachey to Salisbury, 7 July 1885, FO 68/169.

¹² Barron to Granville, 7 February 1885, FO 82/170.

¹³ See, for example, Hans Philippi, *Das Königreich Württemberg im Spiegel der preußischen Gesandtschaftsberichte: 1871–1914* (Stuttgart, 1972); Hans-Jürgen Kremer, *Das Großherzogtum Baden in der politischen Berichterstattung der preußischen Gesandten 1871–1918*, 2 vols (Stuttgart, 1990–1992); Winfried Baumgart, *Ein preußischer Gesandter in München: Georg Freiherr von Werthern: Tagebuch und politische Korrespondenz mit Bismarck 1867–1888* (Berlin, 2018). For German diplomatic documents between 1885 and 1897, see also Vols 4, 8, and 11 of *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871–1914: Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, 40 vols (Berlin, 1922–1927).

¹⁴ The British ambassador to Berlin was simultaneously accredited as minister plenipotentiary to Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, Oldenburg, Anhalt-Dessau, and Brunswick.

Darmstadt (Grand Duchy of Hesse, whose representative was simultaneously accredited to the Grand Duchy of Baden), Dresden (Kingdom of Saxony), Munich (Kingdom of Bavaria), and Stuttgart (Kingdom of Württemberg, until 1890, when the mission was amalgamated with that of Munich).¹⁵ A further post at Coburg, where Britain had been represented by a *chargé d'affaires* since Queen Victoria's marriage to Albert, was upheld until 1897, when the legation was finally merged with that at Dresden. As in the years before 1884, the correspondence remained thin on the ground and largely trivial; it is not included in this volume.

The distinct feature of multiple diplomatic representations had its roots in the Holy Roman Empire and then the foundation of the German Confederation in 1815; it outlasted the creation of the German nation state in 1871 and continued to exist up to August 1914. Over time, the diplomats in their respective capitals became increasingly detached from the power centre and high politics of Berlin, but they fulfilled a symbolically charged role as a reminder of their host states' former independence and dynastic glory. It is their focus on individual state affairs as well as their provision of local perspectives on German and international affairs that prove to be of particular historical value. This is why, along with the hitherto unpublished dispatches from Berlin, an edition of diplomatic papers such as this can still add to our knowledge of the well-researched field of Anglo-German history.

I

After the German Empire was founded in 1871, British multi-representation in Germany continued, but with a smaller number of diplomats and reservations towards its utility and longevity.¹⁶ Notwithstanding an acknowledgment of the value of the legations 'in the present condition of Europe', in its final report of May 1871 the Select Committee on Diplomatic and Consular Services – was 'of opinion, that there is a reasonable likelihood, at a not very distant date, that there may cease to be any good grounds for maintaining

¹⁵ For information on British missions and diplomats, see *The Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Yearbook* (London, 1852–1914); and *A Directory of British Diplomats*, compiled by Colin Mackie. Available at <http://www.gulabin.com/britishdiplomatsdirectory/pdf/britishdiplomatsdirectory.pdf> (accessed 26 July 2018).

¹⁶ See *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich, 1871–1897*, Vol. I, pp. 2–6.

some of them'.¹⁷ Two months later, in the House of Commons debate about the civil service estimates, it became clear that this matter was still open for discussion when Peter Rylands, Liberal MP for Warrington, saw 'now no reason why the small German Missions should be continued'.¹⁸ Over the next forty years, until 1914 when World War I put an end to diplomatic relations with Germany, reference was repeatedly made to the anomaly of having several diplomatic missions in Germany, including twice before Royal Commissions (in 1889 and 1914) and twice more in Parliament. In 1895 the former editor of *Vanity Fair* magazine and Conservative MP, Thomas Gibson Bowles – renowned for his insights and ironic take on the diplomatic establishment – thought it 'absurd to maintain diplomatic arrangements with the smaller German Courts',¹⁹ and in 1913 the Liberal MP Joseph King concluded: 'To my mind they are absolutely useless, except that they are gentlemen of high social position and no doubt very agreeable personalities, but they are not wanted at all.'²⁰

A first indication that the Foreign Office itself was thinking seriously about a further reduction in the service to Germany can be found in 1884 in the *Estimates for Civil Services*. Here a footnote to the table of salaries and rent allowances – compiled by the Foreign Office chief clerk – stated that '[i]t is proposed on the occurrence of vacancies to amalgamate the Missions at Munich, Stuttgart, and Darmstadt, so as to reduce the cost'.²¹ In 1884 the total annual budget for British representations in Germany was £13,700, of which £7,900 was allocated to the Berlin embassy and £5,800 to the rest of Germany. With the salaries of the temporarily seconded

¹⁷ First Report from the Select Committee on Diplomatic and Consular Services; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index, 18 May 1871 [238] (1871), p. vi. On the select committees and on the development of the diplomatic service and the Foreign Office in general, see Raymond A. Jones, *The British Diplomatic Service, 1815–1914* (Gerrards Cross, 1983); Thomas Otte, 'Old Diplomacy: Reflections on the Foreign Office before 1914', *Contemporary British History*, 18, 3 (2004), pp. 31–52; for the missions in Germany, see Markus Mösslang, 'Gestaltungsraum und lokale Lebenswelt: Britische Diplomaten an ihren deutschen Standorten, 1815–1914', in Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler (eds), *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen: Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel* (Cologne and Vienna, 2010), pp. 199–215.

¹⁸ Speech in House of Commons, 28 July 1871, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Ser. III, Vol. 208 (1871), col. 440.

¹⁹ Speech in House of Commons, 30 August 1895, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Ser. IV, Vol. 36 (1895), col. 1270.

²⁰ Speech in House of Commons, 29 May 1913, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Ser. V, Vol. 53 (1913), col. 445.

²¹ Estimates for Civil Services for the Year Ending 31 March 1885, House of Commons Sessional Papers 1884 (57), LII.1., p. 414.

junior secretaries this latter amount roughly corresponded to the cost of the British representation in the USA, or the costs of the missions at Columbia, Uruguay, and Venezuela combined.²² In the winter of 1889–1890, when the diplomatic service came under the scrutiny of the Royal Commission on Civil Establishments, the total cost of the smaller missions had risen to £6,845.²³ In his testimony before the commission the permanent under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, Sir Philip Currie, defended the outposts in Germany but cautiously and not entirely convincingly. Confirming that ‘Berlin is the only place where we should, of course, carry on negotiations’, Currie struggled to explain fully the *raison d’être* of the legations at Munich, Darmstadt, Stuttgart, Coburg, and Dresden when asked: ‘What political information can be needed from a centre of that sort beyond gossip?’²⁴ While the representation at Coburg – due to the close ties with the British royal house – was ‘a separate affair altogether’,²⁵ as far as the other cases were concerned Currie did little more than point to the fact that the respective host states had independent sovereigns and that Britain’s practice of maintaining legations was also mirrored by other European powers. Yet, as the members of the committee rightly objected, Russia was the only country, with a total of five legations at the ‘lesser German Courts’, that roughly matched Great Britain’s six (including Coburg). France and Italy, on the other hand, both had only a representative at Munich. Tellingly, in its final report of July 1890, the commission stated that it was ‘not in a position to judge as to any further reasons, political or otherwise, which may exist for maintaining these missions’.²⁶

One reason for the committee’s hesitation to recommend any radical steps might have been that, in the meantime, the secretary of state for foreign affairs, Lord Salisbury, had decided to go ahead with the long-planned amalgamation of the missions (though not including Darmstadt). Against the protests of the Stuttgart *chargé d’affaires*, Sir Henry Barron, who had been forcibly pensioned off, and much to the displeasure of the Württemberg court, the Stuttgart legation was abolished and in May 1890, the British minister resident at Munich, Victor Drummond, was accredited at

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 413–416.

²³ Fourth Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Civil Establishments of the Different Offices of State at Home and Abroad [C.6172] (1890), Appendix, p. 183.

²⁴ Evidence, Currie (27 November 1889), Fourth Report of the Royal Commission, qq. 27152–3.

²⁵ *Ibid.* q. 27078.

²⁶ Fourth Report of the Royal Commission, p. 11.

Stuttgart as well.²⁷ As a concessionary gesture to the King of Württemberg a junior diplomat (with the rank of second secretary) remained in Stuttgart, officially as part of the Munich mission.²⁸ Whether the king subsequently kept in touch with 'his' British envoy, who had left the diplomatic service two weeks earlier to spend his retirement in Stuttgart, is not known.

Barron's role as a foreign socialite and slightly eccentric bachelor, and diplomat resident at Stuttgart (both active and retired) epitomizes the anachronistic societal role of British diplomats in the political backwaters of Europe. However, his career also hints at another, more structural, element in British diplomacy, i.e. 'the famous block in promotion'.²⁹ Since October 1887, Barron, who had entered the service as an attaché in 1840, had been 'the senior member of the Diplomatic Service on the Active List'.³⁰ Not only was '[h]is a case', as a magazine article on 'Our Diplomats' pointed out, 'of exceptionally slow promotion, for it took him forty-three years to become a Minister-Resident',³¹ his post at Stuttgart proved to be his final one. The same applied to George Strachey, who from 1873 was secretary of legation with 'the additional character of Chargé d'Affaires while resident at Dresden',³² whose annual additional allowance of £250 (i.e. £750 instead of £500) was justified by his 'length of service'.³³ Strachey's promotion to minister resident in December 1890, after thirty-eight years in the service, was initially purely nominal; it was only in 1893, nineteen years after he first appealed to the foreign secretary 'to consider the propriety of my receiving an addition to my small salary', that Strachey was awarded a pay rise of £150 per year, commensurate with the position of minister resident.³⁴

For critics of the multiple diplomatic establishments in Germany, such as Sir Charles Dilke, parliamentary under-secretary of state for foreign affairs from 1880 to 1883, these postings exemplified the unsatisfactory state of affairs, as they were unattractive for aspiring diplomats – 'you cannot hope to be permanently represented at

²⁷ Barron to Currie, 12 March 1890, FO 82/175 (not included in this volume).

²⁸ King Karl II was also invested with the Order of the Garter on 23 April 1890 – possibly a further source of consolation. See *The London Gazette*, 9 May 1890, p. 2688; Philippi, *Das Königreich Württemberg*, pp. 59–60.

²⁹ Jones, *Diplomatic Service*, p. 147.

³⁰ 'Our Diplomats', *Temple Bar, A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers*, 84, 335 (1888), pp. 179–198, at p. 184.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *The Foreign Office List* (1876), p. 9.

³³ *Estimates for Civil Services* (1884), p. 414.

³⁴ Estimates for Civil Services for the Year Ending 31 March 1894, House of Commons Sessional Papers 1893 (59), LVI.1, p. 401. See also Jones, *Diplomatic Service*, pp. 147–148.

those courts by your best men – you cannot expect that your best men will be anxious to represent you at these small places'.³⁵ Yet the question of who were the 'best men' was highly subjective. For instance, the author of the above-cited article in the *Temple Bar* magazine reflected on the fate of Drummond, chargé d'affaires at Munich from 1885 and also accredited to Stuttgart from 1890 until his retirement in 1903: 'Why he has not yet been appointed Minister is a mystery, for he is universally popular and strikes everybody as a type of the accomplished, genial and kind-hearted English gentleman.'³⁶ George Strachey was similarly unable to comprehend why he was, despite some support in the senior ranks of the service, 'on no one occasion [...] ever offered a post'.³⁷ In contrast to what he himself had assumed many years earlier the smaller missions were not 'valuable nurseries for agents of a lower rank'.³⁸ With the two exceptions of Sir Hugh Guion MacDonell, Drummond's predecessor at Munich, and more prominently George W. Buchanan, who took over Darmstadt in 1892 and was ultimately made ambassador in 1910, first to St Petersburg, and then until 1921 to Rome, appointment to one of the smaller German courts proved to be a career move of dubious distinction.³⁹

Of course, the opposite was true of the three ambassadors who served at Berlin between 1884 and 1897.⁴⁰ While they had not, like some of their predecessors, previously worked in one of the other German capitals, all three of them had first-hand knowledge of Germany or its political establishment when they arrived at their post. The appointment of Lord Odo Russell, later Baron Ampthill, in 1871 can, among other things, be attributed to his close contacts with Wilhelm I and Bismarck when he was on a special mission to the headquarters of the German Army at Versailles from

³⁵ Evidence, Dilke (6 March 1890), Fourth Report of the Royal Commission, qq. 29046.

³⁶ 'Our Diplomats', *Temple Bar*, p. 197.

³⁷ Strachey to Russell, 17 December 1883, FO 918/63 (not included in this volume).

³⁸ Evidence, Strachey (30 May 1861), Report from the Select Committee on Diplomatic Service; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index 23 July 1861 [459] (1861), q. 2701.

³⁹ MacDonell, after his three year stint in Bavaria, was promoted to envoy extraordinary at Rio de Janeiro (1885), Copenhagen (1888), and Lisbon (1893–1902). For Buchanan's diplomatic career, see George W. Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia, and Other Diplomatic Memories*, 2 vols London, 1923; for his time at Darmstadt, see Vol. 1, pp. 26–37; and Meriel Buchanan, *Diplomacy and Foreign Courts* (London, 1928), pp. 18–33.

⁴⁰ See Hans Philippi, 'Die Botschafter der europäischen Mächte am Berliner Hofe 1871–1914: Eine Skizze', in Oswald Hauser (ed.), *Vorträge und Studien zur preußisch-deutschen Geschichte* (Cologne and Vienna, 1983), pp. 159–250, here pp. 163–175.

November 1870 to March 1871.⁴¹ His successor Edward Malet, who took over after Ampthill's early death in 1884, had also previously encountered Bismarck during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, when he was secretary of legation at Paris and likewise sent on a special mission to the German headquarters.⁴² Malet also profited from the friendship of his father, Alexander Malet, with Bismarck, which dated back to their time together as representatives to the Diet of the German Confederation in Frankfurt in the 1850s.⁴³ Lastly, Frank Lascelles, who succeeded Malet in 1895, had served as third secretary of legation at Berlin between July 1867 and January 1870, during which time he established valuable contacts in Berlin society. What is more Lascelles, when minister to Romania, had also befriended Bernhard von Bülow, the future German chancellor.⁴⁴

In contrast to diplomats at the smaller missions in Germany, whose appointment was more or less based on Foreign Office internal politics (the question of seniority being just one factor among others), promotion to the Berlin ambassadorship was highly politicized, and involved both government and court on both sides. The question of Lord Ampthill's successor was a case in point. Queen Victoria favoured the greatest expert on German politics at the time, Sir Robert Morier, who, before becoming ambassador to St Petersburg, had been stationed at Berlin, Darmstadt, Stuttgart, and Munich, but who was not acceptable to Bismarck due to personal differences between the two men.⁴⁵ Edward Malet, on the other hand, had only just been accredited as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary at Brussels and lacked seniority. In the end, however, he prevailed as not only the most promising but also, to the German side, the most acceptable candidate.

⁴¹ For Odo Russell's ambassadorship, see Winifred Taffs, *Ambassador to Bismarck: Lord Odo Russell, First Baron Ampthill* (London, 1938); Karina Urbach, *Bismarck's Favourite Englishman: Lord Odo Russell's Mission to Berlin* (London, 1999); Paul Knaplund (ed.), *Letters from the Berlin Embassy: Selections from the Private Correspondence of British Representatives at Berlin and Foreign Secretary Lord Granville, 1871–1874, 1880–1885* (Washington DC, 1944); and *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich*, Vol. I.

⁴² Edward Malet, *Shifting Scenes or Memories of Many Men in Many Lands* (London, 1901), pp. 233–255. For Malet's ambassadorship at Berlin, see also Willem Alexander van't Padje, 'At the Heart of the Growing Anglo-Imperialist Rivalry: Two British Ambassadors in Berlin, 1884–1908', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2001; for his appointment, see *ibid.*, pp. 15–28; Jones, *Diplomatic Service*, pp. 182–183.

⁴³ Willem Alexander van't Padje, 'Sir Alexander Malet and Prince Otto von Bismarck: An Almost Forgotten Anglo-German Friendship', *Historical Research*, 72 (1999), pp. 285–300.

⁴⁴ James Bourne, 'Sir Frank Lascelles: A Diplomat of the Victorian Empire, 1841–1920', PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2010, pp. 13–18, 110–130. For Lascelles's ambassadorship at Berlin, see also Van't Padje, 'Two British Ambassadors'.

⁴⁵ For Morier's relationship with Bismarck, see Agatha Ramm, *Sir Robert Morier: Envoy and Ambassador in the Age of Imperialism 1876–1893*, Oxford 1973, pp. 270–304.

Despite the almost impossible challenge of following the popular and, according to Prince Bismarck, irreplaceable Lord Ampthill,⁴⁶ Edward Malet's old-school approach to diplomacy allowed him to navigate through the complexities of Anglo-German relations until 1895, when, apparently weary of his duties, he applied for early retirement. His irritation with Germany's colonial policy and her conduct in the Transvaal question overshadowed the last months of his tenure – especially during the so-called 'Malet incident' in October 1895.⁴⁷ It did not, however, affect the search for a suitable successor. After Sir Edmund Monson, the ambassador to Vienna, had declined the position and Wilhelm II's attempts to secure a military general as ambassador had been thwarted, the embassy was offered 'by default'⁴⁸ to the ambassador to St Petersburg, Frank Lascelles. Lascelles kept the post for thirteen years, two years longer than his predecessor, until 1908. Like his old friend Malet (both had served at Paris during the turbulent year of 1870)⁴⁹ Lascelles was endowed with courteous manners and a positive disposition towards Germany, though these were to become increasingly difficult to sustain in the months and years to come.

Having 'passed through the "Lyons school" of diplomacy'⁵⁰ in their junior years, Malet and Lascelles were well prepared for the position of ambassador, both inside the embassy in handling junior staff and outside the embassy in their dealings and contacts with their host country. They also had few illusions with regard to the demands on their loyalty, professionalism, and perseverance at one of the most important and most prestigious posts that the diplomatic service had to offer. The total of 6,174 'diplomatic' dispatches addressed to the foreign secretary between 1884 and 1897 alone illustrate that ambassadors Ampthill, Malet, and Lascelles were playing in a completely different league from the other British heads of missions in Germany, whose combined output of official dispatches was well under half that of Berlin – not counting the many additional

⁴⁶ 'England might give a successor to the Ambassador that she had lost, but could not expect to replace him.' Bismarck quoted in Scott to Granville, 30 August 1884, FO 64/1051 (not included in this volume); see Taffs, *Ambassador to Bismarck*, p. 394.

⁴⁷ Willem-Alexander van't Padje, 'The "Malet Incident", October 1895: A Prelude to the Kaiser's "Kruger Telegram" in the Context of the Anglo-German Imperialist Rivalry', in Geoff Eley and James Retallack (eds), *Wilhelmism and its Legacies: German Modernities, Imperialism, and the Meanings of Reform, 1890–1930* (New York and Oxford, 2003), pp. 138–153.

⁴⁸ Otte, *Foreign Office Mind*, p. 190.

⁴⁹ Bourne, 'Lascelles', pp. 18–30.

⁵⁰ Otte, *Foreign Office Mind*, p. 156; Jones, *Diplomatic Service*, p. 183.

telegrams from Berlin and the correspondence marked 'Commercial'.⁵¹ In the last decade of the nineteenth century Berlin became even more dominant, especially after the Stuttgart mission was closed in 1890, and George Strachey retired in spring 1897. In this year only one fifth of the diplomatic dispatches did not come from Berlin – just thirty-three from Darmstadt, fifty-seven from Munich (including the last reports from Stuttgart), and eleven from Dresden. It is consistent with this that, from 1898 onwards, the correspondence from the German rump missions is collected under one single class mark (FO 30).⁵²

The dispatches selected for this edition show clearly that quantity and quality are two quite different things, but it should also be borne in mind that these statistics reflect completely different material circumstances, local environments, diplomatic tasks, and social obligations, and at times, also, different degrees of professionalism.⁵³ Diplomats at Darmstadt, Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart, who tended to conduct their business from their private quarters, usually situated in exclusive residential areas,⁵⁴ more or less ran a one-man show. As the legation records and the *Foreign Office List* show, they were only occasionally assisted or deputized by a junior secretary. In stark contrast the Berlin ambassador was in charge of a minimum of eight further diplomatic officials (1897), and they worked at the Palais Strousberg at No. 70 Wilhelmstrasse, only a short walk from the epicentre of German politics, the imperial chancellery at No. 77 Wilhelmstrasse.⁵⁵

The selection of dispatches from Berlin in this volume highlights the significance of the British embassy in the German capital and its proximity to power, both governmental and royal. Yet confronted

⁵¹ In most cases reports on economic issues were largely based on German statistics and other official publications. These dispatches, marked 'Commercial', are not included in this selection.

⁵² The number of dispatches is based on the listings of TNA's online catalogue and the FO 9, 30, 64 (including 'Africa'), 68, and 84 series, consulted for this volume.

⁵³ See, in general, Mösslang, 'Gestaltungsraum'.

⁵⁴ See, for example, the following entries in municipal directories: George Strachey, Bürgerwiese 16, Dresden (*Adreßbuch, Wohnungs- und Geschäfts-Handbuch der königlichen Residenz- und Hauptstadt Dresden* (Dresden, 1895), part 1, p. 751), George Buchanan, Wilhelmstrasse 17, Darmstadt (*Adressbuch der Haupt- und Residenzstadt Darmstadt* (Darmstadt, 1895), p. 19), and Victor Drummond, Barrerstrasse 15 (*Adreßbuch für München, 1893* (Munich, 1893), p. 77).

⁵⁵ In 1897 the diplomatic staff in Berlin consisted of one secretary of embassy, one military and one commercial attaché, three second secretaries, one third secretary, and one attaché. See *The Foreign Office List* (1898), pp. 8–11; the *Adressbuch für Berlin und seine Vororte* (Berlin, 1897), p. 12 lists nine diplomatic officials for the year 1897. For embassy life in Berlin, see Vincent Corbett, *Reminiscences: Autobiographical and Diplomatic* (London, 1927), pp. 58–90.

with the complex tasks of following, and deciphering, politics and political life, and the delicate business of weighing up the words and sentiments of imperial royalty and officials, the ambassador to Berlin was also to some extent more restricted than his colleagues at the smaller courts. This applies to his perceptions, since his choice of what to report on was often influenced by the obligations of the fast-paced world of Berlin diplomacy, and also affected by the exclusivity of the ambassadorial position; but it also applies to what he found the time for and thought worth sending to London. Thus reports from Berlin and those from the less constrained posts at Darmstadt, Dresden, Munich, and Stuttgart complement each other. Their simultaneous perspectives on Germany were not only defined by geography and local environment, but by the points of view of the individual diplomats.

II

It is one of the specific characteristics of diplomatic correspondence that the reports, in their continuous sequence, form a chronicle of the host states and their foreign relations. Depending on whether dispatches were written just before, during, or in the aftermath of an event, they often differ greatly in terms of depth, insights, and interpretation. Topics appear and disappear, and very much as in diaries, the often unrelated proximity of observations filed side by side makes it possible to experience and reimagine historical processes in their temporal context, indeed, almost as if in 'real time'. This is especially true when new topics (and historical actors) emerge and begin to dominate the reportage, but also when they then disappear from the diplomats' agenda.

In the decade after 1871, which is covered by the first volume of *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich*, diplomats reflected and commented widely on how the new nation-state was coming to terms with German unity and the empire's role in the European concert of powers. Prominent topics of these early *Kaiserreich* years, such as the allocation of power relations between the empire and its constituent states; national integration and anti-Prussian resentments; the relationship of church and state, and the consequences of the anti-Catholic *Kulturkampf*; the repressive measures against the Social Democrats; and, in the realm of foreign affairs, Germany's policy towards France, Germany's alliances and changing relationships with Austria and Russia, and Germany's role in the so-called Eastern Question still feature throughout the years to 1897 and continued to have repercussions on British perceptions of and relations with

Germany. What is distinctly new from 1884 onwards, however, is that in the wake of Germany's unexpected colonizing activities British envoys to Germany widened their horizons of observation towards non-European parts of the world, especially Africa, and, in their interpretations of the imperialist drive, disbanded their long-held assumption that Bismarck simply wished to consolidate German power and maintain the status quo.⁵⁶ With Germany's colonial enterprise in full swing, it became apparent that German and British interests could be diametrically opposed. In this respect Bismarck left no room for speculation when he told Edward Malet 'that at every point at which Germany had endeavoured to found a Colony England had closed in, making new acquisitions so as to restrict Germany's power of expansion'.⁵⁷

With the historian's benefit of hindsight, aspirations for a German colonial empire can be detected in diplomatic reports from Germany well before 1884.⁵⁸ However, as two of Amphill's dispatches from Berlin in April 1884 indicate, the real shift in British perceptions came about rather more abruptly. The first dispatch in question reported on the foundation of the Society for German Colonization, on 28 March. This was deemed to be no more significant than a series of similar initiatives that had emerged in recent years and caused neither Amphill nor London any disquiet: 'There is no reason to suppose that the German Government will be more disposed to lend its countenance to the efforts of this Society than it has been in the case of similar movements in the past.'⁵⁹ The second dispatch dealt with the appointment of Gustav Nachtigal as imperial commissioner for West Africa, which took place only one day after the Society for German Colonization was founded, on 29 March. Based on a newspaper article it was one of the many unspectacular reports that elicited no further comment or interpretation from Berlin. At the Foreign Office in London, however, the senior clerk of the Consular and African Department, Henry P. Anderson, appears to have been more alert to the steps Germany was about to take when he noted on the dispatch's docket: 'This is a movement that must be watched'. '[T]his and any subsequent dispatch on the same subject', he instructed his junior clerk,

⁵⁶ See in general Kennedy, *Antagonism*, pp. 167–183; Axel T.G. Riehl, *Der 'Tanz um den Äquator': Bismarcks antienglische Kolonialpolitik und die Erwartung des Thronwechsels in Deutschland 1883 bis 1885* (Berlin, 1993); Michael Fröhlich, *Von Konfrontation zur Koexistenz: Die deutsch-englischen Kolonialbeziehungen in Afrika zwischen 1884 und 1914* (Bochum, 1990).

⁵⁷ Malet to Granville, 24 January 1885, FO 64/1146.

⁵⁸ See *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich*, Vol. I, pp. 86; 105; 128–129; 160; 184–185; 307; 357.

⁵⁹ Amphill to Granville, 8 April 1884, FO 64/1102.

were to be 'number[ed] [...] in the African Section'.⁶⁰ In fact, from April 1884 onwards, the importance of colonial affairs within Anglo-German relations was reflected in the filing system. Henceforth dispatches marked 'Africa' were separated from other political dispatches from Berlin and, while still being part of the Berlin series, were subsequently collected in special volumes.

While Germany's entry into the 'Scramble for Africa' found expression at this bureaucratic level, the British ambassador to Berlin and his government at home were taken by surprise by the fact that Bismarck had 'secretly embarked upon an imperialist course'.⁶¹ Until the spring of 1885 this new course saw the successive establishment of the German protectorates and colonies of German South West Africa, Togoland, German Cameroon, German New Guinea, and German East Africa. Amptill's dispatches reveal little about the political motives underlying these actions, however, in private correspondence, he left no doubt that Bismarck, '[c]ompelled by the Colonial mania, [...] has discovered an unexplored mine of popularity in starting a Colonial policy, which Public Opinion persuades itself to be anti-English'.⁶² One of the last official dispatches he sent before his untimely death, on 25 August 1884, reveals Amptill's irritation and his concern about developments, especially as they directly affected Anglo-German relations: 'The feeling in Germany respecting these Colonial Questions is so strong, as Your Lordship is aware, that the publication of the above-named correspondence can only tend to confirm the General suspicion that England opposes the Colonial Aspirations of the people of Germany, and the impression of disappointment it must produce will be painful and lasting throughout Germany.'⁶³ Indeed, as diplomatic reportage of the various disputes that occurred over the next thirty years confirms, there were few issues between Germany and Britain as emotionally charged as the colonial question.

It has been said 'that in a very literal sense the colonial question killed' Lord Amptill, who due to the developments in spring and summer of 1884 had cancelled the planned period of rest and recuperation in Marienbad he so desperately needed.⁶⁴ Speculations of this kind rightly hint at the diplomats' increasing responsibilities in times of crisis, both as observers and interlocutors, and (in the

⁶⁰ Docket, Amptill to Granville, 23 April 1884, FO 64/1102.

⁶¹ Kennedy, *Antagonism*, p. 179.

⁶² Amptill to Granville (private), 2 August 1885, quoted in Knaplund (ed.), *Letters from the Berlin Embassy*, p. 339.

⁶³ Amptill to Granville, 18 August 1884, FO 64/1103.

⁶⁴ Urbach, *Russell*, p. 201.

particular case of the ambassador to Berlin) as negotiators. It is no coincidence, then, that during the years 1884 and 1885, but also in 1895 and 1896, when the Transvaal question and the Kruger telegram dominated Anglo-German diplomacy, diplomats wrote more frequently. At the same time they also wrote more briefly and – in an attempt not to omit anything of potential importance – in more detail. Intense discussions, diplomatic negotiations, and the rapid sequence of events also left less time for general observations and comments. This was especially true of Edward Malet who started his new post at Berlin as delegate to the Berlin West Africa Conference, in November 1884.⁶⁵ One of Malet's few comprehensive and opinionated dispatches written during this conference was based on a confidential conversation with Prince Bismarck, in January 1885. Its subsequent publication in a British *Blue Book*, in February, led to indignation in the suspicious German press, and reminded diplomats of the delicate role they had to play under increasing public scrutiny, both in their host states and at home.⁶⁶

In the course of 1885, after Berlin had managed to push through its colonial programme in spite of London's objections, Europe once again became the focal point of Bismarck's foreign policy interests, and consequently that of his British observers.⁶⁷ Despite the serious nature of the Bulgarian crisis, the increasingly strained relations with Russia, and renewed tensions between Germany and France, the diplomats found themselves back on familiar territory. What is more, since 1887 Britain had herself become involved in Bismarck's complex system of alliances through the Mediterranean Agreements with Austria and Italy. The fact that Edward Malet clearly felt less compelled to reflect on the principles of German foreign policy than his predecessor, Amptill, is probably attributable to his more remote relationship with Bismarck who was now often absent from Berlin. In August 1886, for instance, shortly after the coup against Alexander of Bulgaria, Malet remarked: 'As long as Prince Bismarck is away from Berlin it is impossible to form any

⁶⁵ For the conference, see Stig Förster, Wolfgang J. Mommsen, and Ronald Robinson (eds), *Bismarck, Europe, and Africa: The Berlin Africa Conference 1884–1885 and the Onset of Partition* (Oxford, 1988).

⁶⁶ Scott to Granville, 4 March 1885, FO 64/1149.

⁶⁷ For 'Anglo-German' foreign policy, see, in general, Kennedy, *Antagonism*, pp. 157–222; Gordon Martel, 'The Limits of Commitment: Rosebery and the Definition of the Anglo-German Understanding', *Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), pp. 387–404; David Steele, 'The Place of Germany in Salisbury's Foreign Policy, 1878–1902', in Adolf Birke et al. (eds), *An Anglo-German Dialogue: The Munich Lectures on the History of International Affairs* (Munich, 2001), pp. 57–76; Jörg Femers, *Deutsch-Britische Optionen: Untersuchungen zur internationalen Politik in der späten Bismarck-Ära* (Trier, 2006).

distinct notion of the views of the German Government upon passing events.⁶⁸ The appointment of Bismarck's son, Herbert von Bismarck, as state secretary for foreign affairs did little to improve this situation. Malet made but sparse references to times when he had successfully 'pressed Count Bismarck to acquaint me with the views of the Chancellor'.⁶⁹ Although this did not cut Malet off from the power centre in Berlin – and his access to Bismarck was arguably still better than that of most of his colleagues in the Berlin diplomatic corps – the number of conversations that provided greater insights into Bismarck's thinking declined.

Apart from the discussions on German colonial policy already mentioned, the dispatches selected for this volume document, among other things, confidential or even secret exchanges on the Afghan border dispute in 1885, the Bulgarian Question in 1886, and the consequences of Wilhelm II's accession for Anglo-German relations in 1888.⁷⁰ In these conversations – as in those with Bismarck's successor Leo von Caprivi and the state secretaries of the Berlin foreign office, Herbert von Bismarck and Marschall von Bieberstein – the increasing complexity of Anglo-German relations becomes clear. The dispatches provide an abundance of material on the anti-British implications of German imperialism, the asymmetry of interests between the two powers, and on 'Germany's ability to cause disruptions'.⁷¹ What becomes equally clear, however, are areas of mutual interest and understanding, and Germany's strategic importance for Britain, particularly as regards Russia and France. This applied to Russia's policy in the East as well as to France's interest in Egypt and other British spheres of interest. Compared to these threats to the British Empire, German policy not only caused the Foreign Office less immediate concern, but reassuring accounts, and also suggestions for an Anglo-German Alliance, were still being received from Germany into the 1890s. Shortly before Bismarck was dismissed in March 1890, for instance, Malet wrote: 'It is every where felt that Prince Bismarck is a guarantee of peace. He seeks no more victories. His only aim is to consolidate what he has made.'⁷² The diplomats' anxiety during the chancellor crisis of 1888 and after Bismarck's dismissal in 1890 can thus be explained by the uncertainty it brought to the future of German policies.

⁶⁸ Malet to Iddesleigh, 21 August 1886, FO 64/1117.

⁶⁹ Malet to Salisbury, 9 January 1886, FO 64/1113.

⁷⁰ Malet to Granville, 7 May 1885, FO 64/1077; Malet to Iddesleigh, 12 November 1886, FO 64/1119; Malet to Salisbury, 25 May 1887, FO 64/1157; Malet to Salisbury, 14 July 1888, FO 64/1187.

⁷¹ Otte, *Foreign Office Mind*, p. 223.

⁷² Malet to Salisbury, 8 February 1890, FO 64/1234.

Indeed, the dispatches show that, ‘British diplomats had viewed Anglo-German relations through the lens of Bismarck’s dominant personality.’⁷³

While Bismarck still featured prominently in diplomatic reports after 1890 (his journeys, speeches, birthdays, and reconciliation with the emperor provided ample opportunity for commentary) the focus of attention shifted towards the young emperor and the beginnings of his personal regime and, in matters of foreign policy, increasingly towards the press.⁷⁴ British envoys outside Berlin in particular, excluded from the arcane world of diplomatic negotiations, seized every opportunity to report on newspaper articles covering matters of national and, especially, international importance. A dispatch which was appraised by the foreign secretary, Rosebery, as ‘the best thing we have had from Munich’, for example, dealt with a press comment on the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy.⁷⁵ In fact, in this case and many others, summaries of articles printed in German newspapers and journals were forwarded to other British embassies and legations throughout Europe for perusal.

Certainly, British envoys to the *Kaiserreich* had witnessed the ramifications of newspaper articles on foreign relations prior to this time, during the ‘War-in-Sight’ crisis of 1875, for example, and in a similar fashion during another war scare in 1887, when aggressive French nationalism (Boulangism) was exploited for the domestic objective of securing the military budget.⁷⁶ As their reports indicate, such vociferous press campaigns had been characteristic of both Bismarck’s foreign and his domestic policy. George Strachey’s countless condemnations of the ‘reptile press’ demonstrate this particularly clearly and it is thus quite telling that in 1891, he also identified Leo von Caprivi’s ‘New Course’ in the latter’s handling of critical voices. As he wrote, on the ‘hectoring, browbeating, manner in politics, on which, although in Germany its use gives great weight to the

⁷³ Otte, *Foreign Office Mind*, p. 182.

⁷⁴ See Otte, ‘“The Winston of Germany”: The British Foreign Policy Élite and the Last German Emperor’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 36 (2001), pp. 471–504; Lothar Reinermann, *Der Kaiser in England: Wilhelm II. und sein Bild in der britischen Öffentlichkeit* (Paderborn, 2001); Dominik Geppert, *Pressekriege: Öffentlichkeit und Diplomatie in den deutsch-britischen Beziehungen (1896–1912)* (Munich, 2007).

⁷⁵ Drummond to Rosebery, 15 August 1893, FO 9/267.

⁷⁶ Strachey to Iddesleigh, 24 August 1886, FO 68/170; Jocelyn to Salisbury, 25 October 1886, FO 30/264; Drummond to Iddesleigh, 4 January 1887, FO 9/258; Malet to Her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 15 January 1887, FO 64/1155; Scott to Salisbury, 20 April 1887, FO 64/1156; Scott to Salisbury, 9 July 1887, FO 64/1158; Strachey to Salisbury, 19 January 1889, FO 68/174. See *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich*, Vol. 1, pp. 98–108, 217–219.

authority of public men, General Caprivi has turned his back'.⁷⁷ However, this positive assessment remained an exception. One reason for this was Wilhelm II's autocratic political style which could be followed in newspaper reports on a daily basis; another – and here the press acquired a new significance – was that greater attention started to be paid to public opinion, especially with regards to Anglo-German relations. In the smaller missions, in particular, the diplomats' daily business was increasingly marked by flare-ups of Anglophobia that they observed with irritation and reported upon in detail. This applies, for instance, to the accusations against Sir Robert Morier in 1888, the so-called 'Morier incident',⁷⁸ and to the criticism directed against Morell Mackenzie, British physician to the crown prince and Emperor Friedrich III,⁷⁹ but above all to the German press campaign during the Transvaal crisis of 1895–1896, which erupted into a veritable Anglo-German press war after Wilhelm's congratulatory telegram to Paulus Kruger, president of the Transvaal Republic, on 3 January 1896. Yet in contrast to the openly chauvinist sentiments in public opinion, Frank Lascelles maintained his conciliatory attitude towards the German government. Not only was he, as he told the state secretary of the Foreign Office, Adolf Marschall von Bieberstein, on 11 January, '[p]ersonally [...] surprised at the excitement caused by the Emperor's Telegram', he also had few doubts 'that this question should be amiably settled'.⁸⁰

III

In spite of their close attention to German public opinion and the news coverage of current affairs, British diplomats at the smaller German capitals were aware that, as George Buchanan put it, 'one was naturally entirely outside politics'.⁸¹ Ironically, Buchanan, posted to Darmstadt from 1892, made this remark in an audience with the Russian emperor, Tsar Nicholas II, on 6 October 1897 in which he discussed the benefits of 'reading the foreign papers',⁸² but also

⁷⁷ Strachey to Salisbury, 4 December 1891, FO 68/176.

⁷⁸ Malet to Salisbury, 5 January 1889, FO 64/1211; Strachey to Salisbury, 19 January 1889, FO 68/174. See Ramm, *Sir Robert Morier*, pp. 288–304.

⁷⁹ Drummond to Salisbury, 29 October 1887, FO 9/258; Strachey to Salisbury, 2 March 1888, FO 68/173.

⁸⁰ Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 January 1896, FO 64/1386. See also Bourne, *Lascelles*, pp. 184–194.

⁸¹ Buchanan to Salisbury, 6 October 1897, FO 30/287.

⁸² *Ibid.*

touched upon the affairs of Greece, India, and Afghanistan. This was probably the only instance of a lower-rank British diplomat in Germany having an extended interview with a non-German sovereign ruler, between 1884 and 1897, and given the elusive nature of such encounters, the next best thing was an audience with a deposed foreign ruler. It was again at Darmstadt that the *chargé d'affaires* had occasion to meet Alexander of Battenberg, former *kynast* of Bulgaria.⁸³ On both of these occasions the family bonds of the House of Hesse had led to royal or imperial sojourns at the court of Darmstadt: Alexander of Battenberg was the second son of Prince Alexander of Hesse and by Rhine; and Nicholas II was married to Princess Alix, daughter of Alice, the late Grand Duchess of Hesse, and Queen Victoria's grandchild. Despite the potential political dividends from Hessian connections with Russia, it was these family connections with the royal house of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha that really made Darmstadt 'an important listening post'.⁸⁴

William Nassau Jocelyn's and George Buchanan's 'court dispatches' not only drew the Queen's attention but made for a welcome change in the Foreign Office, as 'there is a grave humour about them which is refreshing after some of the other reading'.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the particulars from the German courts did also concern serious matters. This is true, for example, of the numerous reports sent from Munich about the eccentricities of King Ludwig II of Bavaria, and especially his increasingly troubled financial situation. As for the unexpected deaths of Ludwig and Dr Gudden, on 13 June 1886, Victor Drummond's dispatch adds little to our knowledge of the mysterious drowning of the two men; but it is a remarkable document, no less, as Drummond was most likely the first diplomat, if not foreigner, to be informed of the incident. By sheer coincidence he had been staying 'in a Country Inn, on Lake Starnberg, [...] only twenty minutes from the Schloss Berg'.⁸⁶ The unorthodox behaviour of Ludwig had piqued British curiosity since the 1860s, and left little doubt about his predilection for young men. However, the scandal of the King of Württemberg's relationship with Charles Woodcock, which was publicized by a newspaper article in 1888, challenged the British representative to find an appropriate mode for conveying the

⁸³ Jocelyn to Idlesleigh, 25 October 1886, FO 30/264.

⁸⁴ Zara Steiner, 'Buchanan, Sir George William (1854–1924), diplomatist', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online ed.), 2008, retrieved 20 July 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32150>. See Jonathan Petropoulos, 'The Hessens and the British Royals', in Karina Urbach (ed.), *Royal Kinship: Anglo-German Family Networks 1815–1918* (Munich, 2008), pp. 147–159.

⁸⁵ Helyar to Rosebery, 2 January 1893, FO 30/278 (not included in this volume).

⁸⁶ Drummond to Rosebery, 14 June 1886, FO 9/256.

news back to Britain. Notwithstanding Henry Barron's contradictory and reassuring interpretation of the Woodcock affair, which circumnavigated the issue of King Karl's homosexuality, in this case, his 'despatches respecting the "unpleasant discussions" were not sent to the Queen'.⁸⁷

From time to time dispatches which concerned British royal interests, and close personal relations, were also of a delicate nature. The succession to the throne of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha by the Duke of Edinburgh was just such a case, Queen Victoria's disputed marriage project between her granddaughter, the Prussian princess, Viktoria, and Prince Alexander of Battenberg another, along with the fate and subsequent standing of the Queen's daughter 'Vicky' (Empress Friedrich) following the death of her husband, Friedrich III, who was German Emperor for just ninety-nine days.⁸⁸ Together with assessments of Queen Victoria's grandson, Wilhelm II, these reports demonstrate that the dynastic dimensions of Anglo-German relations were highly symbolically charged. Among other things, for example, envoys reported on celebrations to mark the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilees (in 1887 and 1897), the reactions to the Victoria's visit to Berlin in 1888, and Her Majesty's appointment as honorary colonel in 1889, but also on Wilhelm II's feelings towards England after his accession to the throne, and his attendance of the Cowes Week regattas.⁸⁹

While endeavouring to have confidence in 'The Emperor's friendly disposition towards England',⁹⁰ British diplomats were nevertheless apprehensive about political stability, especially after Bismarck's dismissal in 1890, and this continued against the background of Russo-French rapprochement from 1891 onwards. In this respect they conveyed mixed news about Germany's 'New Course'. They did not expect to be 'exposed to a policy of surprises'⁹¹ under Leo von Caprivi's chancellorship, but they were increasingly irritated by Wilhelm's II erratic behaviour and, consequently,

⁸⁷ Barron to Salisbury, 14 November 1888, FO 82/173.

⁸⁸ Malet to Salisbury, 28 April 1888, FO 64/1186; see Eleanor L. Turk, 'The Battenberg Affair: Chancellor Crisis or "Media Event?"', *German Studies Review*, 5 (1982), pp. 233–255.

⁸⁹ Malet to Salisbury, 12 June 1887, FO 64/1157; Drummond to Salisbury, 22 June 1887, FO 9/259; Strachey to Salisbury, 26 June 1887, FO 68/172; Malet to Salisbury, 14 July 1888, FO 64/1187; Strachey to Salisbury, 10 August 1895, FO 68/180; Lascelles to Salisbury, 1 July 1897, FO 64/1411. See John C. G. Röhl, 'The Kaiser and England', in Birke et al. (eds), *An Anglo-German Dialogue*, pp. 97–113. Roderick R. McLean, 'Kaiser Wilhelm II and the British Royal Family: Anglo-German Dynastic Relations in Political Context, 1890–1914', *History*, 86 (2001), pp. 478–502; Otte, "'The Winston of Germany'"; Reinermann, *Der Kaiser in England*.

⁹⁰ Malet to Salisbury, 14 July 1888, FO 64/1187.

⁹¹ Malet to Kimberley, 14 July 1894, FO 64/1325.

uncertain about future developments. In the second year of Wilhelm's reign, for example, Edward Malet observed that 'even in Germany it is thought that ambition in every direction is latent in his character and that if it does not find vent in a peaceful direction it would do so in another and more dangerous one'.⁹² Malet's colleagues from the other missions likewise filed reports on the 'extraordinary activity of mind of His Imperial Majesty'⁹³, and were puzzled that 'one of the family virtues of the Hohenzollerns – tact – has not been inherited by the Emperor William'.⁹⁴ Opportunities for outspoken assessments of his personality included the emperor's birthday, the unveiling of monuments, his attendance at army manoeuvres, and his various speeches. In fact almost every 'public utterance of the young Emperor'⁹⁵ had repercussions throughout Germany.

Perspectives from Baden, Bavaria, Hesse, Württemberg, and Saxony are of especial value with regards to the emperor, and particularly at times when he visited their respective capitals. As had been the case with Wilhelm II's grandfather, Wilhelm I, visits to different parts of the empire served as a barometer for the emperor's popularity, but also held up a mirror to the state of Germany unity.⁹⁶ Diplomats suggested that imperial visits helped to 'strengthen the bond of union'⁹⁷, as they revealed 'a considerable mastery by the young Emperor of the arts of popularity, as well as the progressive extinction of regional sentiment under the growth of the German idea'.⁹⁸ Comparable assessments concerning the matter of unity can be found on other occasions such as the annual Sedan Day celebrations, and are perhaps at their most explicit in George Strachey's assessment of this event in 1895: 'The attitude of the Saxon public has again demonstrated what, perhaps, required no further proof – namely, than in none of the 26 States of the Empire is the new pan-Germanic spirit stronger than it is here. Particularism is dead: the people may almost be described as Germans first, Saxons afterwards'.⁹⁹

Although such emphatic assessments of Germany unity are markedly clearer in the reports filed after 1884, the dispatches still reveal strong feelings of allegiance to the individual states of the *Kaiserreich* and their ruling houses. The federal dimensions of the empire

⁹² Malet to Salisbury, 8 February 1890, FO 64/1234.

⁹³ Drummond to Kimberley, 21 February 1895, FO 9/270.

⁹⁴ Strachey to Salisbury, 27 October 1891, FO 68/176.

⁹⁵ Scott to Salisbury, 18 August 1888, FO 64/1188.

⁹⁶ See *British Envoys to the Kaiserreich*, Vol. 1, pp. 241, 311–313, 384, 495, 528.

⁹⁷ Drummond to Salisbury, 12 September 1891, FO 9/264.

⁹⁸ Strachey to Salisbury, 13 September 1889, FO 68/174.

⁹⁹ Strachey to Salisbury, 3 September 1895, FO 68/180.

were particularly apparent in matters where the rights of individual states seemed to be curtailed, such as those involving taxation, school policy, or imperial military reforms,¹⁰⁰ or, as in the case of the so-called subversion bill, when the states made ‘complaints [...] against the growing predominance of Prussia’.¹⁰¹ The negotiations in the *Bundesrat* (Federal Council, at which all the states were represented) often provided an opportunity to discuss things from a regional perspective. So, too, did the numerous dispatches dealing with the run-up to *Reichstag* elections and with their outcomes, especially in the years 1887 and 1893 when the army bill was rejected and, accordingly, snap elections were called. Local newspapers (of which there were many, often with strong political ties) were particularly useful to the diplomats and enabled them to follow developments within the fragmented German party political system as well as within the parties themselves, as these varied considerably from state to state.¹⁰²

Yet the relationship of the federal states to the German Empire – and their integration into it – was only one aspect of political life in Germany as seen through diplomatic eyes. What happened in the imperial chancery and the *Reichstag*, for example, for all its repercussions on the individual states of Germany, was a matter of prime importance for the embassy in Berlin. Here, junior diplomats were tasked to provide a ‘weekly summary of Parliamentary Proceedings’,¹⁰³ and countless enclosures of laws, rescripts, and other official papers ensured that the Foreign Office could keep up with the finer points of detail concerning German internal affairs. The ambassador himself largely dealt with the ‘grand topics’. Dispatches on the septennial army bill in 1887 and 1893, the political fates of Bismarck and Caprivi in 1890 and 1891, or the accession of the Emperors Friedrich II and Wilhelm II in 1888, in particular, all affected British interests.

Observations on internal politics made by diplomats based in the smaller capitals were naturally more limited in scope. If we compare the dispatches of the years 1884 to 1897 to the correspondence of earlier decades, it is noticeable that, apart from periods of political crisis (for example the year 1886 in Bavaria), the number of such reports

¹⁰⁰ Strachey to Salisbury, 12 December 1890, FO 68/175; Drummond to Rosebery, 9 December 1893, FO 82/178; Drummond to Rosebery, 15 May 1893, FO 9/267; Drummond to Rosebery, 23 December 1893, FO 82/178; Drummond to Salisbury, 13 October 1897, FO 9/272.

¹⁰¹ Boothby to Salisbury, 10 November 1895, FO 9/270.

¹⁰² Strachey to Salisbury, 18 February 1887, FO 68/171; Drummond to Rosebery, 15 May 1893, FO 9/267; Buchanan to Rosebery, 7 June 1893, FO 30/278.

¹⁰³ Scott to Salisbury, 30 January 1886, FO 64/1113.

decreases, as does their level of detail. At the same time the correspondence still reveals that each state had its own specific political particularities, such as the role of Catholicism in Bavaria, or, in Saxony, the condition of the Social Democrats and the constraints on them. These concerns can often be followed in the diplomatic reports over decades. In a dispatch selected for this volume, Victor Drummond in Munich, for example, left little doubt of his attitude towards ‘bigoted’¹⁰⁴ Catholics and the ‘prejudices of the Ultramontanes, who are always inclined to determine State matters by permeating them with an overflow of religious dogma’.¹⁰⁵ Strachey in Saxony, on the other hand, discussed ‘the phantom of Social Democracy’ with relative impartiality. His claim that he did not ‘easily pass from facts to speculation’¹⁰⁶ holds true of his reports on the continued measures instigated by, and the effects of, the imperial Anti-Socialist Laws of 1878, which were periodically extended until 1890. Back in London, the Home Office, to which many of his dispatches concerning elections, strikes, and 1 May demonstrations were forwarded, was left in little doubt that while ‘Social Democracy had been silenced its vitality was unimpaired’.¹⁰⁷ The British interest in policies to combat socialism reminds the reader, at least to some extent, of the attention which was paid to the *Kulturkampf* in the 1870s, when anti-Catholic measures were interpreted in the light of the Irish Home Rule movement.¹⁰⁸ With the end of the *Kulturkampf* the former link between the two strains of German ‘radicalism’ (Ultramontanism on the one hand, and socialism on the other) had all but disappeared – only in Bavaria was socialist electoral success still interpreted as an anti-Catholic referendum.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Drummond to Rosebery, 26 July 1886, FO 9/256.

¹⁰⁵ Drummond to Salisbury, 23 April 1890, FO 9/263.

¹⁰⁶ Strachey to Salisbury, 18 October 1889, FO 68/174.

¹⁰⁷ Strachey to Granville, 7 May 1884, FO 68/168; see similar assessments from Darmstadt and Munich; Jocelyn to Granville, 31 October 1884, FO 30/258; MacDonell to Granville, 19 November 1884, FO 9/252; with various references to Strachey’s reports, see James Retallack, *Red Saxony: Election Battles and the Spectre of Democracy in Germany, 1860–1918* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 131–184, 230–317.

¹⁰⁸ In one instance, Irish Home Rule still affected how German affairs were perceived, when, on 9 December 1893, George Strachey described German centralization and the decline of the state legislatures as ‘the result of that gradual extinction of Home Rule which is the feature of the German political evolution’. Strachey to Rosebery, 9 December 1893, FO 68/178 (not included in this volume); see Strachey to Rosebery, 4 January 1894, FO 68/179.

¹⁰⁹ MacDonell to Granville, 19 November 1884, FO 9/252. See *British Embays to the Kaiserreich*, Vol. 1, p. 13.

Beyond such focal points, what most diplomats had in common was their belief in supposedly more timeless, universal English principles and deep-rooted convictions, to which reference was often made in discussions of German political and constitutional life and legal practice. This is especially obvious in George Strachey's frequent tirades on the inadequacies of German political culture. In 1891, in a particularly harsh evaluation, he stated 'that it is idle to measure the behaviour of the disputants in this controversy by standards taken from English or French history. The Germans are in the political nursery, and they are now less near to the possession of a recognized constitutional morality, and to the conquest of the virtues of tolerance, magnanimity, and self-assertion than they were 40 years ago.'¹¹⁰ Indeed, most diplomats alluded to the anachronistic or at least – to an English observer – peculiar features of the German political landscape. This was the case, for example, when the creation of an imperial ministry, responsible to the *Reichstag*, was suggested in 1884, or in view of the interminable discussions on constitutional reform in Württemberg. Here, Henry Barron, in fact, took a pragmatic stance when writing that the 'Constitution of Wurttemberg, now unique in Europe, and resting on a combination of the feudal and Democratic principles, has hitherto worked fairly well'.¹¹¹ Yet while the diplomats still measured German political affairs against British yardsticks, in comparison to the constitutional and moral impetus which had moved so many of the reports from the time of the German Confederation and during the early *Kaiserreich* years, their increasing apathy towards more liberal and progressive forces in these later years, not least in the middling German states, is remarkable.¹¹²

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In general the reports on Germany met the Foreign Office's expectations. British envoys all had varying personal experiences of Germany and, particularly in times of Anglo-German tension, were confronted with a plethora of newspaper articles of which to make sense. Yet rather than write lengthy, rambling reports, the representatives of Britain increasingly prioritized their observations of their host country, and confined themselves to shorter assessments. Their occasional, detailed reports on Baden and Hesse, Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg, and also on the Kingdom of Prussia or

¹¹⁰ Strachey to Salisbury, 21 February 1891, FO 68/176.

¹¹¹ Barron to Salisbury, 23 February 1888, FO 82/173.

¹¹² See Retallack, *Germany's Second Reich*, pp. 49–50. This also corresponds with the lack of commentary on the liberal predilections of the crown prince and future emperor, Friedrich III, which, at least in their official dispatches, envoys only occasionally addressed.

one of its twelve provinces, were of real interest to the Foreign Office only when they concerned the empire and its political stability as a whole. Nevertheless, as part of a larger repository of perceptions, the diplomatic reports produced between 1884 and 1897, each in their own specific context and taken together over a longer period of time, provide a comprehensive British account of Germany and Anglo-German diplomatic practice and relations, just as they do in earlier years. As can be seen in the previous volumes of this editorial project, British envoys to Germany left a treasure trove of observations to future readers, which is singular in the history of British diplomatic relations. Arguably, nineteenth-century Foreign Office officials and the respective foreign secretaries were better informed about Germany than any other country. To what extent this affected the collective mind-set of the foreign policy establishment, the ‘Foreign Office Mind’, is open for discussion.¹¹³

What is clear is that British envoys to Germany, despite the constraints of their posts and their limited agency in the ever more complex “‘engine room” of international relations’,¹¹⁴ often found their own tone and manner of expression, and thus left distinct traces in Anglo-German history. Between 1884 and 1897 one diplomat in particular, George Strachey at Dresden, stands out for this. Strachey’s highly opinionated reports, which were not always to the taste of his superiors in the Foreign Office, now make for extremely useful, and, at times, amusing reading. After his death, in February 1912, an obituary in the *Pall Mall Gazette* described Strachey as ‘one of those erratic geniuses who should have made a brilliant career in the Diplomatic Service’ had it not been for ‘his whimsical sense of the limitations of other people’ and ‘his trenchant wit [used] in the wrong direction’.¹¹⁵ From a historian’s point of view Strachey’s stagnant career at Dresden is a stroke of luck as it resulted in his continuous and direct communication from Germany with various foreign secretaries for over twenty-four years. Comparison of his reports with simultaneous reportage emanating from the other missions shows that Strachey not only followed German politics far beyond his host state, but he also showed growing expertise in topics beyond the more traditional subjects covered by his colleagues, for instance

¹¹³ See, in general, Otte, *Foreign Office Mind*.

¹¹⁴ Raymond Cohen, ‘Putting Diplomatic Studies on the Map’, *Diplomatic Studies Programme Newsletter*, May 1988, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 February 1912. The obituary also quotes Lord Amphilhil with the words: ‘Strachey would wreck a dynasty to make an epigram.’

on German monetary policy or agricultural tariffs.¹¹⁶ Yet, despite his widened authorial scope, the dispatches from Dresden almost always reflected his ‘special Saxon horizon’.¹¹⁷

Certainly Strachey, just like the other diplomats, does not always measure up to the historian’s expectations when it comes to his analysis of German society. It has been noted that they ‘failed to untangle the many ties that linked Germany’s liberal and nationalist movements’,¹¹⁸ and similar shortcomings can also be identified regarding the rise of political anti-Semitism or the Polish question in East Prussia.¹¹⁹ Yet while diplomats struggled to bring together their various observations, let alone foretell the implications of an unfurling nationalism in wider society, the juxtaposition of many and various issues in the correspondence from Germany (in its entirety, as in the selection in this book) often provides the context for interpretation of these matters. With regard to the question of German nation building and the unity of the German Empire, for example, the dispatches vividly illustrate that the provincialism of the German federal states and German nationalism were two sides of the same coin.¹²⁰ Up to 1897, at least, ambiguous accounts from the various envoys do not confirm the view that ‘Germany is what it is, in virtue of having become Prussianized’, a judgment made by the leading Foreign Office expert on Germany, Eyre Crowe, in January 1907.¹²¹ Rather, pre-1900 British envoys would have approved of a later statement made by Eyre Crowe in 1914 to a Royal Commission, enquiring once again into the need ‘to maintain such missions as those at Darmstadt and Dresden’. On 3 July, only a few weeks before the out-

¹¹⁶ Strachey to Salisbury, 28 October 1887, FO 68/172; Strachey to Salisbury, 27 April 1890, FO 68/175; Strachey to Salisbury, 5 June 1891, FO 68/176; Strachey to Rosebery, 17 December 1892, FO 68/177; Strachey to Rosebery, 25 February 1893, FO 68/178.

¹¹⁷ Strachey to Kimberley, 10 March 1894, FO 68/179.

¹¹⁸ Retallack, *Germany’s Second Reich*, p. 50.

¹¹⁹ Malet to Salisbury, 5 September 1885, FO 64/1079; Scott to Salisbury, 30 January 1886, FO 64/1113; Jocelyn to Salisbury, 8 November 1890, FO 30/272; Strachey to Rosebery, 10 December 1892, FO 68/177; Gosselin to Salisbury, 19 June 1896, FO 64/1377.

¹²⁰ See, in general, Dieter Langewiesche, *Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat in Deutschland und Europa* (Munich, 2000), pp. 55–81; Siegfried Weichlein, *Nation und Region: Integrationsprozesse im Bismarckreich* (Düsseldorf, 2002).

¹²¹ Note, 21 January 1907, based upon a minute by Mr Crowe which was attached to Cartwright’s dispatch to Grey, 12 January, FO 371/257, printed in *British Documents on the Origins of War*, Vol. 6 (1930), p. 11. For Crowe’s, now renowned, view of Germany, see also his ‘Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany’, published three weeks earlier, on 1 January 1907, in *ibid.*, Vol. 3, pp. 402–406.

break of the First World War, Crowe responded in favour of the multiple British envoys to the *Kaiserreich*: 'They are very useful. I should be sorry to part with them. They give very useful information from a point of view that we do not get elsewhere. Germany is a very peculiar country, and Berlin is not the centre of Germany in the same sense that Paris is the centre of France.'¹²²

¹²² Evidence Crowe (3 July 1914), Royal Commission on the Civil Service. Appendix to Fifth Report of the Commissioners. Minutes of Evidence, 29th April 1914–16th July 1914 [Cd. 7749] (1914), q. 43463.